



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday morning, June 12, 2019

Day 12

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 30th Legislature**

First Session

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Party standings:

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Tyler Shandro	Minister of Health
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Wednesday, June 12, 2019

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Deputy Speaker: Good morning, members.

Let us pray. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideals but, laying aside all private interests and prejudices, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. May Your kingdom come and Your name be hallowed. Amen.

Please be seated.

Orders of the Day

Committee of Supply

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

The Chair: I would like to call the Committee of Supply to order.

Supplementary Supply Estimates 2018-19 General Revenue Fund

The Chair: Hon. members, before we commence consideration of supplementary supply, I would like to review briefly the standing orders governing the speaking rotation. As provided for in Standing Order 59.02, the rotation in Standing Order 59.01(6) is deemed to apply, which is as follows:

- (a) the Minister, or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may make opening comments not to exceed 10 minutes,
- (b) for the hour that follows, members of the Official Opposition and the Minister, or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak . . .
- (c) for the next 20 minutes, private members of the Government caucus and the Minister or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak, and
- (f) for the time remaining, to the extent possible, the rotation outlined in clauses (b) to (e) shall apply with the speaking times set at 5 minutes as provided in Standing Order 59.02(1)(c).

During the first rotation speaking times are limited to 10 minutes. Once the first rotation is completed, speaking times are reduced to five minutes. Provided that the chair has been notified, a minister and a private member may combine their speaking times, with both taking and yielding the floor during the combined period.

Finally, as provided for in Government Motion 13, approved by the Assembly yesterday, the time allotted for consideration is six hours.

The Committee of Supply has under consideration the 2018-19 supplementary supply estimates. I will now recognize the hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance to move the estimates.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to move the 2018-2019 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue

fund. I stand before you in this Assembly to present supplementary supply.

I would like to begin by introducing the Treasury Board and Finance officials sitting with me here today. To my right is Athana Mentzelopoulos, deputy minister, and to her right is Mary Persson, assistant deputy minister, budget development and reporting. I would like to take a moment to thank them and the staff at Treasury Board and Finance for their professionalism, their hard work, and their long hours. They've been a tremendous support to me and to our government as we navigate the challenging waters of Alberta's financial situation.

Madam Chair, our government respects the traditions of parliamentary democracy, and as a part of that, it is essential that we receive legislative approval of these estimates. This is to ensure there's the appropriate oversight of government spending by the elected representatives. The supplementary estimates are essentially the overspending of the members opposite. Prior to the election the previous government made several contractual commitments, and now the responsibility falls on our government to formally ask this Legislature for funding so we can pay for these items.

I recognize that some of these commitments are, in fact, related to important activities, some of which include wildfire disaster recovery and emergency assistance, support for persons with developmental disabilities, and the repair and rebuilding of flood-damaged homes at the Siksika Nation.

Our government also recognizes that events and natural disasters happen. In fact, we are seeing that right now as fires burn in northern Alberta. Thousands of Albertans have been evacuated from their homes and/or remain on evacuation alert. All Albertans need and can be confident that our government will be there for them in their time of need.

We also recognize that disasters and the magnitude of any disaster are not something any government can predict. However, these estimates tabled before you today go far beyond disaster funding. These estimates demonstrate a lack of discipline and respect for all Albertans. Madam Chair, not only do these estimates represent poor fiscal planning of the previous government, but they clearly demonstrate how our friends opposite played politics with Albertans' money.

What I'm referring to, Madam Chair, is the more than \$310 million that the previous government used to fund an ill-advised initiative to lease railcars. My friends opposite have treated taxpayers' money like a credit card, and now we've received the bill. If they felt they needed it, they bought it. There was little consideration around who was actually going to pay for it.

Madam Chair, on April 16 Albertans elected this government with the most significant mandate in the province's history. They took a careful look at our platform. They saw that we were committed to bringing the budget back to balance and to making the effort that will be required to turn back the momentum of growing debt. They asked us to bring sustainability back to government so that hard-working Albertans can be confident that their children will enjoy the same government services that have sustained them, and we're going to do that, but first we must finish old business and put the recklessness of the previous government behind us.

So now, as a matter of law, our government must pass legislation including that money for prepayments to lease railcars despite our own misgivings of this rushed job. When passed, these supplementary estimates will authorize an approximate increase of \$8.9 million to the office of the Chief Electoral Officer, \$449 million in voted expense funding, \$53 million in voted capital

investments, and \$362 million in voted financial transactions for the government.

The estimates of these overages are consistent with the fiscal plan presented in the previous government's 2018-2019 third-quarter fiscal update and will authorize increases to the office of the Chief Electoral Officer and the following 15 departments: Advanced Education, Agriculture and Forestry, Children's Services, Community and Social Services, Culture and Tourism, Economic Development and Trade, Education, Energy, Indigenous Relations, Justice and Solicitor General, Municipal Affairs, Seniors and Housing, Service Alberta, Status of Women, and Treasury Board and Finance.

Madam Chair, as we debate these supplementary estimates, I suspect that our members opposite will argue that this money was for the good of Albertans, but let me be clear. Rushing contracts worth hundreds of millions of dollars for political gain is not responsible spending, and it's certainly not good for Albertans. As President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance I've been given a great privilege. I've been tasked with making sure that Albertans' money is spent responsibly, and I'm taking on that challenge as a privilege and with the utmost respect for the people of this great province.

Albertans want to know that their hard-earned money is treated with the utmost respect. They also want to be sure that government has the money to help them when they need it most, and they want to make sure that there is money for the future.

Madam Chair, my role, my fellow ministers' roles, and the role of our government is to be responsible stewards of Alberta taxpayers' dollars. We know there will be challenges ahead, but we will bring this province back to balance and find better ways than pushing contracts through for political gain to do things differently.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak this morning, Madam Chair. Now my colleagues and I will be pleased to answer any questions from the members of this Assembly.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. members from the Official Opposition. Hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre, would you like to combine your time with the minister for the first 20-minute block?

Mr. Shepherd: Yes, if the minister is open to that.

The Chair: Hon. Minister of Finance, do you agree to combine the 20 minutes and go back and forth?

Mr. Toews: Agreed.

The Chair: Okay. Edmonton-City Centre, please proceed.

9:10

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the minister. I appreciated his opening comments and certainly look forward to the fall budget, when this government will have the opportunity to demonstrate whether they can indeed pull the rabbit out of the hat, that they seem to indicate that they feel they will.

I'd like to begin by asking a few questions, then, on the matter of Health. Speaking to the minister, he was indicating, I guess, some concerns with our government's plan on spending, but I do note that for Health there seem to be no supplementary amounts to be voted on, which I can only assume means that Health is proceeding on budget for the fiscal year in Budget 2019 and that our former minister, now the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, had things in good stead. To the minister: can you just confirm, then, that indeed, as there are no supplementary amounts, the budget that was proposed and put forward for Health has been successful and moved forward appropriately?

Mr. Toews: Madam Chair, I can confirm that there are no supplementary amounts related to the Ministry of Health.

Mr. Shepherd: All right. Thank you. Well, I can see, then, that the minister intends not to be only thrifty with spending but also with his answers.

To the minister. Can you tell us, then, based on that budget and given that you are agreeing with those numbers and that you're moving forward on the budget that we put forward: are you able to indicate how many full-time employees were allocated to mental health and addictions in Budget 2018 and what the increase in full-time employees for this fiscal year might be?

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Ms Sweet: Madam Chair, point of order.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Point of Clarification

Ms Sweet: Just as a point of clarity, Madam Chair, can you please clarify for the House that we can actually ask any minister and that it doesn't specifically have to be to the Minister of Finance? Just for the information of all members of the House.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Madam Chair, this certainly is not a point of order, but with that said, I am interested in that point of clarification as well.

The Chair: Hon. members, for clarification purposes, the government can decide who responds to the questions.

The Minister of Finance.

Debate Continued

Mr. Toews: Madam Chair, in response to the question, for 2018-2019 there were 933 FTEs related to mental health, and for Alberta Health Services and the Health Quality Council of Alberta there were 80,605 FTEs. I think that in response to the member's question around 2019-2020, which is the upcoming budget year, as the members opposite know, at this point in time we have not delivered a budget. We are working and deliberating with ministries as they develop their plans going forward, and of course a budget will be forthcoming this fall.

The Chair: Edmonton-City Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. Given that, as has been noted, the government seems to largely agree with the budget that we had put forward and recognizes that it was well put together and that they do not feel anything additional to add to it, I believe that would end the questions that I would have on the matter of Health.

At this time I would hand things over to the Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

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

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'll seek your guidance on whether I need to ask to combine with the minister again or whether we'll just continue to proceed in that exchange.

The Chair: We're still in the first 20 minutes, so please proceed.

Ms Ganley: Fantastic. Thank you.

I'd like to begin by noting, if it's possible, something that actually isn't in here. In 2015, when we went through this exercise, also with

numbers that weren't really our own, there was a large amount of overspending in corrections, and that was difficult to get under control. Over a number of years it required software and incredible hard work on the part of many individuals in the department. This year it's gotten to the point where the hiring and the staffing – and we made a bunch of moves around, ensuring that we don't have, you know, people who were in jail for a day and a half nearly as much. That is an incredible achievement on behalf of those staff, to make it the case that that isn't going into an overage. I'm not sure if you're aware of that, Minister, but I think it's worth noting.

My first question, I will direct, is on page 55, obviously having to do with estimates for Justice and Solicitor General, line 5.8. I'll direct this to the Minister of Justice, but I guess anyone can answer. I'm incredibly proud to sit here with my colleagues. I think we made a lot of changes that were beneficial to the people of Alberta. One of the ones that I'm proudest of is the change that you're seeing the last piece of in item 5.8. That's \$14.8 million in additional funding for legal aid. Over four years it's part of a more than \$70 million boost in funding to legal aid. It's almost 76 per cent over the course of our term. I'm incredibly pleased to see that this number is here. I hope that it continues to be here as we go forward into the future.

What I will ask is: does the minister agree, especially in light of the comments of the Minister of Finance about waste and overspending, that this investment to ensure that our system functions adequately and to ensure that those most vulnerable are able to access it is a good investment?

Mr. Schweitzer: Madam Chair, again, we're here to talk about the NDP's spending. We have a \$14.8 million increase in legal aid spending. We have clear campaign commitments that we've made. Again, we're going to be going through a thorough budget process, and in that process we will refine our campaign commitments and our commitments to Albertans to make sure that we have an effective justice system. We're going to be making sure that we focus on the priorities of Albertans and our legal system to make sure it has the tools required to do the services that Albertans are expecting.

The Chair: Calgary-Mountain View.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect, I'm aware that this is a commitment that the previous government made. I remember making it. I see that it's been included in here, and what I'm asking is whether you think this was a good use of funds.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you to the hon. member for the question. I think that what she's attempting to refer to in a roundabout way is that the Finance minister's comments about concerns about the fact that we have to bring some supplementary supply components of this process here really have to do with NDP boondoggles and misspending. Asking if specific points of this still have value and are important and if that was a blanket statement by the hon. the Finance minister: Madam Chair, I think, through you to the hon. member, I can assure you that that's not what the Finance minister is referring to. The Finance minister, in fact, said in his opening comments that there are important parts of supplementary supply to be able to continue with the continuity of government, which is what we're doing here right now.

In fact, Madam Chair, through you to the hon. members of the opposition, I will quote their then Finance minister on March 13, 2018, sitting in the Finance chair in this place during supplementary and interim supply. He refers specifically to supplementary supply.

This interim funding authority will ensure continuity in the business of the province while the Legislature takes the time

necessary to discuss, debate, and enact the full funding required for government business for the 2018-19 fiscal year.

That was on March 13, 2018, in this House. The fact is that there are important things within supplementary supply to be able to deal with the continuity of government. That's why this government is bringing supplementary supply to this House, to go through the process.

