



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, June 18, 2019

Day 15

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 30th Legislature

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UCP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees
Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UCP)
Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UCP)
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie,
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Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)
Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP),
Official Opposition House Leader
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Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)
Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UCP)
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Glubish, Hon. Nate, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UCP)
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Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP)
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Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)
Guthrie, Peter F., Airdrie-Cochrane (UCP)
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UCP)
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Kenney, Hon. Jason, PC, Calgary-Lougheed (UCP),
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Madu, Hon. Kaycee, Edmonton-South West (UCP)
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Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)
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Party standings:

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Turton
Yaseen

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, June 18, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Hon. members, the prayer. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our Queen and her government and to all Members of the Legislative Assembly and to all in positions of power and responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interest and prejudice, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, there are a number of guests joining us today in a wide variety of the galleries. Please welcome to the Legislative Assembly a school group from Greystone Centennial middle school, joining us from the constituency of Spruce Grove-Stony Plain. As well, at 2 o'clock in the gallery will be Norwood elementary school from the constituency of Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin. I invite all those students to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly. Thank you, hon. members.

In the Speaker's gallery today we have several guests with us this afternoon. First, a constituent of the Associate Minister of Natural Gas, Master Warrant Officer Mike Vollick. He has been deployed in Croatia, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan throughout his military career and currently serves as the quartermaster senior instructor of the First Battalion of Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry. I invite members to welcome him.

We will welcome the rest of the members at the conclusion of their introduction.

Visiting us from the United Kingdom this afternoon and seated in the Speaker's gallery is Mr. Robert John Pooley, MBE. Mr. Pooley provides swords for the British and Commonwealth forces and is the official supplier of the swords to our very own Sergeant-at-Arms. Welcome, Mr. Pooley.

Also in the Speaker's gallery this afternoon are a number of dedicated individuals from the Calgary and Edmonton Salvation Army advisory board, including Major Margaret McLeod and Major Al Hoelt.

Last but certainly not least, in the Speaker's gallery today is a very familiar face to this Chamber, Mr. Pat Nixon, of course, the father of not only one but two hon. members.

Go ahead if you want, now that we're here. [applause]

Also today we have guests of the Minister of Seniors and Housing, Jamie Leong-Huxley, and the constituency manager of Calgary-Fish Creek, Christina Steed, and a guest of the hon. Deputy Speaker, Mary-Lou Stacey. Members, please welcome them to the Assembly.

Members' Statements

Property Rights Legislation

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the UCP campaign platform directly commits to enhancing property rights for all Albertans. The UCP's commitment to establishing an Alberta property rights preservation act, enshrining property rights for

Alberta in the Canadian Constitution, establishing adverse-effects legislation, and providing compensation for property owners being negatively affected by regulations is not only fair and just, but it will also ensure Alberta is a secure and more certain place to invest.

Currently, under Bill 36, the Alberta Land Stewardship Act, and Bill 24, the Carbon Capture and Storage Statutes Amendment Act, we continue to see uncertainty as well as limited access to courts and timely and fair compensation. We also need to be considering the positive economic and social impacts of how a free market for environmental goods and services would impact our province. It would allow our top-shelf environmentally conscious farmers and ranchers the ability to promote and capitalize on the carbon they sequester and their ability to provide and enhance first-rate soil regeneration.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have always wondered why property rights resonate more in rural Alberta than in our cities. Perhaps it is because rural Alberta is huge, diverse, and pristine. Perhaps it is because rural Albertans face more encroachments on their title covenants, for which compensation may be owed.

Speaking of fencelines, as a teenager I spent many a summer night playing touch football in a friend's backyard because it was as big as Commonwealth Stadium. Twenty years later I sold the house during my real estate career. Oh my; an up-to-date real property report showed that not only were we playing football on my friend's neighbour's property all that time, but even his garage had been built on the neighbour's yard 30 years earlier. Mr. Speaker, it took all my negotiating skills to sort out that one fairly and according to property rights.

Mr. Speaker, good fences make good neighbours, and strong property rights provide . . .

Education Act GSA Provision Enforcement

Ms Ganley: Imagine, Mr. Speaker, if you were required to pay taxes, but there was no deadline. Would you still pay them on time, and would you count on everyone else to do the same? Have you ever tried to make a child apologize without a content requirement? It doesn't always go exactly as you were hoping. Imagine if we were to prohibit speeding but didn't say what the punishment was. Certainly, in all these cases most people would follow the rules, but it's hard to believe that everyone would. That's why we have laws, to make sure that everyone plays by the same rules. When you make a rule, you need to make more than just the rule. There needs to be a consequence, there needs to be content on how you comply, and there needs to be a timeline.

These are just a few examples, yet this is exactly the sort of thing the government expects us to take on faith with Bill Hate. The bill takes us back in time to a previous version of the legislation, that had problems with enforceability. We know that there were problems because students came forward to complain about schools dragging their heels. We know that schools tried to prevent students from calling a GSA and a QSA exactly that. We know that when schools produced discriminatory inclusivity policies, we had to change the law, exactly the same law that's proposed now, in order to enforce the spirit and intent.

Mr. Speaker, words matter, especially words in law. Now, it remains possible that all these questions will be answered in regulations. But if the government intended to do all that, the larger question arises: why change it at all? We have solved these problems. We have enforceability now. We have protection for our LGBTQ students now. So why go back to a law with less protection unless that was exactly the intent?