But as the Finance minister said, Madam Chair, the fact is that also within supplementary supply is a requirement, unfortunately, for this government to have to be able to follow through on some boondoggles and some, you know, misspending by the government, and that's what the Finance minister is referring to. In fact, I think a great example of that – and I think it's relevant to the hon. member's question because it was asked in such a broad way – would be crude by rail, which was an abuse, almost, of taxpayer dollars, that was brought forward in the dying days of the former administration during an election period, that utilized taxpayer dollars and put us in a tough situation. I hope we'll have more of an opportunity to be able to talk about that once some questions are asked about energy.

To close, Madam Chair, because I'm sure the hon. member would like some more time back, the answer is: yes, there are things that are important to supplementary supply. Unfortunately, there is also some misspending by the NDP that we have to handle. That's the reality of what we've been left with by the bad financial management of the former government.

9:20

The Chair: Calgary-Mountain View.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think it's probably worth pointing out that the question was specifically about line item 5.8. It wasn't asked in a broad way. It was a question specifically about exactly \$14.8 million for legal aid and whether or not that's important. I think it's pretty clear that if each of the things individually is important, they can't collectively add up to misspending on things that are unimportant.

The question I was asking, to which I am clearly not going to receive an answer, was whether or not that specific spending on legal aid, which spending came at the time that it came because we were in negotiations over the course of several years for a governance agreement that will make legal aid sustainable for years into the future – anyway, I will move on to my next question.

Again, very specifically, page 55, lines 4.3 and 6.5, which refer specifically to additional funding that went into our rural crime strategy. Six million dollars came in-year. This is the \$4 million that came at the end of the year. Obviously, we were moving quite quickly when we were doing this. We thought we got it right. We continued talking to folks, and we ultimately landed on this.

At the time, of course, the members opposite singled out this particular rural crime strategy to vote against it, calling it overspending, and we know, I think, beyond a doubt at this time that that much-needed investment has already started to pay dividends. In fact, I've seen the hon. minister begin to reference sort of continued use of exactly that same strategy into the future. I'm incredibly pleased that we went through with that strategy. I think it's been incredibly effective. Again, in general, the comments of the Minister of Finance, having admittedly singled out some specific things that were important like disasters and other things, certainly not this particular strategy – but I don't think that this represents a lack of discipline. I think that this was a good idea. I think that it was something that was needed by the people of Alberta at the time. I don't think it was irresponsible at all. In fact, I think that not doing it would have been irresponsible.

So I'd like to ask the current minister to share his perception of this investment, whether or not he thinks that it was worth while to invest in RCMP officers and Crown prosecutors.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Madam Chair, I'll take this question on behalf of the government just because I think it's important for my colleagues who are new to the Legislature to have a little bit of the other side of the history lesson that was just presented by the hon. member when it comes to rural crime inside this Assembly. The fact is that the then Official Opposition, which I was proud actually at the time to be the leader of inside this Assembly, had to fill these galleries full of people from all over rural Alberta and beg for help for rural crime – beg for help for rural crime – to be able to make sure that that was addressed while that member, who was the Minister of Justice, refused over and over and over to help people. In fact, at the time, their leader said that there was really no rural crime problem and disregarded . . .

Ms Hoffman: Mischaracterization.

Mr. Jason Nixon: In fact, every member of that party that is an incumbent . . .

Ms Hoffman: What a mischaracterization.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Madam Chair, I know that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora wants to get in and heckle away. She can rise and speak at any time. She has her block here.

Ms Hoffman: Right now. Yeah. Let's do it.

Mr. Jason Nixon: But the reality is this . . .

The Chair: Hon. member, please.

Ms Hoffman: Sorry.

Mr. Jason Nixon: The reality, Madam Chair, is that when it comes to rural crime, rural crime is an extraordinarily important issue. I know you know that. It's an important issue to your constituents; it's an important issue to my constituents. But this wanting to rewrite history by the hon. member so that all of a sudden the NDP has become the great champion of rural crime and standing up for rural Albertans is absolutely ridiculous when you know the history and the facts of the process that it took the Official Opposition at that time to get the then government to actually take action for people.

Now, the hon. member also is implying that the former opposition, by voting against the former government's budget, was automatically against every issue, including the funding of police officers, something that we called for in this Assembly for a very, very long time. It means that we would be against specific components of the budget. That's not true, Madam Chair. What we were against was a fiscally irresponsible budget that had already at that point become about five credit downgrades if I've got it correct – I have to look . . .

An Hon. Member: Six.

Mr. Jason Nixon: . . . maybe even six by that point and had us on track for \$100 billion. If the hon. members want to spend their time in supplementary supply trying to campaign and talk about how good they were at budgeting or managing the province's finances, I certainly welcome that because I think that they were likely the worst government in the history of this province when it came to managing our finances. They had us on track for \$100 billion in

debt, and some of the issues that we have to come to this place today to be able to pass are basically fixing up many of the components of their mismanagement when it came to the finances of our province.

With that said, Madam Chair, through you to the hon. member, of course, funding police officers and standing up for victims of rural crime is a huge priority for this government. It was a huge priority for the United Conservative Party when we were in opposition. The real question is what took them so long to do it and why they hadn't gone all the way when they were in government. But the Minister of Justice, I know, will go all the way, and this government will always stand up for rural Albertans, and we'll always stand up against rural crime.

Ms Ganley: Through you, Madam Chair, thank you for the incredible lecture on that one. I feel like "mansplaining" was in fact ruled parliamentary, and it's probably worth using in this instance.

Returning, then, Madam Chair, to the issue of lines 4.3 and 6.5, I think it's just worth noting that in the instance of – and we're going to have this procedure again today, so you'll no doubt be incredibly familiar with it. When you're voting on something like a supplementary or an interim supply, you have the option to block vote all on one, or you have the option to single out certain items to specifically vote for or against them. In the instance when we introduced the rural crime strategy, the members opposite specifically singled it out so that they could vote against just that without voting against everything else. So let's be clear that it had nothing to do with voting against other portions of the budget that were not justice related.

Ms Hoffman: Facts.

Ms Ganley: Right.

With respect to this strategy, obviously, it includes a couple of different elements, some portion of which flows through to the RCMP and some portion of which goes to Crown prosecutors, most of those prosecutors now being in place, I think, and doing their job. I think at this point we have seen rather significantly the outcome of that strategy. I'm incredibly glad that at the time I chose to act immediately, while the members opposite yelled at me to take my time and study the issue and even went so far as to introduce a private member's bill to study the issue at length and to send it to a committee and to do a whole bunch of things.

I think this has been incredibly effective, and I'd love to hear, you know, from the minister. I've asked about specifically two things. I've asked about the rural crime strategy, which, again, just so it's clear that I'm being specific, is 6.5 and 4.3, those lines. I've asked also about line 5.8, which is specifically support for legal aid. I think those are all very important things. What I'm asking is whether the minister or the government more generally feels the same.

Mr. Schweitzer: Madam Chair, addressing rural crime was one of the cornerstones of our platform that we put forward in the most recent election campaign. It goes through in a detailed way and outlines a lot of the hard work that was done by the legacy members of both of our historic parties in putting forward our rural crime strategy. In that, we have our rural crime strategy, and when we get into our budget process and as we get going here, throughout this process we're going to be making sure we bring through in detail those policies.

9:30

We're going to be making sure that we fully fund things like ALERT to make sure that they have the resources to combat gang activity, also make sure that resources are there for our rural

communities. Our priorities as well are to put in place 50 new prosecutors, Madam Chair, to make sure that we have the resources to deal with these backlogs that we have in our court system to give people across Alberta the confidence in our justice system, and make sure that they know that the policing is there.

The Chair: Hon. members, we are now entering our second 20-minute block.

Members of the Official Opposition, who would like to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Ms Ganley: Sorry. If it's all right . . .

The Chair: Hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, would you like to continue going back and forth?

Ms Ganley: Yes, please, if that's amenable.

The Chair: Government, agreed?

Please proceed.

Ms Ganley: Perfect. I'm actually pretty much finished, so my hon. colleague can get up right away. All I wanted to do was just say thank you to the minister. I appreciate that acknowledgement. I'm glad to hear that we're on the same page with respect to that. I'm incredibly glad that you've managed to convince our now Premier, who cut ALERT when he was in Ottawa, of its value. Thank you so much for that.

The Chair: The Minister of Justice.

Mr. Schweitzer: Madam Chair, first and foremost, I categorically reject the statements that were made there. We're talking right now here in supplementary supply about the spending that was done by the NDP. Right now in Alberta we have clear priorities on justice to make sure that we provide the services Albertans are looking for. We have priorities. We're not prioritizing light bulbs. We're not prioritizing shower heads. We're prioritizing to make sure that our front-line law enforcement officials have the resources they need to get their job done.

Not a day goes by when I walk through here in these halls, Madam Chair, that I don't run into one of our MLAs representing a rural constituency who comes to me and says: "Look, I need you to come to my constituency. We have a crisis happening in our constituency." That's why I'm working with many of our colleagues in this Chamber to make sure we get to every community possible to talk to them about their concerns, to talk to them about our plan to combat rural crime. We're going to be going all the way up to Fort McMurray. We're going to be going to Grande Prairie. We're going to be going to Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Red Deer. We're going to be talking to people about our plan to help make sure we address this crisis that's going on across our rural communities. So many people on farms just do not feel safe. We need to make sure that they feel safe in their communities.

It was the failure of the past government to listen to Albertans in a timely way. You heard the hon. House leader. His comments were about how many times he had to fill the galleries here with people to make sure that the previous government actually took steps to get the job done. Right now in Alberta we have to make sure we do more. We have committed the most detailed platform in Alberta's history – Alberta history. This is a platform with over 300 commitments. We're going to make sure that we have promises made, promises kept on this. Albertans are relying on us. They're relying on us to make sure we keep them safe in their communities.

Thank you.

The Chair: Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise today and speak to supplementary estimates. I did have some specific questions related to the Agriculture and Forestry ministry, but I wanted to first note that the Minister of Finance in his opening remarks did specifically, basically, exclude Agriculture and Forestry from those ministries that might be spearheaded in their attack as overspending of members opposite because, of course, as is fairly typical on an annual ongoing basis, Agriculture and Forestry will be one of those ministries that does have a significant amount of monies that are called for in supplementary estimates.

For example, this year we see about \$193 million for wildfire disaster emergency assistance provided for wildfire management costs. Some of my inquiries will relate to that number but not in a way that would be looking to condemn the practice because I know that when, in fact, we were in government, we were called out for perhaps budgeting only a small amount initially for this contingency. However, subsequently there was a much larger amount that was necessary to be spent during the course of the wildfire emergency on an annual basis. Therefore, supplementary estimates requests were made and the same is true for the past budget year.

I'm wondering if the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and/or representatives on that minister's behalf could comment a little bit about the unpredictable nature of the financial requirements for this ministry with respect to fighting wildfires and natural disasters, particularly wildfires given that the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry has the responsibility for fighting forest fires, and also the inherent cost of disaster relief resulting from evacuations that are coming as a result of wildfires that are approaching more and more rapidly towards centres of population and which, increasingly, on an annual basis seem to be costing us more and creating a greater sense of fear and risk in northern communities in particular, who face threats of wildfire that may actually impinge right up to their community. I know that this year, of course, in High Level we were very concerned about that wildfire almost getting into the community. We lost homes in Paddle Prairie as a result of an unpredictable wildfire that took off and actually caused some 15, 16 homes to be destroyed.

One of the things that was undertaken, Madam Chair, during the High Level firefighting effort – and it was widely publicized – was an effort, during a period of time when the winds shifted and gave a bit of an opportunity for those heroic firefighters to do their work, to create significant firebreaks around the community of High Level at great cost and expense and using much heavy equipment and bulldozers in an effort to protect against the wildfire actually encroaching into the town of High Level. This type of expenditure on an ongoing basis during an emergency period when firefighting is actually taking place, when there's an active fire taking place: I'm wondering, going forward, if we can perhaps look at having some of this work done on a more ongoing basis as a measure of public safety and protection rather than on an emergency basis, making it part of ongoing fire protection and perhaps incorporating it into our FireSmart community protection efforts. We are seeing a higher level of risk on a regular basis to many of our northern communities, which are surrounded by forests.

I know that there's been a significant uptake in interest, and it's taken seriously by our northern communities, to engage with their fire departments through community planning and to make efforts to satisfy those plans. Because of the large amount that we see in supplementary estimates required on an ongoing basis, some of which are costs for work that's done during an emergent situation but possibly could be done on an ongoing basis on the community

FireSmart program, I'm wondering if that might kind of sort out or balance the expenditures that are made as a result of fighting wildfires that do occur: doing work that might be preventative in nature rather than doing these fireguards, in particular, in an emergency situation.

I wonder if the minister could perhaps comment on that and also, really, basically look at the predictability of supplementary estimate expenditures, the large ones that are being required on an ongoing basis. Of course, we're not going to be eliminating the sizable estimates, the supplementary estimates, the supplementary dollars that are asked for because of the unpredictability. But is there a way that the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry foresees altering their budgetary planning process to perhaps balance out some of the expenditures so that they're not such a large amount called for during supplementary estimates? Is there a way of doing that? Is there any thought being given to that process?

9:40

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the member opposite for the question and for the thoughtful comments. In response to the member's question I can confidently say that this government is basically looking at our emergency response budget line. As we take a look historically and, I think, by virtue of the fact that we are having to deal with a large budget item expenditure right now in supplementary, this would point to an inadequate amount of emergency planning funding in previous budgets. Because of that this government is taking a look to ensure that we have adequate amounts built into emergency planning response for upcoming years.

Again, I would point out that we're here today dealing retroactively with expenditures that have been committed to by the previous government that were not budgeted, and I think it's important that all members in this House recognize the discomfort that we have in doing that. We all agreed that to be transparent with Albertans means that we should be coming forward with our spending plans in a budget, and to that end, we are looking at required budget levels based on historical facts and historical costs to deal with emergencies in this province.

I will say that the emergency response that we've observed this summer to the fires in the north has been exemplary. There's been a tremendous response by our emergency management personnel and officials. I think there's been a very efficient, co-ordinated response by all levels of government, and I commend all those that have been on the front line of those decisions. I recognize the hardship that many residents have experienced, the residents that have lived in and around those areas of the fires, residents who have experienced real loss as a result of those fires.

I appreciate the member opposite's comments on considering a proactive response around municipalities in terms of creating fireguards. I do know that our minister of agriculture and his team are looking into those possibilities. Our Minister of Municipal Affairs, I believe, is also very interested in what this government can do in fact prevent emergencies going forward.

A couple of things I would like to point out in the agriculture section of this supplementary ask. I don't believe that adequate budget consideration was given to the emergency response requirements that this province has typically had, so we're now here retroactively having to pay for this emergency response, which was needed, which was required, but which was not adequately predicted or budgeted.

Another concern. When we look at the expenditures by the ministry of agriculture, I think we want to take a look at the amount

of \$7.6 million that was paid out as a grant in response to, really, what I would call an ever-changing and ill-advised beer markup program or programs that were implemented and reimplemented and never quite struck an adequate tone to ensure that our manufacturing sector was properly looked after. When I say properly looked after, I know that for the business community predictability is critically important, and we had an ever-changing markup plan here over the last few years. We take a look again at a \$7.6 million ask, again after the fact, and I would suggest that dealing with these kinds of expenditures after the fact is not acceptable in the eyes of Albertans.

Again, Madam Chair, I'll close my comments with this. The fact that some departments are not included in the supplementary ask, in other words, the fact that some departments, including the department of Health, does not have expenditures that we're now having to retroactively approve, I don't think should be confused with the fact that this government believes that all the spending in those departments was performed in as an efficient manner as possible or that all of the programs were delivered in the most efficient manner. The fact that we're having to retroactively approve expenditures in some departments, I think, demonstrates an irresponsible approach to budgeting in some cases and in other cases demonstrates simply a very irresponsible approach to spending. But, again, the fact that some departments haven't required supplementary expenditure approval does not mean that those departments acted in a fiduciary responsible way in every case.

We know that there's been much government mismanagement in the past by the previous government, and we know that there are opportunities in every ministry to find efficiencies and to deliver programs more efficiently, more cost-effectively, and with less government waste. Madam Chair, this government is committed to finding those efficiencies and to delivering high-quality services that Albertans expect but to do it in a very responsible, efficient, cost-effective manner.

The Chair: Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to continue our conversation with the Minister of Treasury Board and Finance on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. In his comments the minister just mentioned a couple of things I wanted to touch upon, particularly with respect to comments regarding a suggestion that the emergency response was inadequate or not adequately predicted. I think that this is something that has been an ongoing historical criticism of any Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, but it's something that's not necessarily warranted or prudent because it is a difficult department to predict because of the nature of the emergency responses that are required with respect to wildfires on an annual basis.

Now, certainly, there's always room for improvement on an annual basis to try to more accurately predict what expenditures might be required, but I think it's been noted as a very common and accepted practice in this ministry to have a contingency initially allotted and then a supplemental amount asked for in supplemental estimates, as we're doing now, because of the unpredictable nature of wildfires and the efforts to support firefighters and those individuals caught up in disasters who need disaster relief. I'm not sure if it's really a fair comment to say that it wasn't adequately predicted because this is not something that governments over the past number of decades in this province or right across the country, for example, have seen fit to try to pinpoint. It's been, I think, a proper practice to allot a smaller amount and then see what contingencies are required as the fire season progresses.

However, I concur that there are some things that can be improved upon on an ongoing basis. I think this is one of the things that had been done in the past as a result of practices that were looked upon by our government when we were in power with respect to the aircraft contracts. I believe that may be one thing that, you know, on an ongoing basis any government would look at attempting to control. Whether it's the procurement of aircraft on a standby basis or whether it's creating fireguards around communities that will perhaps prevent encroachment of fire into communities during an emergent disaster, those are things that, going forward, might lessen the amount of supplemental estimates that are required.

9:50

I wouldn't get into damning any particular Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, whether the past ones in our government or the current one, for relying on what seems to be a proper procedure by going ahead and asking for a responsible, small amount to begin with and then seeing how the fire season plays out to ask for supplemental dollars later on.

Just as a matter of principle, Madam Chair, the parliamentary practice of supplemental estimates and interim supply requirements is something that offers balance.

The Chair: Hon. members, we now enter our third 20-minute block.

Members of the Official Opposition, would you like to start? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora. Would you like to combine your time with the government?

Ms Hoffman: I'm happy to do that. We'll see how it goes, if that's the desire.

The Chair: The government agrees?

Ms Hoffman: Yes? Okay.

The Chair: Please proceed.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much. I first of all want to start by saying how grateful I am to the public service for all the work that went into, of course, the last four years but also into preparing for today. I know that preparing interim and sup supply can be very onerous, so to the public servants as well as to the government for the work in preparing for today's discussion: thank you.

I have a question to which I imagine there probably isn't an answer today, but it stemmed from some of the discussion earlier and if it's possible to get a written response later, I'd appreciate it. Maybe we can do the last 10 years or another timeline if the government proposes. How many years did we not require supplementary supply in Health? That would be something that I would appreciate knowing. I can probably get the library to look it up, but if it's possible for the folks who have that information available to provide that written response if it's not available today, that would be appreciated.

The other thing I just want to mention before I get going through Education, because I do want to spend the majority of my time on pages 43 and 44 of the sup supply document, is that I appreciate the comments around wanting to be able to anticipate natural disasters and emergencies to a better degree. I think that that's an important thing to aspire to. I also think that if we could anticipate the natural disasters and emergencies in a better way, we'd prevent them rather than just budget for them. I do want to say that.

With regard to page 43 I would love to discuss line 4. There are not a lot of lines, but line 4, school facilities. I'm hoping that the

minister could please provide some detail on what the increased capital requirements are for the school building program, please.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. We're looking at line 4 on page 43. The supplementary amount of \$500,000 is requested today to provide fund increase capital planning requirements for the school building program. Today, right now, I don't have further details to provide this House. However, we could certainly provide those for that \$500,000 expenditure.

I would like to just respond perhaps as well to maybe some comments by the member opposite in terms of emergency response planning. I absolutely want to acknowledge that any government cannot accurately predict what type of emergencies the people of Alberta might find themselves in from year to year. Again, I appreciate the suggestions of every consideration to be as proactive as possible and to ensure that communities are least impacted when we encounter an emergency. We all know that those emergencies can take place in the form of fire, floods, and other emergencies as well.

My concern is not that there was an inadequate response or that the response was not justified when we're taking a look at approving this supplementary supply but, in fact, that Albertans, I believe, expect their government to ensure that there is an adequate budget line to deal with emergencies that do occur. Even though we can't predict necessarily what they will be, when they will occur, I think Albertans expect that governments have an adequate line built into the budget to deal with those emergencies as much as possible, again, on a proactive measure.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much. I look forward to the written response with regard to the question around line item 4. That would suffice. I think that's what I heard the minister say. Certainly, my desire, of course, would be that everyone anticipate every possible cost we could possibly need, and I'm sure we'll have an opportunity to discuss that more in interim supply for disaster recovery. I know that it can be challenging, that not everyone can predict how bad the flu season is going to be, for example. That's not even a natural disaster. That's the Health minister's amazing analytics team doing their best to anticipate how effective the flu vaccine is going to be and how many people are going to get it, but sometimes things get in the way of good predictions. I certainly wish you all the best with that, Minister. And to the entire government, I think that that is a worthy aspiration, but I think that natural disasters and other emergencies are very, very difficult to anticipate.

My second question – and perhaps this is again for follow-up in writing – is around line 4 on page 43. Several school projects across the province are funded for planning, but schools and communities are anxiously awaiting information about if and when they will find out if funding is in place for the project to proceed after that initial planning investment. Is there any funding being moved between fiscal years to keep those projects moving forward with regard to that line item? If so, that's great. Can you tell us which ones and why? If not, the same question: why are we not moving fiscal years, making sure that we have that money there to move those projects forward? Again, that's page 43, line 4.

Mr. Toews: Madam Chair, just to respond to the question, I think, as everybody in this House knows, we are moving forward with the budget process. We will be tabling a budget this fall, and I know that ministries are active right now looking at their programs that

Albertans expect this government to deliver. They are considering the best ways to deliver those programs, the most cost-effective and efficient ways to deliver those programs. You know, I would say in response to that question that, again, we will be rolling those details out in our budget deliberations. As we present the budget, obviously those details will become very transparent.

Ms Hoffman: My last attempt to clarify that. There is five hundred – oh. I guess it's only a thousand dollars identified there. So does that mean that none of those projects have been included in this sup supply document? If that's the case, I'd be fine with receiving that response as a written response.

My next question is about line item 4.1, again, same page. Could the minister address what a related party is and if there are any increased costs associated with operations and maintenance associated with them? That would be helpful. I think there was information provided around that there could be related parties that would be impacted by this line item, so I'd like to know in more detail what that means.

The Chair: The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. We will respond to the member opposite with the details around the \$6,667,000 of funds needed to address increased capital payments to related parties to provide funding for operations. Again, we will respond with the details. Of course, it is the members opposite that in fact incurred those expenditures, and if memory fails them, we will certainly provide the details for them again.

10:00

The Chair: Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you. Next, I would like to continue on again with line item 4.1, and I just want to give a little context.

I imagine that many of us, probably, in this room helped fund raise for playgrounds at new schools when they were being built. I know that I went to a few birthday parties where instead of asking for presents, children said: "Hey, we need a playground at our school. Can you give us a donation to help pay for that?" because their new school was built, and it was built without a playground. So when we were in government, we made the decision to work with parents and to provide a funding envelope for a basic playground when a new school would open, something that I think many of us would want. Of course, if school councils want to make it a priority to fund raise additional funds to supplement that, so be it.

But I'm looking for some clarification about whether that line item, school facilities infrastructure, does indeed, through the supplementary supply estimates that we're considering, still include the addition of playgrounds to new school builds, if that's something that did continue on during this period between when the election was called and today, when we consider sup supply estimates?