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville is rising to make a statement.

Skilled Trades Caucus

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise in the Assembly today and celebrate the creation of the first-ever Skilled Trades Caucus, for which I was elected chair. It is a pleasure to serve on this committee with my fellow caucus members the hon. members from Spruce Grove-Stony Plain, Peace River, Lesser Slave Lake, Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul, Lethbridge-East, Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland, and Highwood.

The government and Skilled Trades Caucus believes that apprenticeship learning and the skilled trades have every bit as much value and worth and merit as a university education. That's why we are committed to creating opportunities for young Albertans to learn practical job skills that meet the demands of the labour market and that will help them succeed and build prosperity for all of Alberta.

Alberta faces the dual challenge of retirement among skilled workers and the worst youth employment in decades. The department of labour predicts that from now until 2025 more than 3,000 skilled workers will retire every year, creating a steady demand for apprentices and skilled workers. We need to get ahead of these trends. Our government is committed to enhancing and expanding the apprenticeship model and the skilled trades by increasing the focus on skills for jobs, from high school through postsecondary and into the workplace.

1:40

I personally want to take this opportunity to recognize that there are more trades than just the typical construction trades that are most commonly thought of. I have a journeyman certificate as a beautician, which can be just as rewarding and provides a good living as well. I've worked in this profession for over 30 years.

The government has a strong plan to get Albertans back to work and rebuild our economy to make life better for all Albertans. By showing the world that we are open for business again, we will generate the economic growth we need to bring back balance to our province's finances, create jobs, and make life better for Albertans. The task before us is more than a promise; it's an obligation.

Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to stand alongside my colleagues in fighting for skilled trades and apprenticeship learning.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has risen.

Support for Young Parents

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week when I asked the Minister of Children's Services if she consulted with foster children affected by the minimum wage rollback, the Government House Leader got up instead to deflect the question and claimed that my question was "ridiculous" and unreasonable. As someone who has fought for social justice my entire life, this was truly disheartening.

Last week I attended Terra Centre's Promising Futures breakfast along with the Minister of Children's Services. This is an amazing breakfast, that helps raise funds to enable young parents to complete their high school education and gain parenting skills. We heard that many of these teens who get services from Terra come from poverty and have had past involvement with Children's Services. We also heard of how many of these young parents rely on the minimum wage and \$25-per-day child care programming provided at Braemar school.

Hearing the stories of these young people was truly moving, but it was also disheartening given the policies of this government. This government claims to care about young people, but they implement a youth minimum wage so that they will earn less money to support themselves and have an incentive to drop out of school. This government refuses to answer my questions about vulnerable young people in this province but also refuses to implement a long-term affordable child care strategy that will help young parents.

If the minister won't answer my questions in this House, it begs the question of whether the minister is even raising these issues with her cabinet colleagues. Or does the minister stand with the Government House Leader, who believes that these questions are unreasonable and ridiculous?

Mr. Speaker, vulnerable youth in our province deserve a champion. They deserve a minister who is not afraid to stand up for what is right, even when it is tough. As the NDP critic for Children's Services I will continue to stand up for all youth in this province and hold this minister accountable. I will continue to urge her to speak truth to power even when it is difficult.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-Stony Plain.

Skilled Trades Training

Mr. Turton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week I had the opportunity to tour the local 1325 carpenters' and millwrights' facility right here in Edmonton with my hon. colleagues the Minister of Labour and Immigration and the Minister of Advanced Education. As a 20-year member of local 1325 it was wonderful to see the training offered through one of these training centres and the positive effect it has had on people entering the workforce. I'm a dual-ticketed tradesperson myself, having earned my journeyman carpentry ticket from NAIT in 2004 and having earned my journeyman scaffolder's ticket from this very same training centre we had the pleasure of touring last week. Employers and contractors here in Alberta and across Canada and around the world recognize the need for a trained, professional, and safe workforce. Organizations like the Alberta Carpenters Training Centre allow Albertans to be among the best in the business, leading the field not just in performance but in safety as well.

I understand the importance that trades play in Alberta, and I'm excited to see the support being offered to our tradespeople and trades schools by this government. A source of great pride to my constituents, Mr. Speaker, is that NAIT has opened a satellite campus in Spruce Grove, allowing constituents of my riding greater access to apprenticeship training. Trades must become an option that is seen more highly by our high school students. Skilled trades should have every bit as much merit, weight, value, and worth as a university degree. I look forward to seeing what advances this government will make in apprenticeship and trades availability to small cities like mine, whether that be in high school programs or further postsecondary opportunities.

Thank you.

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

LGBTQ2S-plus Youth and Bill 8

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. LGBTQ youth are four times more likely to attempt suicide than their peers. Adolescent LGBTQ youth who have been rejected by their families because of their sexual orientation or gender identity are over eight times more likely to attempt suicide. One study indicates that 28 per cent of

trans and two-spirit people had attempted suicide at least once. LGBTQ youth need a safe space.

Another study found that 49 per cent of trans students, 33 per cent of lesbian students, and 40 per cent of gay male students had experienced sexual harassment in school in the last year. Twenty per cent of LGBTQ students reported being physically harassed or assaulted about their perceived gender identity or sexual orientation. That is why LGBTQ youth need a safe space.