Member LaGrange: Yes, it does include all of commitments that were made by the previous government.

The Chair: Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Hoffman: Thanks. I guess my supplementary to that would be: did the entire amount that was budgeted for school playgrounds get spent in this last year through this sup supply, and if so, do we know how many playgrounds were built and how many are under construction now with the remainder of the funds?

The Chair: The Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you for the question. We will have to get back to you with those fine details.

Ms Hoffman: Since we're on a roll for fine details, will the interim supply amount for ensuring these projects are completed also – that'll be a question I'll ask in interim supply, so you can start working on that now, I guess, because it makes sense if we ask in sup and carry over to there. Will there be an additional need in interim supply to offset any shortfalls in supplementary supply? That would be that question that flows from there. There's my heads-up for that next chunk of time, that we have to consider that.

My next question is on page 43, and it's about not just what's here but also what's missing. Of course, there are a few line items. I think it was the same when we came in and brought in sup supply, so I'm not criticizing that. Perhaps there were slightly more details, but I don't expect that there were significantly more details. In terms of reviewing last year's sup supply, I noticed that the Assembly was to consider an additional \$18 million for enrolment growth, and I noted that that isn't here in this year's sup supply. Could the minister comment on what that means about her enrolment growth commitment that was made earlier this week, on Monday, and whether or not that will be funded in a different way since I don't see it funded through this sup supply line item?

The Chair: The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. I question the relevancy of that question. Right now we're looking back at, really, expenditures and commitments that the previous government made that really don't impact future enrolment. In fact, these were spends for the previous year. So again I question the relevancy of that question to this House.

Ms Hoffman: Perhaps it's a question to raise with officials. I'd be happy to have the response. It's just that last year I know that in the same document, which was looking retroactively, there was a line item for \$18 million that was identified for enrolment growth, and I know that it's not here. I'm just trying to be able to do apples to apples, so if there was a change in the way it was accounted for or the way that it was reported, I'd be happy to receive that information. I just want to confirm that the announcement earlier this week is being funded somewhere through one of these pieces of paper that we're being asked to consider and approved.

I also see that enrolment growth in the province is going to be maintained or increased. I think that the number that was mentioned through media yesterday was \$150 million, so I guess I'm looking, again, to see – and the \$18 million was only a very small subset of the hundred and whatever million dollars that were required last year to fund growth, but I thought that there would be something given that it was in last year's document. If either minister would like to elaborate further, I'd appreciate that.

The Chair: The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, I think that in terms of discussing future enrolment growth and expenditures, it's irrelevant to this conversation, to this deliberation today. If, in fact, there was an \$18 million ask in the previous year's supplementary supply bill, that, again, I can't comment on today. There was not that requirement in this supplementary ask.

I would suggest that, then, in the previous year – again, the supplementary supply requests, in fact, really, in my opinion, indicate an overspend, over and above what was budgeted. In fact,

if there was enrolment for the previous year that was not anticipated, that's unfortunate because then Albertans were not made aware through the budget process of the financial commitment that they had to fund education. We're fortunate that this year, in fact, there is not that request, but I can't comment on that particular year.

The Chair: Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Hoffman: Thanks. Again, one of the things that I think makes this much more complicated than doing a household budget is that sometimes conditions happen that are out of our control. There might be things like an influx of student population coming from Ontario after significant cuts to special needs education in Ontario and those types of things that do result in some of these pressures, and I know that everyone does their best to anticipate what's going to happen and what the trends are going to be, but it's not just the 4-year-olds from Alberta that end up becoming 5-year-olds in Alberta when they enrol in school. Sometimes we get new kids from other provinces or other parts of the world.

I just want to clarify. When I asked my question about related parties, I said that it was page 43, but it's actually page 44, line item 4, capital payments to related parties. I'm hoping for some clarity on who related parties are and what that entailed given that it was a supplementary estimate that we're considering here today. Who are related parties, and what are the services that we are making these capital payments to them for?

Mr. Toews: Madam Chair, the related parties were, in fact, school boards and the expenditure related to school board projects that were in play.

The Chair: Edmonton-Glenora.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much. I don't expect a list to be here, but if we could get a list – it is over \$6 million. I'd appreciate a list of which projects those are and which boards received that funding, at the convenience, of course, of the public service. It's something that I think would help us all understand this document better, ideally before we are asked to vote on it because I think it's an important financial amount. But I appreciate the clarity that it was to school boards. That is certainly helpful.

I think I'll cede the rest of my time to my colleagues. Thank you very much, and I appreciated the succinct responses to what I tried to make succinct questions.

Thank you.

The Chair: Edmonton-Riverview.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair.

I'm pleased to rise and talk a little bit about the Ministry of Seniors and Housing, which, of course, I had the honour to be the minister of in the last government. We know that that ministry does serve thousands of seniors in our province to live in dignity. They are parents or grandparents, community leaders, mentors, and our friends, and certainly we want to make sure that we have the support they need to live. They built our province, and of course we want to make sure that seniors are taken care of.

Unfortunately, there are some myths about seniors. Sometimes there's talk of the grey tsunami or the burden of the aging population, but we want to make sure – certainly, I did when I was minister – that these apocalyptic discourses are not heeded. It's very important to know what seniors contribute, actually, to our province. They contribute in so many ways. They contribute financially. Many seniors are business owners, investors. You

know, asking mom and dad for a loan is often a thing that we do. It seems like older people have money, they have a lot of expertise, and they have a lot of love. We certainly count on the seniors in our communities.

When I'm looking at the supplementary supply estimates here, I see that there is an increase in this ministry of \$16 million, a little over 16 and a half million. I'd like to talk with the minister, and if I could go back and forth, if that's amenable to the minister, I'd appreciate that. Is that okay?

10:10

The Chair: Please proceed.

Ms Sigurdson: The first question I have is actually on page 64, and it's number 1. Certainly, despite what the Finance minister said in his opening remarks that, you know, we planned poor fiscally, we were reckless, I see that there are some savings. There was actually \$672,000 that wasn't spent. There's just sort of a general explanation that this was "lower than budgeted expense in . . . programs." I would like to ask the minister what that means.

The Chair: The Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Ms Pon: Hello, Madam Speaker . . .

The Chair: My apologies. Sorry, hon. minister. That marks the end of the last 20-minute block for members of the opposition.

We will now go to the proceeding 20-minute block for private members of the government caucus. The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Well, Madam Chair, thank you so much for giving me this opportunity to speak. I hadn't originally planned on speaking, but listening to the debate from earlier here, I couldn't help but notice the opposition bring up the rural crime issue, which is something that immensely affects people all throughout Alberta. This is why under the UCP opposition we put together what was called the rural crime report. I would of course refer to page 55 of our supplementary supply book that we have here as it relates to the expenses that relate to crime in general.

Now, the opposition spoke at length on the crime issue as it relates, of course, to the supplementary supply. I'd love to talk about how the previous government refused to accept that rural crime was even a problem, let alone a crisis. I remember seeing the galleries filled with people. I remember talking to all of my colleagues. I can remember the expressions on the faces of the government members who were representing rural constituents, that crime was an issue in those communities. I remember how nobody on the government side went to the town halls. I remember the outright denial that rural crime was even an issue. I remember going to town halls myself, watching the pain in people's faces. I remember watching people cry because of the crisis that was going on. It was something that could not be ignored any longer, and it was to the point, Madam Chair, that they finally – finally – had to do something about it. It was almost like the fentanyl crisis where they denied that was a crisis until, finally, they had to do something about it.

Then they come up with this. Let's talk about it. Let's talk about the \$10 million and phantom 39 officers, which I tried to articulate was something that was – when the RCMP are at any given time 20 to 30 per cent short in the number of human beings that they have in their service, it was impossible for them to fill those 39 positions, so it was like a shell game that was being played.

Let's talk about the Crown prosecutors now. They set aside \$10 million, which I can see as it relates to Alberta Crown prosecutor

services. They have criminal and youth prosecutors. Well, I consulted with the Justice minister. They still haven't filled those positions. So money doesn't solve all of life's problems.

It had to do with management, and whether you like it or not, the previous government had bad management. That was shown in the last election. I look at the rural contingent of MLAs in this room, and whether you like it or not, I see them all on the UCP side. I think that really shows that their plan to combat rural crime was a complete and utter failure. That's why we have a Justice minister who is going to take a look at the rural crime report, who's going to analyze the supplementary numbers, and he's going to make sure that the money that is being put into rural crime and, in fact, justice as a whole is going to be the most effective use of that money for what is best for the people of Alberta.

Now, I want to talk a little bit, too, about the denial that the NDP had when it came to rural crime. We'll even relate it to, again, the prosecution at that time of Mr. Eddie Maurice down in Okotoks, right? Again, we had a gentleman who was just trying to protect his home, protect his family. He discharges a weapon under sections 34 and 35 of the Criminal Code. What do we get from the NDP? Silence. The only consistent pattern that I ever saw from the NDP when they were in government is that when there were protests that reached an absolute crisis point, that was the only time that they ever reacted. That had to do with rural crime, that had to do with the fentanyl crisis, and that to do with poor Eddie Maurice and his situation, who, to let you know, had never, ever to that point even received as much as a parking ticket.

Why did he do what he did? Because the police were not showing up to his home. He had called the police weeks prior to that, and the police didn't show up. So he did what any normal human being, especially in the middle of rural Alberta, would do. Because he had a lack of faith and trust in law enforcement at that given time under the leadership of that government, he defended himself, and he defended his child, who was sleeping in the middle of the night. He gets arrested. That's wrong. The NDP were silent. They were silent. They did not do anything. To sit there and dole out some money to some Crown prosecutors who were never hired – I confirmed that with the Justice minister – is not a solution to a problem.

Now, I tried in a nonpartisan factor to talk with that former Justice minister, but they didn't want to hear what I had to say. That's fine. I put it all in that rural crime report, I put it all on that platform, and I fully expect the Justice minister to execute it. I've known him a long time, and I have faith in him that he will do a good job.

I want to ask this government and somebody who was here, the Government House Leader: what was his version and what did he see under the leadership of the previous government? Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: The Minister of Environment and Parks.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, and I appreciate the hon. chief government whip's comments. In regard to supplementary supply the question I heard in there, Madam Chair, was in regard to the hon. Member for – I think the riding has changed; it's a little bit confusing now – Calgary-Mountain View, if I am correct, earlier in Committee of Supply speaking to and asking some questions to the Justice minister and to the government in regard to supplementary supply, specifically some money that is in there for officers and Crown prosecutors, as it relates to the announcements that were made during the now famous rural crime debates inside the Legislature. Whether or not that's important was the first question that, I think, the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View asked at that time that the hon. Member for Calgary-West is referring to but,

second, how that relates to the priorities of our government going forward.

10:20

I think, first of all, it's important to point out that, Madam Chair, as the hon. Finance minister has already said in this Assembly, we are working on supplementary supply. That is different than interim supply and certainly different than the budget process. When we go through the budget process, we will be able to talk a lot more about our priorities as a government and where we will fund things going forward, our vision for the province and the promises that we have made, whereas with supplementary supply it's more about, basically, this unique spot because of the transition that happened in government, really about this House having to do an administrative chore to be able to put through commitments that were made by the former government.

To answer the hon. Member for Calgary-West's question and the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View's question, the rural crime portion of this, the announcement for prosecutors and police officers, is important. Nobody has said inside or outside this Assembly, on the government side certainly, that rural crime is not. Our concerns with the former government's spending are not on every topic. The reality is that we have to fund important things like prosecutors and police officers, but we don't need to do boondoggles like we saw by the government with oil by rail in the dying days of their government.

It's rich – and I think that's the point of the Member for Calgary-West when we're speaking about supplementary supply and asking about those specific numbers – to try to imply that the government, who was then the opposition, does not care about the rural crime issue. I know that you, Madam Chair, care about it, and I know your constituents care about it. I certainly know that the hon. Justice minister cares about it and cares about the investment that we would make in that. In fact, I suspect he will find, as he looks through the rural crime report, an important job that I know he is already undertaking, and he hears from constituents like mine in Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, that we have not fixed that problem. It is a very real problem that impacts people. For the now opposition to act like they were champions of that issue when they were in government and then ask about it in interim supply specifically is quite shocking. I think that's the Member for Calgary-West's point.

I will tell you that on November 27, 2017, I have the wording of a motion that I moved in this Assembly. I know you were there for it, Madam Chair. It goes on to say: "Mr." – and I can't say my name, obviously, inside the Chamber – but then it goes on to say that Mr. hon. Leader of the Official Opposition requests leave to move:

Pursuant to Standing Order 30... [to adjourn] the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly... to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely the growing incidence of property-related crime and an accompanying escalation of violent crime in rural communities and the resulting fear for safety that is felt by the residents of such areas, which now constitute a state of emergency.

I moved that as Leader of the Official Opposition. It refers directly to the response that the hon. member brought up inside this supplementary supply, which she's indicated was a response to that motion. The reality is, though, that the now opposition, when in government, voted against that opposition with the galleries full. To say that they are the champions of rural crime and imply that somehow, when this side of the House points out with supplementary supply that the NDP, when they were in power, made some terrible financial mistakes then leads to the conclusion that all of a sudden the United Conservative Party and now

government does not care about rural crime is a ridiculous argument. That, Madam Chair, is the argument that was made by the hon. members during supplementary supply, not an argument that was introduced to this Assembly this morning by me. It was an argument that was introduced to this Assembly by the now NDP Official Opposition.

The reality is that the NDP showed over and over in this Assembly that they do not care about rural crime. We certainly do care about rural crime. I have all the utmost confidence in my friend the hon. the Justice minister to be able to tackle that on behalf of my constituents and other rural members of this Assembly's constituencies. That's one of the reasons why we have to continue the continuity of some of these programs. It's one of the reasons why we brought supplementary supply to this Assembly even though we disagree with some of the financial decisions that were made by the hon. members when they were in government. The reality is that if Albertans are looking for confidence, we will support these components of supplementary supply to help with hiring prosecutors and hiring police officers. I think that the results of the last election in rural Alberta show clearly – I don't even think that any of the hon. members of the opposition can make that argument with a straight face, that the results inside rural Alberta show that they have confidence in the NDP to be able to accomplish anything, quite frankly, for rural Alberta, let alone tackle one of the biggest issues that faces the communities that I represent and other members represent in this Assembly.

To the hon. Member for Calgary-West, to answer his question: I assure you that this government will continue to take rural crime seriously, as we did while we were in opposition. We recognize that it's a priority. To the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View and the opposition: I also assure her that we will continue to take this issue serious sly. We'll continue to hear from Albertans who are struggling with rural crime. We'll continue to work through our rural crime report to be able to implement real solutions to try to help our communities.

You will never see us stand in this House like the Official Opposition did when they were in government, with galleries full of hard-working rural people who were being victimized, and stand up like the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre, heckling away about this issue. I can assure you that, Madam Chair, unlike that, this government will continue to always stand for rural Alberta. We'll stand for the portions of supplementary supply that matter on that issue. They can be assured of that. The best part is that there's no longer an NDP government to continue to sit on this side of the House and work against hard-working rural Albertans who are being victimized by rural crime.

The Chair: Central Peace-Notley.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. It's interesting listening to the comments here talking about rural crime. I just want to take a few minutes and chat about the, you know, supplementary estimates 2018-2019. Obviously, this represents a lot of the promises and commitments the NDP made before they became unelected, I guess, would be the term. What we're doing here is that we're finishing up some the old business that they have brought forward.

Of course, it seemed like to start the day, we were listening to a lot of the NDP previous cabinet ministers get up. I guess they wanted pats on the back for their fiscal discipline and management over the last four years, but I'm afraid that Albertans don't feel the same way as they feel about how they managed the province's resources and finances the last four years.

Now, it came up already this morning about the crude-by-rail program that the previous government signed up for. I think that when we look at this crude-by-rail program and the cost to taxpayers and the cost that's being borne even though the previous government announced this in an election period – during the election period the previous government announces that they're going to do a \$3.7 billion lease of railcars, burdening the taxpayers with that sort of expense, which may be one of the largest single expenses ever in Alberta's history.

One thing, Madam Chair, we have to make clear is that we've stated our opinion on those contracts right from the beginning. In fact, I think the day after it was announced, we were already trying to get a hold of these railway companies to notify them that it would not be our intention to go ahead with those contracts.

I think it's also important to remember that this \$3.7 billion, almost \$4 billion, deal was to be done with borrowed money. It isn't like there was extra money sitting around that the government could spend; this was money that we were going to be paying interest on on top of this huge expenditure.

Now, what's interesting to see, too, is that I think it was the head of Canadian Pacific Railway who immediately after the announcement voiced his displeasure at the whole deal. He said that he didn't like it at all because the government had stepped in to work out this plan, and he didn't think that this was healthy. But he did say that this deal was just as good if not better than other deals. Of course, when he suggested that it might be even better than other deals, that doesn't represent a good deal for Alberta taxpayers.

We know that this government rushed into these deals in a desperation attempt to save themselves in the upcoming election. I could go on a little longer on that, but maybe I'll just turn a little bit of time over to the Finance minister or one of the other ministers to discuss that issue.

Thanks.

10:30

The Chair: The Minister of Environment and Parks.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Madam Chair. I believe there's only one minute in this block, so we may talk about this again in a brief moment.

I think the hon. member is correct. An interesting part of supplementary supply are the components of, I guess, \$317 million within supplementary supply that have directly to do with, you know, the NDP boondoggle, the largest expenditure probably in provincial history, their crude-by-rail strategy, that they brought in in the dying days of their administration as they headed into an election that they likely knew they were going to lose, which would be the only reason why they would attempt to rush that, in a desperate attempt, as the hon. member said, to try to save their government. We know that the results on April 16 spoke loud and clear that Albertans agreed that they disagreed with this former government's approach when they gave the United Conservative Party and the hon. Premier a historical mandate, a significant mandate to come and fix these scenarios. I think, Madam Chair, that this is a great example of what the Finance minister was talking about when he opened up supplementary supply, that there are components within supplementary supply that, quite frankly, the government has to hold their nose to be able to deal with.

The Chair: Hon. members, we will now move to the five-minute speaking portion of estimates. The hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much. We were just discussing here, of course, the crude-by-rail plan and the cost that that's incurring to

Albertans in supplementary supply estimates. Again, we've been clear from the start on our opinion of this deal, and I think Albertans were clear, too, during the election, when they had an opportunity to either endorse the government's plans that they had or to not endorse. I think there was a pretty clear message that was sent on election day that they did not endorse these plans that the government had.

Now, one thing we need to make clear is that our government is not in the business of competing with the private sector. Obviously, any time the government decides that they want to do that, that messes with the natural marketplace that is there. We know that a deal like this is a very risky deal for Alberta taxpayers' dollars.

Again, I just want to reiterate that this crude-by-rail deal that this government signed onto, that's costing hundreds of millions of dollars of taxpayers' money, is just not acceptable. Of course, that's one of the reasons we're here today discussing these issues that we're talking about right now.

Thank you.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Madam Chair, I move – and I suspect that the Assembly will agree – to rise and report from Committee of Supply.

The Chair: To report progress, hon. minister?

Mr. Jason Nixon: I apologize, Madam Chair. Yes, I move to rise and report progress from Committee of Supply.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Milliken: Madam Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration the supplementary supply estimates for the fiscal year 2018-2019, reports progress thereon, and requests leave to sit again.

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

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed, please say no. Carried.

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

The Chair: I would like to call the committee to order.

Bill 3 Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act

The Chair: We are on amendment A2. Are there any comments, questions to be offered with respect to this amendment?

Hon. Members: Question.

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

The Chair: On Bill 3 are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to the bill? The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair. I am pleased to have at least one opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 3 here in committee because I think it's important to get our views on

the record with respect to the strategy which is incorporated within this bill. The reason for that is because this bill, I guess, for all intents and purposes represents the primary foundation to the new government's so-called job-creation strategy. It is a gift that, unfortunately, will undoubtedly hamper and, in fact, dog the course of Alberta's fiscal health over the course of the next four years, at least, as well as serve to significantly undermine quality of life, significantly undermine the quality of important services received by Albertans, and generally grow inequality quite profoundly over the course of the next four years.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

While it is a bill that they certainly ran on and was within their mandate, it is a bill that we think is profoundly ill advised and one that is going to create a huge number of difficulties for the people of Alberta. It's important to walk through those to some degree as we are in the midst of debating it. I suspect that the misadventure associated with this bill and the negative consequences that flow from this bill will be discussed repeatedly over the course of the next four years, but let it not be said that we didn't warn the members opposite – I know they find these things very inconvenient – about the facts and the history and the reality around this misguided, reheated version of 1980s economics.

In short, what's going on here, of course, is that the government has bought into this notion that if we hand over big tax cuts to new investors, somehow we will see manna from heaven fall to the ground, and jobs and economic activity will flow accordingly. I think the argument here is twofold: one, we'll attract new business or new investment here, and two, those companies which already exist in the province of Alberta will take all that new money that they get from this \$4.5 billion tax gift and reinvest it in jobs.

10:40

Now, to be clear, I think one of the first things that we need to lay out here is that when we use the \$4.5 billion tax gift, we are just talking about four years. We're talking about what it will cost Albertans over the next four years. Clearly, in terms of lost revenue that number will continue indefinitely. As long as this ridiculous tax giveaway, this big handout to UCP friends and insiders, is in place, it will cost Albertans. For instance, when you compare it to our made-in-Alberta economic diversification and job-creation plan, where we were looking at and talking about investing \$7 billion, we were looking at doing that over an 11- or 12-year period. Over that same period of time this piece of misguided public policy will cost almost twice what our plan would have cost, and it will create not even close to the number of jobs or economic growth that our plan was predicted to generate. Anyway, we'll get into that in a moment.

Let's just sort of talk generally about this idea that if you cut corporate taxes, suddenly everybody does well. Now, the members opposite like to speak of the fact that Jack Mintz, from their favourite, rather right-leaning public policy group, at the University of Calgary, thinks that this is a good idea. Now, I'll also note that Jack Mintz advocates pretty much daily for a sales tax, so I'm not sure if there's another shoe that's going to drop at some point from these guys. Certainly, people need to understand that I don't think Jack Mintz's economic advice is intended to be cherry-picked. I think it's intended to go hand in hand. If you give a \$4.5 billion tax break to Alberta's large, profitable corporations, then of course I think he intends that the other shoe is that you get to a sales tax. But I'll leave it to the folks across the aisle to have conversations with their platform adviser, Mr. Mintz, at other times.

Nonetheless, although Mr. Mintz is a respected member of the academic community, from the University of Calgary, I am quite

prepared, first of all, to say in this House that it is a fact that for every two economists that you get into a room, you are likely to get four opinions. So the fact that they're able to track down one economist saying that this is a good idea proves nothing. Even with that, I will say: I will see you your Jack Mintz and I will raise you a Nobel prize winning economist from the U.S. who, just in the last few months, published significant commentary on the fruitlessness of these short-term plans to generate economic growth through corporate tax cuts. There I'm referring to Joseph Stiglitz, but I'll get into that in a moment.

Let's just talk for a moment about some other examples of where these kinds of strategies have been used in the past. Of course, it's no surprise that we can go back to iconic right-wing politicians and find that they have typically tried this. Let's talk for a moment about the U.S., where in 2003 former President Bush decided that it would be a great idea to engage in a series of very aggressive corporate tax cuts. Now, did it work? The answer is no. Where do I find that answer? Do I find it on some dark website run by a bunch of communists? No. I find that in the public commentary offered up by the economic advisers who sat on former President Bush's Council of Economic Advisers.

The first one is Andrew Samwick, who was the chief economist on President Bush's Council of Economic Advisers. He said that if you look at the growth between 2001 and 2007, the period over which the corporate tax cuts were put in place, the growth rate was mediocre. "There is . . . no first-order evidence in the aggregate data that these tax cuts generated growth" at all. That's the first thing that we need to know. What we did determine, though, was that the top 1 per cent of U.S. income earners enjoyed an average tax cut of \$50,000 a year or \$570,000 over an eight-year period. That was the top 1 per cent of Americans who enjoyed the benefit of that, but it did not actually generate any kind of growth.