According to the Child and Youth Advocate, LGBTQ2S-plus young people have specific vulnerabilities, needs, and circumstances that require particular attention. He made five specific recommendations to the government just this year, including the need to revise policy and practices to support LGBTQ2S-plus young people. Mr. Speaker, Bill 8 is actually altering policy and practices to lessen supports for these vulnerable youth, the opposite of the recommendations of the Child and Youth Advocate. The Child and Youth Advocate releases special reports when there are systemic issues affecting children and youth that need to be addressed by government, and 50 per cent of the reports in the last six years have been about LGBTQ2S-plus youth.

I cannot stress it enough. LGBTQ youth need a safe space. This is literally a matter of life and death. Bill 8, no matter how many times the members opposite deny it, will harm LGBTQ youth. It has so many loopholes in it so big that you could drive a Sunday school bus through it.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader is rising.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to provide oral notice of the following motions. First, Government Motion 22.

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 9, the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in second reading, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

Second, Government Motion 23. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Jason Nixon:

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 9, the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act, is resumed, not more than six hours shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in Committee of the Whole, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we will have order while the Government House Leader is providing notice of his motion. We certainly will have lots of opportunity for debate, at which point in time I encourage the opposition to engage in it.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Government Motion 24, Mr. Speaker.

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 9, the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act, is resumed, not more than two hours shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in third reading, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar has a tabling today.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising to table two articles. One is entitled Hansen Brothers Hockey, and the other one is called The Real Hansen Brothers from Camrose, Alberta and Augsburg College, Minneapolis, Minnesota. These articles detail the interesting lives of the Hansen brothers of Camrose, who comprised the Augsburg college hockey team during the late 1920s and almost represented the United States in the 1928 Olympics. They are composed by Gary Zeman, who is a constituent of mine. I have the appropriate . . .

The Speaker: I, too, look forward to reading the articles.

Is there anyone else who has a tabling? The hon. Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today with the requisite number of copies of documentation: an advisory issued by the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner which clarifies the protections afforded to students participating in GSAs under privacy legislation.

The Speaker: Are there any other tablings? The Member for St. Albert is rising to table a document.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to table a story. It's part of a CBC news series entitled In Our Backyard, which looks at the effects climate change is having in Canada, from extreme weather events to how it's reshaping our economy. This one is called 'It's a Problem for Society': Climate Change Is Making Some Homes Uninsurable.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The hon. the Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

1:50

Bill 9 Debate Time

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I imagine that some of the youth in the audience were wondering what that horrific response was. The response was to the fact that the Government House Leader last night brought in a motion to limit debate, and today he brings in closure because he's trying to stymie voices. Students learned that how a bill becomes a law is supposed to be a fair process with democratic debate and representation. Why won't the Premier allow that to happen? Why won't he stand up and face the workers that he's trying to take the rights away from?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, no one is taking anybody's rights away. We're proposing a bill to defer arbitration by four months to ensure that the government has adequate information on the fiscal state of the province. There will be ample debate. I've been advised by the Government House Leader that there will be somewhere between 25 and 30 hours of debate. That's more than one hour for every member of the opposition for a three-page bill on a four-month deferral.

Ms Hoffman: Minutes after midnight last night the government moved to shut down debate on its bad-faith bargaining bill. This is a bill that gives the government heavy-handed authority to delay legally mandated contracts, to break the law, to impose contracts on nurses, teachers, paramedics, the first responders who were evacuating the north last night. It's cowardly, and this Premier deserves to face the people he's rolling back the rights and protections for. Why won't he? Why won't he stand in this House and defend his bill?

Mr. Kenney: I am rising in the House and defending the bill, but, Mr. Speaker, I'm getting worried the member opposite is getting so agitated she might call the government sewer rats soon because she did it before. You know what? Conservatives and Albertans are not sewer rats. This government was elected with the largest democratic mandate in Alberta electoral history on a mandate to restore balance to our province's finances. That means proceeding with collective bargaining agreements in an informed and responsible way. That's exactly what we're doing with a mere four-month deferral on a couple of agreements.

Ms Hoffman: I don't call bullying teachers, nurses, and paramedics balance, Mr. Speaker. I call that an injustice.

I think it's rich for members who may have been in their bed last night while they had their cabinet do their dirty work to come into this House and say that they're bringing in balance. That is far from what's happening in this place. It's an embarrassment. This Premier knows better. Why won't he act better?

Mr. Kenney: Well, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to bullying and incivility, we see a master class on that from the opposition in this place every day at question period.

This government has been entrusted with a mandate from the largest democratic vote in Alberta history to restore balance to the province's finances. We're going to do exactly that, in part by ensuring that we get all of the necessary information from the MacKinnon panel, chaired by a former New Democrat finance minister, before we can proceed in a responsible way with the wage reopeners and these collective bargaining agreements.

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

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What the Premier is pushing his cabinet and caucus to do is cowardly. It is the epitome of unconstitutional, law-breaking infringement on the rights of teachers, nurses, paramedics, and front-line public service members. I am embarrassed that this Premier thinks he can come in here and say that it's simply a delay until after the federal election, because he doesn't want his numbers to tank the same way his friend Doug Ford's numbers are tanking. Will the Premier admit that he – will he promise, let's try that. Will he promise to sit in this House for every stage of Bill 9 debate, or is he going to run away?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, we can see the lack of respect that the NDP has for this Chamber, for the traditions of this institution, for basic civility and public discourse. [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members, I heard the question. We will hear the answer.