Meanwhile what we did get during that period of time was an increase in the debt of the United States to the tune of \$5.6 trillion. Economists identified that there was a \$5.6 trillion bump in the debt of the United States entirely attributable to the tax cuts brought in by President George Bush, so mediocre growth entirely limited to the top 1 per cent of the population and paid for by a \$5.6 trillion bump in debt. Ultimately, President Bush went on to say: "Oh, don't worry about it. Don't worry. This tax cut will ultimately pay for itself." That's what he said. Well, interestingly, Bruce Bartlett, who was a domestic policy adviser under President Bush, said, "to claim, as Bush . . . did, that his [tax cuts] . . . paid for themselves is the grossest of exaggerations." So that's how it went there.

Now, more recently we have the evidence that we saw from Kansas in – I believe it began in about 2012-2013. Nope; 2011. Sorry. We'll get it one more time. In 2012 they passed the largest tax cut in state history, meant to create jobs and stimulate growth. What ultimately happened, however, was that the Kansas economic growth rate fell way behind the overall growth rate of the rest of the U.S. as well as neighbouring states, so in fact economic growth did not arise as a result of this corporate tax cut. What it did do, however, was blow up their deficit and debt to a very large extent such that they ultimately saw repeated credit downgrades because they lost revenue.

They had credit downgrades, the cost of borrowing grew, the economy stagnated, and – oh, yes – because of the fiscal crisis that they created for themselves, they then had to cut funding from public services, did so in the education sector, and, as I mentioned yesterday, ultimately the courts in Kansas concluded that the Kansas government had breached the constitution of the state because the quality of education that they were providing was so low as to have breached the constitutional rights of the citizens of Kansas to receive an education. Therefore, they were in breach of

their own constitution as a result of the forced cuts brought on by the misguided effort to engage in this experiment of eliminating corporate taxes in order to generate economic activity. It was a profound failure. The jury is now back in on that from all sides – all sides – and it failed. That's what happened there.

10:50

Then, again, we also have the whole example of what happened in Canada. We talked about that a little bit already. We have seen that when the government of Canada made a series of tax cuts beginning in 2011-2012, somewhere around there, they decided to forgo about \$13 billion in the course of one year. What ultimately happened was that we saw that businesses accumulated the money, corporations accumulated the money, and they essentially rendered it dead money. That was a phrase that was used by former Bank of Canada governor Mark Carney. He said that basically it negatively impacted growth. It just sat in corporate coffers, and it did not generate growth. In fact, it took massive amounts of money out of the economy. Corporate bottom lines got much rosier, but the level of investment did not go up, and it served to act as a damper on economic growth. That's what we saw here as a result of the Harper government's attempt to generate economic growth through these corporate tax cuts.

Interestingly, we also see the whole matter of corporate tax cuts being gamed out in the U.S., and we look at what has happened as a result of President Trump's massive corporate tax cuts. Well, Warren Buffett, one of the wealthiest entrepreneurs and investors in the world, basically sums it up this way. He says, "the tsunami of wealth didn't trickle down. It surged upward," upwards to the people who need it the least. What we saw from that tax cut, from 35 per cent to 21 per cent, was that 84 per cent of businesses have not changed their investment plans one bit, while the U.S. deficit is already up almost a trillion dollars per year. We also have the example of where AT&T specifically promised the President that if they got their great big corporate tax cut, they would create 7,000 new jobs. Instead, what they did was cut 23,000 jobs. That's what we saw there.

Now, interestingly, there has been some analysis of what has happened in other jurisdictions where we have seen these kinds of corporate tax cuts. It's interesting. What we saw: a survey by Just Capital, which tracked 1,000 firms, found that 57 per cent of the benefits of the tax cuts were reserved to be given back to shareholders; 27 per cent went towards investment. That 27 per cent: that's what you guys are banking on at this point – 27 per cent – less than a third of this \$4.5 billion tax cut. It's that 27 per cent that you're hoping will go towards investing in new businesses, new economic activity, creating growth, and creating jobs: less than a third of that \$4.5 billion tax cut. Experience and evidence and research – I know that research is an irritating thing for you folks, but nonetheless – show past examples of where, basically, these kinds of huge tax cuts result in less than a third of the cost of that tax cut going towards that much-sought-after goal of new investment and job creation.

Typically, economists look at actions of government and the impact on jobs and they talk about a multiplier effect. So, if you spend a dollar in tax cuts, theoretically you'll get a multiplier of, you know, 1.2 or 1.3 or whatever. If you spend a dollar in child care, interestingly, you'll get a multiplier of about 7. There are multipliers all the way through. This particular study suggests that what you've actually got here with these particular tax cuts is a divider. It's not actually a multiplier. It's a divider. You give \$10 billion in tax cuts, and you generate \$2.7 billion of economic activity. That's not actually a multiplier effect. You're now

dividing. You are reducing the value of your money, and you are giving 57 per cent of it, almost 60 per cent, to shareholders.

Well, that's great. Maybe those shareholders will take their money and invest in the Alberta economy, but then again why would they? Because the vast majority of those shareholders do not live in Alberta. So we're not actually ensuring that the benefit, the primary benefit, of this tax cut goes to Albertans. Nope. We are making sure that the primary benefit of this tax cut goes to shareholders, which typically in most multinational companies have nothing to do with the province of Alberta. They couldn't give a hoot about how many jobs are created in the province of Alberta.

The Deputy Chair: Are there any other members wishing to – I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora rising to speak.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much. I know that we're in committee, so members can speak multiple times. I just wanted to make sure that the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona had an opportunity to conclude her remarks because I think that they are telling of where our party stands on this and where, I imagine, many Albertans do. I wanted to make sure she had an opportunity to continue, Mr. Speaker – Mr. Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you very much. I appreciate the intervening Speaker aspect of that as well.

Please, the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much. I hope to not take too much more time, but I do want to finish walking through some of the evidence on what we're dealing with here. Fifty-seven per cent of the benefits of tax cuts went to shareholders, in our case the vast majority of which do not reside in the province of Alberta. Twenty-seven per cent went towards investment, and 6 per cent went to higher wages. The whole idea that if we give massive tax cuts to corporations, somehow Albertans will generate or enjoy the benefit of higher wages is utterly ridiculous, Mr. Chair. Again, it's that annoying little habit we have of doing the research and getting evidence-based policy-making and attempting to inject evidence-based policy-making into what we do here in this building. Anyways, what we see, then, is that it didn't actually work.

In all, then, we have examples in Canada. We have multiple examples, three separate examples, from the U.S.: one under President George Bush in the early 2000s; another in the state of Kansas, where they really eliminated all of the confounding factors and decided that this would be the great experiment to prove once and for all that wealth does trickle down and giving big handouts to right-wing friends and insiders is in fact the way to go. Unfortunately, the problem was that it demonstrated absolutely, unequivocally that that is in error and that is not the way to build an economy. Then we have the most recent examples from the U.S. where, again, we saw a short-term bump that immediately disappeared, and we now have evidence that shows that the vast majority of that tax cut does not get reinvested into the economy. It gets given away to shareholders, many of whom are not attached or have no loyalty to the jurisdiction in question. At the same time it blows massive – massive – holes in the fiscal situation of the jurisdiction in question.

I will say that, I mean, it really is quite ridiculous when I hear the members opposite do the so predictable and, quite frankly, tired talking points of: "Oh, my goodness. We inherited such a mess. Yada, yada, yada." I'll tell you something. Forty-four years of government, and the minute that the price of oil dropped, we had a deficit of \$9 billion. That's what we inherited. We had to make a choice, and that is what we did. In fact, we had met or exceeded our deficit reduction targets from our second year onward, and we had

done that while investing in jobs, while supporting communities, while not letting the problem get worse and not piling on. That is why, for instance, our economy continued to grow and we had inward migration while the opposite was going on in Saskatchewan.

11:00

We made a choice to support Albertans because it wasn't Albertans that made the decision to fail to plan for the inevitable challenges with our oil and gas sector for 44 years. It is a really tired talking point to have the members opposite try and argue these kinds of things. Again, I know that facts are things that they're very comfortable to blow right by. You know, I guess I'm a traditionalist that way. I think that truth and facts and reality is an environment within which we should all continue to try to operate in the best interests of the people we've been elected to serve.

The concern that we have, then, is that – and what we've seen from other economists all along is that, you know, government can do a number of different things to try to generate economic activity. As I said yesterday in my response to the Speech from the Throne, I think we all agree that we are all seized with this desire to grow the economy and to create jobs. There's nobody in this room that doesn't believe that needs to be done. That's what I think, anyway. I think the majority of folks on the other side do believe that what they're doing is the right thing. I think some actually know that it's not but don't care because they have friends who just told them that it'd be really nice for them if they could pay less in corporate taxes, and they decided: hey, let's go; let's have at 'er. But I do suspect that many folks over there just haven't had the time to do the research to understand that this experiment has been tried repeatedly and doesn't work. So I'll give you the benefit of the doubt.

The plan that we had in place to build off the work that the first PC Premier had commenced in the '70s and very early '80s to diversify the economic activity that we can extract out of the raw resources that we, that all Albertans, own: that was our plan. We had been very, very strategic about it and had taken some time to get moving because we needed to do our homework and we needed to make sure that it would work. But it did pay off. The major investments that we made are paying off, are creating jobs, are generating more economic activity. I know the members opposite understand that because at one point I saw a whole schwaack of them out there doing photo ops with the recipient of phase 1 of our PDP program as though somehow they had anything to do with it.

Anyway, our made-in-Alberta plan involves moving forward on that basis and doing more of that kind of work to very strategically support the kinds of major developments that need to occur in our oil and gas sector as far as initiating new economic activity within that sector. Rather than just sort of, you know, pulling it out of the ground and shipping it to somebody else as fast as we can, how can we be more strategic with it? How can we get more value from that product here in the province of Alberta? That plan was designed to ultimately cost Alberta taxpayers in the range of about \$7 billion between now and 2030, and at the end of that time it would have generated \$70 billion in incremental economic activity.

And those were conservative estimates because they didn't take into account the spinoffs that would happen. For instance, if you have a critical mass of a certain type of plastic being produced here in Alberta, you could ultimately attract manufacturing, because that plastic feedstock is so inexpensive here because we have so much of it being created here. Of course, you know, the PDP program: we essentially created the first or second place in Canada where that plastic feedstock was being manufactured and, in fact, I think, only the third or fourth on the continent, so we were well placed to actually attract additional business that would engage in

manufacturing as a result of that feedstock that we were producing here in Alberta. When I talk about that \$70 billion in incremental economic investment and activity, it didn't include the potential additional investment that would come from providing some of the basic components of additional manufacturing that might draw people to invest in Alberta rather than somewhere else.

But it's that kind of strategic investment that the people of Alberta need, not this blind, you know, "we're just going to throw money off the back of a truck at big corporations," most of which have no allegiance or roots in the province of Alberta, who are not being held to account for one cent of that money that they are receiving. They can do whatever they want with it. That's great, and we're going to cross our fingers and hope that it goes into new investment. Yet we have the example that we have in the U.S., where, in fact, we're seeing less than a third of it being used for those purposes, about 27 per cent. Really, a very, very sorry economic strategy, I would say for sure, and a poor, poor replacement for what we had queued up and ready to go.

In terms of economic activity, though, the last thing that I will say on this matter is that I must say: you know, this was our made-in-Alberta diversification plan.

I will say that one other made-in-Alberta plan that we had, contrary to all the rhetoric that we saw coming from the other side, was a made-in-Alberta pipeline, and it was our crude-by-rail deal, designed to move more product so that we could reduce curtailment as fast as possible and allow for more economic activity to begin again as we pulled back on curtailment. Every day that we fail to grow our takeaway capacity now past July 1 is an extra day and an extra barrel or an extra 10,000 or an extra 50,000, whatever, barrels of curtailment. That curtailment is slowing down economic growth in the oil and gas sector.

I sure hope that folks over there have a plan to be moving oil and gas by July 1 because every day past that is an extra day of curtailment thanks to the UCP government and ideological reasons, where they sort of shot and then decided to aim. That kind of approach to policy-making is very damaging to the people of Alberta, and it will be damaging to job creation, and it is something that they will wear. Best of luck to you, because I, too, care very much about people who are waiting for the jobs to be recreated once we can pull back on curtailment.

But I also believe that this government is fully engaged in the act of extending curtailment right now. Yes, curtailment is also being driven by the line 3 delays, but that is why fast, efficient, open, accessible takeaway capacity in our short-term, made-in-Alberta pipeline is so, so important. Every day that it gets delayed by the dithering, driven by ideological . . .

Ms Hoffman: Fantasy.

11:10

Ms Notley: . . . fantasy and misinformation, is a day that Albertans are hurt. You can use all the language you want to describe it, but that's what it is.

Anyway, that is most of what we have to say right now on the matter of the tax cut. We are very, very concerned.

The last thing I was going to say: 27 per cent of the tax cut in the U.S. went to investment and new jobs; 6 per cent went to higher wages for workers. Meanwhile working people, regular people, who can't afford to buy their own health care, who can't afford to buy their private education in this new world of educational choice, who can't afford to hire a nanny to take care of their kids, who can't afford to hire a private caregiver to take care of their parents and their grandparents and their uncles and their aunts as they age, will pay for this tax giveaway to wealthy corporations in the form of less

education funding, less health care funding, less support for our seniors, less support for our kids. That is the cost. It's not just that working people are only getting 6 per cent of this ridiculous \$4.5 billion gift to profitable corporations; it's that they have to pay for it as well, and they will pay for it through the things that matter most to them, that they need and rely on.

This is why this is a profoundly misinformed, bad plan, with no substantial evidence of success anywhere. I know members here have repeatedly asked the minister, over and over, whether he can provide evidence of any place where this ridiculousness has worked. Thus far he has been unable to do so. Anyway, we certainly have provided evidence where it hasn't worked, and we will work hard to stand up for the rights of all Albertans as these folks try to get them to pay for their big tax gift for their wealthy friends and insiders.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

The Deputy Chair: I see the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board standing to speak.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just do need to respond to a few comments that the hon. Leader of the Opposition has made. Firstly – I've made this point before, and I'll make it again – every economist and, I think, more importantly, every business owner, whether it's a large corporation or a small-business owner, will agree that as the business environment is improved, as the competitiveness of a business environment is improved, that environment attracts investment, that environment becomes more attractive for investment. The tax regime, the tax component of the business environment, is a key part of the overall environment. So to suggest that there's no correlation or an extremely weak correlation between corporate tax policy and investment, I believe, is nonsensical.

I find it, quite frankly, Mr. Chair, just a little rich to be lectured repeatedly on this topic by a government who presided over the largest flight of capital out of this province in recent history. We recognize that there are a number of factors at play, and I'll reiterate the fact that during a time of difficult economic circumstances, admittedly difficult economic circumstances, with the decline in global energy prices particularly, the previous government implemented the largest tax increase in this province's history, without consulting Albertans, by implementing the carbon tax. They then went on to increase corporate taxes by 20 per cent, at the same time adding regulatory burden on Albertan businesses. Those effects, policy effects, on top of difficult energy prices, again, precipitated the largest exodus of capital and, with that, massive job loss in this province. In fact, we've inherited a province with the highest unemployment rate outside of Atlantic Canada. For a province with this kind of wealth and resources we find that unacceptable.

So we do have a bold plan. A bold plan is required in order to attract investment, create jobs, and ensure that future governments and future citizens have enough wealth to continue to receive a high-quality education, to receive high-quality health care and other services that Albertans expect. Our plan is bold. It's multifaceted. It does include a corporate tax reduction, which will bring this province to the lowest corporate tax rate in the nation and to one of the most competitive jurisdictions within North America. It also includes the repeal of the carbon tax.

It also includes modernizing our regulatory system so that our businesses don't have to compete experiencing the extra regulatory burden that is upon them day by day by day, that incremental burden that makes doing business so problematic and so costly in this province. For that, of course, we are implementing a very

specific effort through the Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction, an effort that will involve seeking industry's advice, seeking the advice of everyday Albertans, and working with government departments to, again, reform our regulatory system and modernize it to ensure that it's the most competitive.

We recognize that there are ongoing challenges with market access for our energy products. I certainly agree with the hon. Leader of the Opposition that that needs to be a fulsome effort and that that's a critical effort for this government. We have a Premier who's on that job every day, seeking to do all that he can to ensure that Alberta and, in fact, the nation can develop the market access that we need to maintain the standard of living in this province and in this country.

I want to talk a wee bit about diversification again. The hon. Leader of the Opposition alluded to their diversification efforts when they were in government. Creating the most competitive, broad-based business environment, in my opinion, is the best way to encourage economic diversification within this province and, in fact, within any jurisdiction. That broad-based, competitive business environment doesn't pick winners and losers.

It, in fact, then creates a very competitive location to create, to innovate, to consider business opportunities that governments never could, and to engage the thoughtful foresight of our young entrepreneurs in this province. We have an extremely young, very educated, I think, forward-looking group of citizens in this province, and I have every confidence that as we create the most competitive business environment, those individuals will rise up with fresh ideas, that we could never contemplate ahead of time or predict, and will work to diversify this economy in ways that are sustainable. I think that's incredibly important not only to this generation but to future generations, Mr. Chair.

I'm going to again make reference to the document that an opposition member tabled a couple of days ago, and that relates to the 2009 federal budget that was brought down by previous Prime Minister Harper. This document states, and I'll read it again:

Corporate income tax measures have limited impact on aggregate demand over the periods displayed in the table . . .

And that was a very short period displayed in the table.

. . . but have among the highest multiplier effects in the long run.

Mr. Chair, we're interested in the long run for this province. We have a great responsibility to ensure that this province's economy, job creation, and long-term government revenues are sustainable in the long run.

And I continue to quote:

This is because they increase the incentive to invest and accumulate capital, which leads to a higher permanent capacity to produce goods and services.

That is ultimately our goal as we implement this job-creation tax cut as part of a broader strategy to create the most competitive business environment not only within Canada but one of the most competitive business environments within all of North America.

Job creation is the number one priority for this government, and this job-creation corporate tax cut is a key piece within that strategy.

11:20

The Deputy Chair: Any other members? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to respond again quickly to the Minister of Finance and his comment about the tabling that I did table a few days ago in regard to the corporate tax cut from 2009 under the Prime Minister at the time, Mr. Harper. I recognize that he does keep using it and indicating that, you know, in the long term the table indicates that corporate taxation does support the stimulation of growth.

I guess my question around that is that it also indicates that when you invest in infrastructure and when you invest in low-income families, the return on investment is also higher. So in the first few years of that budget – and what we are talking about today is the fact that for infrastructure it was \$1.60 for every dollar invested and for low-income families it was \$1.70 for every dollar invested. Again, this goes back to the conversation that we're having around the interim financial gains that we need to be looking at.

In the platform that the UCP has put forward, they do acknowledge that it's two years out before this tax cut does generate any type of economic growth for the province. If the UCP is saying that, you know, it's going to be two years before we see any type of return for economic investment due to corporate taxation, then in those two years why would you not invest in infrastructure and see that for every dollar you invest, you get \$1.60 back? Why would you not, then, also invest in low-income families, where for every dollar that you invest, you get \$1.70 back? You still have the potential to do that over the next two years.

What I'm seeing us discuss is not looking at those two options. We're not looking at that in the next two years, even though your corporate tax will put a \$4.5 billion hole in your revenue, any type of investment in infrastructure or in low-income families will give you the return and the economic growth that you're discussing. I mean, we can look at that tabling that I provided in two different ways. I know that the UCP is using it as, well, long-term gain, that corporate taxation cuts over the long term could potentially stimulate growth. However, the arguments and the economists will say that that's not necessarily the case, depending on which economists you discuss, which ones you're looking at.

Again, I think that's a dispute of the facts in the sense that the UCP have their economists that say one thing, and there are other economists that say another thing. There's evidence, specifically in Ontario, that has demonstrated that with the same bill, they actually haven't seen the economic growth. In fact, Ontario's economy has slowed, and their return on investment is actually not there. So if we're going to look at the tabling, and we're going to say, "Well, on one side, in the long term corporate taxation will do that," then over the next two years will the Finance minister agree that for every dollar in his budget that he invests in low-income families and infrastructure, he can get \$1.60 to \$1.70 in return on that dollar? There's two sides to every coin.

I would encourage, I guess, then, that the Finance minister consider while we're having this discussion that over the next two years when you acknowledge and your platform acknowledges that there will be no economic benefit to this taxation cut, you also acknowledge that you need to, then, invest in families and social programming to get that return. As well, you also need to be investing in infrastructure to be able to get a return on the investment. You can still drive the economy over the next two years by investing in infrastructure and low-income families, with \$1.60 to \$1.70 for every dollar, while you acknowledge that your corporate tax will not generate any type of financial gain.

The Deputy Chair: I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung standing.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I stand today to speak to Bill 3, and I'm happy to do so. I know that some commentators have called this piece of legislation a centerpiece of the government's economic platform. They've called it the big bet. They've said in commentary that they expect the government is hoping that this bet will pay off.

Well, I'll tell you what, Mr. Chair and members of the House. I've been to the races a few times. I know my grandparents loved going to Northlands, particularly on Thursday afternoons. They had

Thursday afternoons off. They were the postmasters in Thorhild, and that was the afternoon they took off. They would come into Edmonton and quite often grab a couple of grandkids, myself included, and back then we could actually be the runners. I made plenty of \$2 bets on behalf of my grandparents at the window of the old Northlands, which had the wooden seats. The outside was exposed to the elements, and if it rained, it rained.

I know that my grandmother was a bit of a sucker for the horse with the least chance of winning. She would look at the odds and look at the horses as they paraded by. Quite often she'd bet on the underdog, my grandmother – she had a heart of gold – and maybe that's because of the one-eyed pony that she rode into Northlands and got a second prize for years earlier, that's why her heart led her to bet on the underdog.

But you know what? The underdog is not necessarily the horse that you should be betting on. I know there are a number of songs that relate to horse betting, but I'll tell you what. There's one song – I won't sing it because I've sung in caucus before, and it really didn't get a lot of accolades – and the lyrics go: I bet my money on a bobtail nag; somebody bet on the gray; I went down there with my hat caved in; I came home with a pocket full of tin; doo-dah, doo-dah; oh da-doo-dah-day.

Well, I'll tell you what. Betting on a nag is what this government is doing. It's a big bet that they're making on behalf of Albertans, and the treasury is betting on a nag, a nag of a government policy. They really are doing a disservice to Albertans in making this bet. It's not a throwaway \$2 bet on a Sunday afternoon, a day at the races. This is an all-in bet, bet the farm, ideological jump off a cliff which will throw 4 and a half billion dollars into a corporate black hole.

Mr. Chair, I fail to understand why this government continues to hang its hat and bet all-in on this nag of a government policy when they know that the odds are against them. Historically, this policy has been discredited. This nag is called supply side, and that's the horse that they intend to bet on. They repeatedly saddle her up, knowing that she's going to come in last, and it's going to be Albertans who suffer. They're the ones whose capital is going to be invested into a corporate tax giveaway, which has been shown repeatedly not to have the results that the government hopes to have.

I know that our Leader of the Official Opposition went into great detail to demonstrate the faulty logic and the lack of wisdom in saddling up this pony once again and riding supply-side economics to dead last in the race. Mr. Chair, this nag is a horse that the government is intent on riding until the last race is run. It's a bet that they're sure to lose no matter how many times they decide to run the race.