Mr. Kenney: Shouting, heckling, attacking, fear and smear: Mr. Speaker, that's why they ended up with a historic repudiation from Alberta voters, voters who told us to act responsibly, to get our finances under control. That means we need all of the information necessary, and that is exactly why this is a modest, four-month deferral. While we fully respect collective bargaining agreements, we want to proceed in a responsible way.

Ms Hoffman: Forty per cent of Albertans voted for us, and even if they didn't, Mr. Speaker, they deserve to have their voices heard in this place. Shutting down debate, bringing in time limitation, and pretending that there's nothing to see here when clearly there is, the Government House Leader bumbled through some rationale for why he thought the House no longer needed to debate it, and then he says: we'll bring in further closure. That is the epitome of

bullying. Will the Government House Leader admit it, and will he stop bullying around his own caucus? They deserve to speak on this.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, as the hon. Premier has said, there will be over 30 hours of debate, over one hour for each member of the opposition if they want it. But you know what was very, very disappointing last night? You were sitting in the chair. I bet you were shocked to see it, as over and over the opposition used their time to debate on this bill to try adjourn debate and make sure that they could go home last night instead of being in here and working, not focusing on the legislation. We will give the time that is needed to debate this bill. [interjection]

Mr. Ellis: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Jason Nixon: I suggest the opposition take the opportunity to do it.

An Hon. Member: Absolute liars.

The Speaker: Hon. members, if I wasn't mistaken, I heard someone from the opposition bench say: absolute liars. Of course, that wouldn't have happened because that would have been wildly inappropriate. It seems to me by the sheepish look from someone in the middle row there that perhaps that is what I heard.

I do note the point of order at 1:55 or so.

Ms Hoffman: An act to impose bad-faith bargaining practices that steamroll over legal, constitutional rights, Mr. Speaker, is nothing to be rushed. Absolutely. I'd be happy to inform the House leader that actually when you call a division, it doesn't count against debate time. It actually does bring attention to the fact that this should be debated in front of the public instead of under the darkness of night. Why won't the Government House Leader, why won't the Premier, look the workers that he's steamrolling over in the eye? Why did he send his caucus in here to do his dirty work?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, first of all, that member just magically inflated the NDP's popular vote by about a quarter. That party was repudiated by Albertans for many reasons, one of which is the exact incivility and anger that they are demonstrating in this place today. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Kenney: Another reason that they were repudiated, Mr. Speaker, was their gross fiscal irresponsibility, driving this province towards \$100 billion of debt. This government takes seriously our mandate to restore balance to the finances. We'll do that in a responsible way.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora for the third question.

Gay-straight Alliances in Schools

Ms Hoffman: Hundreds of Albertans are planning to come to this Legislature tomorrow night for a nonpartisan rally to save gay-straight alliances. This event is called pride as protest. It's a direct response to this government's Bill Hate, which will destroy GSAs and allow . . .

Mr. Jason Nixon: Point of order.

Ms Hoffman: . . . students to be outed, Mr. Speaker. I will be attending this rally, and I know all members of our opposition

caucus will. My question is to the Premier: will you be attending the rally tomorrow night, and if not, why not?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, Bill 8 constitutes part of our commitment to Albertans presented in our platform to bring into force the Education Act, the very same act that the NDP committed to bring into force in 2015. With respect to gay-straight alliances it simply re-establishes the law that the NDP voted for in 2014, which would be the strongest statutory protections for gay-straight alliances in Canada.

Mr. Speaker, as the Privacy Commissioner has confirmed today, the privacy law will continue apply, as it always has, to the participation of students in extracurricular activities.

Ms Hoffman: Well, perhaps when the Premier is gallivanting across Canada campaigning for his friends, he missed his own minister's memo on Friday, which admits that the law that they are proposing to bring in in no way is the strongest in Canada, Mr. Speaker. His own minister admitted that. She also indicated that she would continue to consult, but she said that she already had talked to everybody. My question to the minister is: will you join me at the rally tomorrow and allow me to introduce you to the folks who are here to protest against Bill Hate because they are terrified you are destroying their right to GSAs?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Point of order.

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the law that the NDP is attacking was the law for the first three years of their government. It was the law they voted for in 2014. It was the law, the Education Act, they ran on proclaiming in 2015. I am proud to have last week been attracting a major international investment to this province and standing up and defending this province, defending our energy industry and jobs and building alliances to support our vital economic interests, something that the NDP never did.

2:00

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, today we have the strongest laws in Canada to protect gay kids and their allies. Should this government move forward with John Carpay crafted amendments to make sure that they bring in Bill Hate . . .

Mr. Jason Nixon: Point of order.

Ms Hoffman: . . . that will no longer be the case. Will the minister rise in this House and admit that the bill she is bringing forward is a rollback, is an attack on gay-straight alliances and the kids who are a part of them?

Mr. Kenney: Of course, it's not, Mr. Speaker, and no amount of these kinds of absurd charges from the NDP makes it any more true. It's essentially re-establishing a law that existed for three years under the NDP government, with which they were perfectly satisfied until they decided to try cynically to use this issue to divide Albertans, but Albertans rejected that. You know when they rejected it? They rejected it on election day in giving this government the largest democratic mandate in Alberta history on an explicit commitment to bring into force the Education Act. That's exactly what Bill 8 facilitates.

The Speaker: I would just note the points of order that have been identified by the Government House Leader as well as the government whip in the first supplemental on the second question and in the third set of questions.

Energy and Environmental Policies

Ms Hoffman: Alberta is expecting good news today, Mr. Speaker. Let me tell you, the approval of the Trans Mountain pipeline is a victory for our leader and for all Albertans. We proved that a balancing approach, where you protect the environment and the economy, can produce real results for Alberta's energy sector. Decades of dithering by Conservative governments in Ottawa and Edmonton couldn't get a pipeline to tidewater. Will the Premier tell this House what he is planning to do to ensure that the approval of our pipeline isn't threatened by lack of adequate environmental protection and consultation with indigenous leaders, which, of course, is the reason why he failed for so many years in Ottawa?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, it is astonishing to see how little the NDP learned from the humiliation delivered to them by Alberta voters, who were understandably outraged with the total failure of the NDP to make any progress on pipelines or on oil and gas, the NDP . . .

An Hon. Member: Point of order.

Mr. Kenney: . . . that surrendered to the killing of Northern Gateway, that surrendered to a U.S. veto on Keystone, that surrendered to the Prime Minister killing Energy East. You know why, Mr. Speaker? We all know why. It's because the NDP has always been against our oil and gas industry. [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members. [interjections] Hon. members. A point of order is noted, but I would encourage all members to acknowledge the need for decorum inside the Chamber. In particular, when asking or answering a question, it is important that the chair can hear both of those occasions.

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, our government introduced a 100-megatonne emissions cap because it was endorsed by industry, indigenous groups, First Nations, and environmentalists alike. Industry told us that they got the oil out of the sand . . .

Mr. Dang: Point of order.

Ms Hoffman: . . . and they could get the carbon out of the barrel, and with that cap in place Alberta is in a stronger position to protect our constitutional authority as owner and regulator of our natural resources against attacks like Bill C-69. To the Premier. You've been wishy-washy on this. Will you keep the 100-megatonne cap that helped us get this pipeline approval?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, I understand why the NDP heckle so much. It's because they're angry. They're angry with Albertans for rejecting their failed economic policies. They're angry with Albertans for giving this government a mandate to repeal their job-killing carbon tax. They're angry with Albertans for wanting a government that will, without apology and relent, stand up and defend our oil and gas sector and jobs. We will take no lessons from the party that drove us into the longest period of economic decline and stagnation since the Great Depression. They were rejected for good reason on election day.

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy. I'm happy that we are going to be one step closer to ensuring we get a fair price for our resource that Albertans own. The Premier is planning his victory lap, no doubt, with regard to TMX. I'm happy. He should be happy. All Albertans should be happy. What I fear is that he will use this approval of the pipeline to justify attacking those who care about both the economy and the planet. To the Premier. We got a pipeline;

we need more. Will you admit that we must protect both the economy and the environment to protect our access to future markets?

Mr. Kenney: Mr. Speaker, the socialists still don't get it. They talk about victory laps. They talk about it because they don't actually understand these issues. Every time there was some minor, putative step forward, you would have a rally with the NDP and high-fiving. You know what? Nobody should be high-fiving. Nobody should be doing any victory laps until oil flows through that pipe, until we see the repeal of things like Bill C-69 because we need multiple avenues of egress. One of the terrible mistakes of the NDP was to put all of their eggs in the one basket of TMX. This government is going to fight for multiple points of access to get fair price for our oil.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I'll note the point of order at 2:04 from the Member for Edmonton-South.

Crime Rates and the Criminal Justice System

Mr. Milliken: Mr. Speaker, under the NDP's watch Alberta witnessed a dramatic increase in crime. Police services across the province are reporting significantly higher robberies, assaults, sexual assaults, and property damage compared to five years ago today. This increase in part can be tied to the poor economic situation and job-killing NDP policies. Minister, my constituents want to know: what is the new government doing to ensure that Albertans are protected, and what is our plan to combat these increases in crime?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, all Albertans deserve to feel safe in their homes and communities. Unlike past governments that didn't have their priorities straight when it came to the Justice file, we're making sure that programs like ALERT have the funding that they need to disrupt gang activity, to disrupt the opioid trade that's going on in our province right now. We're also taking proactive steps. Just this last week we met with community leaders. Three cabinet ministers, a local MLA, and Calgary police met with community leaders to talk about gang violence in the northeast of Calgary. We're not going to delay. We're not going to wait for these galleries to be filled, like previous governments, to take action.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie has the call.

Mr. Milliken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that in a recent 2009 *Maclean's* report called Canada's 20 Most Dangerous Places, 7 of the 10 with the worst increases in crime over the last five years were right here in Alberta and given that too many Albertans are being victimized and too many criminals are going through a revolving-door justice system, getting back out on the streets and claiming new victims, can the minister tell my constituents and all Albertans: how will this government stop the revolving door and ensure that we have a more effective criminal justice system?