So, Mr. Chair, I won't go into great detail about it. I know that our members on this side of the House have talked quite a bit about jurisdictional failures of this supply-side economic policy, something that also is called Reaganomics. We believe, simply, as I've stated in this House before, that it's a faulty decision on the part of the government to rely on failed supply-side economics, which don't do anything to help the population they're purported to serve and don't create the jobs that governments who ride that horse, who adopt that policy, purport that it will.

11:30

We oppose any plan that will call for massive tax cuts for corporations that will result in much higher deficits than we already face, that are systemic to this type of supply-side economics. It's really, as I mentioned before, all about an ideological jump off a cliff with no real expectation of a different result than supply-side economics have produced in years past.

I know that the Republicans after four years of failure in 2017 in the United States in a dominated state House of Representatives and state's Senate reversed the cuts. The government vetoed the bill, and a two-thirds majority in both Chambers overruled the veto, and their experiment came to an end. So supply-side economics has been discredited repeatedly.

If you really want to stimulate an economy, if you want to create jobs, putting money in the hands of people who spend it in that local economy is historically something that is a very proven, tried and tested, result-oriented policy, and that's what we did in our role as government previously, yet this government seems to think that the mandate they've been given will somehow reinvigorate supply-side economics to give them a different result than has been achieved by other jurisdictions, where it's failed so miserably in the past.

We do have a great debate going on here. It's actually unfortunate that we have to be sort of rehashing this old debate here in 2019 in the Alberta Legislature, when we know that it's an unnecessary debate to be having. We know that the real results that will improve the employment situation in Alberta and stimulate the economy will be as a result of demand-side policies, which put the money in the pockets of people who spend it, whether that be through helping those who are least able to afford it, whether it's through increased social programs, like making sure that AISH recipients have closer to a living wage or living amounts that they have as they were granted when we were government, increasing their monthly amount and tying it to the cost-of-living index. Those are things that will encourage people to spend the money here locally. You know, 70 per cent of your economy is actually consumer spending. You put money in the hands of consumers; they spend it here locally, and that drives the economic escalators to a point where you actually create employment locally.

I hearken back to the days at Northlands when I was running \$2 bets for my beloved grandmother, who consistently bet on the nag. She didn't win a lot. She seemed to enjoy herself at the races. The only thing I remember her ever winning was a toaster, and that baby is all you get from betting on the nag. The bobtail nag usually comes in last.

This, unfortunately, is going to be the result, once again, with this government riding the supply-side horse. We'll end up, as I mentioned, dropping off a 4 and a half billion dollar economic cliff. It's an all-in bet, bet the farm, ideological jump off a cliff that will throw 4 and a half billion dollars into a corporate black hole, totally avoidable, unnecessary consequence that Albertans don't need to suffer, but this government is hell bent and determined to flog the supply-side horse until it's, in their view, truly dead.

We believe that nag is dead already and that they should leave that horse in the barn and try something that really works, and that is to put money in the pockets of people who spend it and truly stimulate the economy at the local level rather than parking it into corporate cash bins that simply allow them to pay out regular dividends. As Mark Carney, former Bank of Canada governor said, it becomes dead money and useless to the economy.

I guess, you know, since the government did win the election, we're going to see the big bet made, and the collateral damage will be the Alberta working force and the province's treasury in general. I hate to be the one later on who says, "I told you so," because there's going to be a terrific amount of damage to follow through on this experiment that, once again, the Conservative government is leading us into. The big bet on the bobtail nag, Mr. Chair, is going to hurt us all. I'm afraid to say that over the next two to four years we're going to see it, and we'll be counting on Albertans to

recognize this and react accordingly come the next election, when they realize that this failed experiment has cost them dearly.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just have to respond to the member opposite's comments. I think, on behalf of employers, on behalf of businesspeople across this province, I take offence to really being referred to as the nags in the race. Quite frankly, this province has a rich history of entrepreneurs stepping up, investing in this province, creating jobs and opportunity, and they are anything but nags. To be lectured by the previous government on suggesting that we continue down the path that we were on, that the previous government put us on, I would suggest is a downward spiral that Albertans simply cannot tolerate. In fact, I think if we take a look at the results of the last election, one can conclude that it was clear that Albertans did not tolerate the path that the previous government put us on.

I have every confidence that employers, that businesses, that corporations will respond to the most competitive business environment that we could provide and invest in this province, create opportunities, create jobs for all of Albertans.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

I'd also like to respond to the Member for Edmonton-Manning with the questions around infrastructure projects. I will say this: this government recognizes the importance of infrastructure projects, and we place particularly high importance on those projects that will, again, improve our competitiveness, projects that will lead to more economic development and growth. We will be considering those projects very carefully, recognizing that it is a responsibility of government to ensure that we have capacity in this province, and we recognize some of the economic benefit in the short term as well in building those kinds of projects, but most importantly, the economic benefit in the long term is that we create capacity for future investment and job creation.

We will continue to support the most vulnerable around us, the most vulnerable in this province. We commit to that as a government. We did during the election period. We continue to do that as the government.

I'll say this: to simply spend money we don't have to create the mirage of true economic activity using hard-earned taxpayers' dollars is a downward spiral that we cannot continue on here. As a government, we have to live within our means, and we have to, again, ensure that we create the most competitive business environment and let the private sector invest in this province, create opportunities for hard-working Albertans and create jobs for Albertans in the future.

You know, there's a lot of talk, again, negative talk around profitability that I hear from members opposite. I believe that's very inaccurate. They talk about profits in an inaccurate way. As we create the most competitive business environment in this province, we will see corporations reinvest profits back into this province to create future and additional economic activity. That's the way it works. That's the way folks that are in business think. They look to reinvest profits where it will create and generate a fair return, and I'm confident that entrepreneurs within this province, that corporations and businesspeople within this province will reinvest profits to expand and enlarge this economy.

11:40

In fact, if we look at the history of this province, we have a great history of being the economic engine of the country. We have a great history and responsibility, in my opinion, of being the economic engine in this country, and we did that by creating a competitive business environment that attracted investment, that attracted creative thinkers, that attracted risk takers to invest, to create jobs, to create opportunity, to create wealth not only for the people of this province but for the people of this nation, and we must continue to ensure that we provide that environment for Albertans.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm enjoying this back and forth that we have going on right now. I just want to chat a little bit about, again, some of the comments that the Minister of Finance is making.

We look at consumer spending and we look at the fact that we know that when there's a recession and things are slowing down, so does consumer spending. People are not spending money. They're not purchasing. There's no purchasing power that stimulates and helps drive the economy. Part of that is that people go into saving mode. They want to make sure that they have the money to pay for their basic needs, their mortgages, their child care, all of those things that we know good-paying jobs pay for. Now, because of that, when you're not investing in people and you're not investing in the infrastructure that employs those people to build the infrastructure, it also slows down the economy.

We can talk about business – and hiring people and driving the economy is important – but when we recognize, again, that the proposal of a corporate tax cut is not going to benefit the economy for two years, we still need people working in areas like infrastructure. We still need to be looking at investments in low- to middle-income families so that they have the money to have the purchasing power that we need to continue to be able to drive the economy. It's pretty basic. If people aren't spending money, the economy slows down. When people start spending money, the economy thrives. People need to be able to be employed such as investing in infrastructure. I mean, it's a basic economic fact: when you build things like schools and hospitals and roads and bridges and highways, people work, and when they're working, they spend. When they're not working, they don't spend.

When you are putting your eggs in one basket around corporate tax cuts, saying, "Well, at some point these corporations are going to start spending again, and they're going to start expanding their business, and they're going to start hiring," but we know that that's not going to be for, like, two to three years down the road, who is driving your economy in the interim? The people are, and the only way that the people are is if you're employing them through the building of infrastructure, which is why, when we were government, we built so much, because people got to work. People were building hospitals. People were building bridges. People were building schools. All of those tradespeople that were getting laid off because the price of oil crashed and the economy slowed down, all those tradespeople got to transfer their trade and build other things. Because they were building and because they were working, they were spending, which kept the economy going forward.

You can talk about corporate taxes in the global sense that the UCP does, but you have a two-year lag in your economic plan, so until you address the two-year lag, you're going to have a hole in your budget. You're going to have to cut spending, which means

you're going to cut services. That's just the basic economics around it.

Again, I really encourage all the members of this House to consider what they plan to do over the next two years and how you're going to explain to Albertans why it is that their services are being cut because you put all of your eggs in one basket.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise to speak to Bill 3 again. I appreciate the conversations that have happened so far today. I do just want to speak to a conversation that came up yesterday in discussion with the Minister of Finance in this House. I had asked the question: why did you choose to spend \$4.5 billion in reducing corporate income taxes for large corporations when you could have maybe found some balance – I know the government likes to throw that word around – in how you are investing this money? I brought up the small-business tax. Whether I support it or not is maybe not necessarily the point. Why didn't this government choose to lower the small-business tax to 1 per cent or to zero per cent compared to putting all their eggs in one basket with this large corporate tax cut?

The minister said: well, because the small-business tax is already lower than every other jurisdiction. Okay. Well, you have a bill before us that is proposing to do the exact same thing, to cut it much further than any other province. So the argument that was made by the Finance minister actually answers the question of: is this bill even worth it? And that's no.

In the grand scheme of things, I mean, I've spoken about it over the last week here as we discussed Bill 3. Really, the more I look into the consequences of this bill and the more that I have discussions with business leaders and economists – I'm not sure which economists the front bench here actually had discussions with because the people that I've been talking to are saying: no, cutting corporate income tax is not the best bang for your buck to get people working again. These tax credits that our government put forward over the last four years, as far as the discussions that I have had, are much, much better for getting people back to work, for bringing new investment to the province.

When we look at the corporate income tax, we're not only talking about money that's being invested now. We're actually going to start subsidizing old money, money that's already been invested in the province, so we're going to start handing these corporations money without any guarantee of new investments. As has been brought up, often these are shareholders that live outside of the province and often live outside of Canada, so that money is not even staying here.

When we're in a situation where our economy is in recession or just coming out of recession, we need to consider the implications of economic inequality. The corporate tax rate cut is not going to solve that issue at all. It is not going to put more money back into the workers' pockets. When we talk about tax credits, well, as I brought up in the House earlier this week, that money has to be proved that it is, to some extent, 50 per cent of wages for employees – excuse me; let me try that again. To some extent, the employees, of course, have to live in the province, and that has to be proven. The shareholders have to live in the province. Those are things that we can look at when we're talking about tax credits.

Now, the Finance minister also brought up the fact that he wasn't happy with the tax credits because they focus on certain industries.

Well, open it up, then. If you're concerned that we were focused on certain industries that you don't think we should subsidize or you don't necessarily support, then open it up. You can expand the tax credit programs, and still more often than not I believe it's going to be more effective than reducing corporate taxes. I just wanted to make sure I had that on the record.

You know, I had moved to Alberta during the Ralph Klein years, and I was actually here about six months before – I had just made the cut-off for getting my \$400 cheque in the mail. Though I enjoyed buying a pair of roller skates with that money, I don't know how much that helped the economy. But I didn't think that I was going to come to a time where I disliked a policy more than that one. When I compare giving money back to Albertans, putting it in their pockets, or doing a massive handout to large corporations when we don't necessarily know if the money is even going to stay here, well, I think this one takes the cake. I might change my mind once I further research that, getting that money back. We'll wait and see, I suppose.

Once again, I absolutely do not support this bill. I really think that it's the most lazy way that you could have tried to incentivize new employers to come to the province. I think that the government should have done a better job of researching and actually having conversations with people. I think this was something that they just put in their platform because it was, you know, an easy slogan. I mean, lower taxes: sounds great. Yeah. Well, I think there were better options to create new employment here in the province and bring new investments to the province.

Thank you.

11:50

The Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Shall I call the question?

[The remaining clauses of Bill 3 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

We will now rise and report.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Milliken: Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 3.

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

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed, please say no. Carried.

The hon. Minister of Finance and keeper of the Great Seal.

Mr. Schweitzer: Madam Speaker, we've made some excellent progress here today. I would propose at this stage, given the fact that we're very close to the lunch hour, that we rise until 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:52 a.m.]

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