Mr. Schweitzer: Mr. Speaker, we had what they called a triage system in our prosecution branch in this province before, under the previous government. Triage: that's a hospital type of term, not a justice term. We're going to be making sure that we hire the prosecutors we need. Fifty new prosecutors is our commitment under our platform. We're going to deliver to make sure our law enforcement officials have the tools and resources they need to make sure all Albertans feel safe in their communities, to make sure we put the criminals behind bars.

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

Mr. Milliken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. For clarification, that was a 2019 report.

Given that Alberta prosecutors are drowning in their caseloads, particularly in rural ridings, while repeat offenders are bogged down in the justice system and given that in order to get dangerous offenders off the streets, we need prosecutors to work these cases, Minister: can you please update all Albertans on what the government is doing to improve caseloads and ensure our criminal justice system functions properly?

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice.

Mr. Schweitzer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would also like to thank the hon. member, who actually has a long history in recruitment in legal services and in hiring lawyers. We're going to be making sure that we work with all the different stakeholders in the legal system to make sure that we can recruit prosecutors. I'm going to be meeting later this week with the dean of the University of Calgary law school and talking to him about how we can engage students in future careers, how we can engage lawyers at different stages of their careers and taking a look and making sure that they want to become prosecutors in our province. We need to get this done for Albertans. We need to reduce the caseload on our prosecutors.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Public Service Wage Arbitration Postponement

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government is breaking the law. They want to rip up contracts and prompt court challenges from public-sector unions. In the end Albertans will pay the price for poor management from this Premier and this Minister of Finance. We know that legal challenges are expected. To the Premier. We know legislation like this has cost provinces big in the past. How can you be sure we won't pay much more after judges weigh in on your costly and unconstitutional legislation?

2:10

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, again, Bill 9 is about simply seeking a delay in arbitration so this government can better understand a pathway forward, a path to fiscal balance. We committed to Albertans during the election campaign that we would bring this province to balance. We're committed to that. This delay in arbitration is about being responsible and prudent.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that in 2002 the B.C. government imposed contracts that stripped away the ability of teachers to bargain collectively and given that it took the Supreme Court less than 20 minutes to rule against the government and in favour of teachers and given that it appears that this Premier and this Finance minister are attempting to run down the same path as that B.C. government, to the Premier: is booking us a date with the Supreme Court really part of your plan to help pay for your \$4.5 billion tax giveaway to corporations?

Mr. Toews: Again, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate and this government greatly appreciates the tremendous work our public sector does day after day on behalf of Albertans. Again, this legislation is simply just delaying arbitration so that we can develop a responsible path forward, a responsible path forward that will ensure that we can continue to deliver high-quality services to Albertans today and into the next generation.

Ms Gray: Given that showing respect is a great way to show your appreciation and given that our government worked in good faith with public-sector unions and negotiated contracts that worked for all sides and given that in just a month and a half this government has ruined all that hard work and potentially caused permanent damage between these workers and their relationship with government and given that real leadership doesn't involve sneaking in measures in the dead of night to shut down debate in the House, to the Premier: how much will this fool's errand cost us in high-priced lawyers?

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

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll tell you that what would cost Albertans is this particular opposition who, when they were in government, had us on a trajectory for a hundred billion dollars in accumulated debt. That would have guaranteed that future generations would not have a first-class, world-class education system or health care system. We are going to put this province back on a track to balance. We're committed to that.

Ms Phillips: Mr. Speaker, no one has ever seen this kind of undemocratic behaviour before, but no one has ever seen a Premier so preoccupied with politics outside the province. This is a Premier who cares far more about Ottawa than he does Onaway. Everyone can see that the Premier is deferring his wage war until after the federal election. This is so he can campaign in his happy place, which is Ontario, but do so before he's become as unpopular as Doug Ford. Will the Premier now admit he's planning to take thousands of dollars out of nurses' and others' pockets but not until he's done with the federal election, which is his real priority?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, again, we are simply seeking to delay arbitration so that this government can make prudent, thoughtful decisions on a path to balance for Albertans, decisions that will ensure that we can continue to deliver high-quality services to Albertans. We have a Premier who's been advocating for the people of this province every day since he's been on the job.

Ms Phillips: Given that the government wants to cruelly seize take-home pay from corrections workers, conservation officers, nurses, lab techs, paramedics, tens of thousands of others, but given that this government doesn't want the wage war to inconvenience the dear leader, who is paving his way back to 24 Sussex, will the Premier now admit he is deferring his wage war on working people until October 31 just to buy time until after the federal election on October 22, at which time he will pick paramedics' pockets as soon as the ballots are counted?

Mr. Toews: Again, Mr. Speaker, this opposition has no idea how to ensure that finances are dealt with responsibly. They have no idea how to properly and respectfully deal with taxpayers' hard-earned dollars. We're about deliberating, ensuring we have time to make thoughtful, prudent decisions on behalf of Albertans and on behalf of the public sector.

Ms Phillips: Given that while the Premier might fancy himself a master Machiavellian, it is quite possible that tooting around Canada, campaigning on Albertans' time and dime, might just be too clever by half and given that Albertans have limited patience for entitled, out-of-touch Conservatives flying around everywhere but here, will the Premier commit to spending his time in Alberta until October 22, or will the siren call of spending our money on

interfering in the federal election campaign be too much for him to resist?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, what a ridiculous question. The opposition should try a lot harder. Let me be very clear. This side of the House and Albertans can be very proud of their Premier. I'm proud of our Premier, who has been working for years to campaign, to stand up for our province, who is travelling across and building a coalition that will stand up to Justin Trudeau and the federal Liberals for our provincial interests. That is in sharp contrast to that side of the House when they were in government, who spent their time shoring up Justin Trudeau, who spent their time going out of their way to help the federal Liberals work against Albertans. I'm proud of our Premier, and I want to thank him very much for his hard work.

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

Calgary Ring Road Completion

Ms Issik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every day in Calgary-Glenmore we face a sea of orange cones on our roadways, with virtually every major thoroughfare undergoing road construction, much of which on the west and north sides of the constituency is related to the construction of the southwest ring road. Further, many are subjected to the incessant song of the beeping of backup signals and the rhythm of piledriving. Most understand that we cannot continue to drive the north-south trade route for Alberta through the middle of Calgary, but they're frustrated. To the Minister of Transportation: when will the southwest portion of the ring road be completed?

The Speaker: The Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The southwest Calgary ring road project was actually approved in 2013 and started construction in 2016, and the hon. member can actually blame me for that approval if the hon. member chooses to. I would say that the whole southwest portion of the ring road is scheduled to be complete and open by the end of 2022. Currently the projects are on schedule. When it's complete, there will be a hundred kilometres of continuous road around the city of Calgary.

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

Ms Issik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that progress on the Calgary ring road has been arduous and is still expected to continue for some time and given the vital need for this roadway in Calgary for regular commuting purposes and also to support and sustain economic growth in Calgary and neighbouring regions, can the Minister of Transportation explain how this government will ensure that the project is kept on schedule?

The Speaker: The Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for advocating on behalf of her constituents. I would have her know that the southwest portion of the road is more than 60 per cent complete today. It is on schedule to open for traffic by the fall of 2021, the southwest portion. Our contractor is working quickly, with an aggressive schedule. We have actually allowed them extended working hours and other considerations to help them stay on schedule, which they are currently.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Issik: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that an agreement to transfer land for the project was completed with the Tsuut'ina First Nation back in 2013 and given that the final sections of the ring road, the west and southwest sections, are not expected to be completed for a while, to the Minister of Transportation: how will this government ensure that the mistakes of previous governments are not repeated and that future projects do not take a decade to go from land acquisition to completion?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I respect the hon. member's impatience. I will just say that the land transfer with the Tsuut'ina First Nation was finalized in 2015 after federal government approval, which, actually, the Premier helped out with when he was a federal minister. A contractor was selected in 2016, and construction began that year. A number of detours are under way right now. I will say to the hon. member that we are working hard to learn from our past experiences, both good and bad, and apply those lessons.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-McCall is rising with a question.

2:20

Oil Transportation

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today we are hoping to have Alberta's first pipeline to tidewater in more than 60 years approved, thanks to the hard work put in by the former Premier and the Leader of the Official Opposition. Still, TMX will not fix the oil backlog overnight, and it will take years to build this pipeline. To the Minister of Energy: what will you do to move our resources to market while we wait for TMX to be built? Surely, your strategy includes much more than just social media posts from the much-hyped war room.

Mrs. Savage: Mr. Speaker, November 29, 2016, is a date that we all remember. It was that date that the federal Liberals approved Trans Mountain for the first time. On that date the former Premier was in Ottawa, and at the same time they cancelled Northern Gateway. That's the legacy of that party opposite in getting pipelines built. In the meantime we are standing up for Alberta, and we will get pipelines built.

Mr. Sabir: I think we can talk about that pipeline some other day, but today we are talking about TMX.

Given that on May 22 the Premier's second-favourite columnist wrote in the *Calgary Herald* that this government would cancel oil-by-rail contracts that our government signed even if it took legislation to do so and given that the Premier himself said that he would move the 120,000 barrels of oil that we planned to ship per day to the private sector, can the minister please tell this House exactly how many barrels they have successfully moved to a private company?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Mrs. Savage: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The oil-by-rail contracts signed by the previous government were a boondoggle. They were absolutely devastating for this province. They were not on commercially responsible terms. We made a commitment in the election. We were very clear that we would not be in the business of competing with the private sector and we would not be honouring contracts signed by that government on the eve of an election campaign that were wrong for Albertans.

Mr. Sabir: And your answer was zero barrels.

Given that nearly a month after the *Herald* column ran, this House has heard no progress from this government on oil by rail and given that moving oil by rail is a medium-term strategy to protect jobs and generate \$2 billion in revenue for the provincial treasury, to the minister. Come clean to this House. Are you going to legislate away the oil-by-rail contracts this session and put countless jobs at risk, all to fulfill your Premier's ideological fantasies?

Mrs. Savage: Mr. Speaker, we will be taking steps that are in the best interests of all Albertans. I reviewed those contracts, and those contracts that were signed would cause a \$1.5 billion loss to Albertans. The profits that they were talking about were some artificial numbers on potential income tax returns and upticks to royalties. I would note that that would . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members, I have no problem, as I think we have seen, with heckling inside the Chamber. However, when the volume reaches a level that I am unable to hear the minister, you leave me no choice but to intervene.

Mrs. Savage: Mr. Speaker, those contracts were at a \$1.5 billion loss to Alberta taxpayers. We're taking the best interests of taxpayers and Albertans in mind, and we will not be proceeding with those contracts.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadows is rising to ask a question.

Racism and Religious Discrimination

Mr. Deol: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government of Quebec has pushed through a disturbing piece of legislation that bans Muslim and Sikh teachers, lawyers, police officers, and judges from wearing turbans and hijabs at work. Albertans and Canadians have been horrified by this attack on religious and ethnic minorities, but our Premier hasn't said a peep. So to the Premier: will you break your silence and condemn this racist bill?

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, the first freedom mentioned in our Constitution is the freedom of religion. Our party has always stood for protecting Albertans' freedom of religion. We are for treating all Albertans equally no matter what their background, no matter who they are, no matter who they love, no matter their faith. We have always stood by that. We will continue to stand by that, and we encourage all provinces in this country to do the same.

Mr. Deol: Mr. Speaker, given that this past week our Premier had dinner with the Premier of Quebec and given that it has been known for some time that Quebec would be pursuing its racist Bill 21, to the Premier: did you raise concerns about this bill during dinner with the Premier of Quebec?

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, let me be clear for the hon. member. We condemn all forms of racism, full stop. No exceptions. Every time. Having said that, I'll admit that I haven't read the Quebec bill. But we absolutely are against all forms of racism, period.

Mr. Deol: Mr. Speaker, given that we have seen the government repeatedly protect racist white supremacists and Islamophobic candidates and party members and given that this is totally out of step with Albertans' values of freedom, tolerance, and openness, to the Premier: will you commit to antiracism training for all members of your government?

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member ought to look around and see our diverse caucus from across this great province. We stand against racism in all its forms. We always have, and we always will. The hon. member should be happy to know that. I believe that should more than answer his question.

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

Road Construction and Wetland Conservation

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In recent years Calgarians have raised concerns about the environmental impacts of the ring road, especially on the wetlands. Some concerned citizens even appeared before the Environmental Appeals Board in 2017. They obtained a decision forcing a former minister to release an order protecting several key wetlands. Now, ironically, the previous government, who hold themselves as heroic defenders of the environment, failed to enforce its own environmental protection measures. Can the Minister of Environment and Parks please update us on the status of this enforcement?

The Speaker: The Minister of Environment and Parks.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member is right. The former government delayed many things when it came to the environment and really went out of their way not to work with the people of Alberta. Specifically to the issue that he's referring to, I'm going to have to get back to him on that issue.

But I think it's important to recognize the different approach you'll see in the Alberta Environment and Parks file going forward compared to the former government, an approach that will focus on balance, working with recreation users, economic users, and making sure that we conserve our important environment as well as working with all the different agencies looking for approvals.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that it is our understanding that the ministerial order was not enforced and that the designated wetlands are significantly important to the residents in the area, can the Minister of Environment and Parks please share what our government is doing to address their concerns?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not aware of the ministerial order that the hon. member is referring to. But, again, we have heard often over the last few weeks about hard times that Albertans have had being able to contact the former environment minister as well as the former department. That's something that we're working very, very hard on for his constituents and all constituents, not just from the government caucus but as well from the opposition caucus. We'll continue to work to provide improvements to be able to make sure that there is better access to the department so that these types of questions can be answered better in the future.

The Speaker: Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the previous NDP government failed to implement its own ministerial order to protect these wetlands and that we are now in a situation where the damage to these wetlands is irreversible, can the minister please share what our government's approach will be to these kinds of concerns in the future?

The Speaker: The Minister of Environment and Parks.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's another good example of what was taking place under the NDP as they continued to delay talking about these important issues, not providing confirmation, either approval or nonapproval, of certain issues so that people knew which way to go forward. It was a pretty common approach of the NDP, of course, to not even reach out to anybody.

We know how bad the former minister failed when it came to consultation, for example in the Bighorn, by not even consulting the three First Nation communities that were there. This government will have a different approach that's much more focused on working with Albertans and finding the proper balances as we go forward.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Rutherford has a question.

2:30 Health Care User Fees and Wait Times

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was proud to stand in this House and introduce Bill 203, An Act to Protect Public Health Care. This bill, if passed, will amend the Alberta Health Care Insurance Act to prohibit extra-billing for insurance services and to prevent fee-based private clinics from billing individuals for insured services. Now, this Premier seems to be rather elusive as he jet-sets around the country, so I will try this question. Do you support, Mr. Premier, Bill 203? Do you support a prohibition on extra-billing and preventing fee-based private clinics?

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take the opportunity to talk about, again, what the opposition wants to keep talking about, our Premier travelling and working to build a coalition with like-minded Premiers across the country, and how refreshing it is to see that. This side of the House is proud of it. Albertans are proud of it. I hope that the Premier continues to do that. We're now going to have a solid coalition across this country, something that we've never had before because the NDP would not try to stand up to Justin Trudeau. Instead, as you know, they went out of their way each and every time that they could to vote with Justin Trudeau, to shore him up, and to stand with the Trudeau Liberals against Albertans.

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

Mr. Feehan: Thank you. It's quite clear that this Premier is evading Alberta so he can open the door for private health care, which is very disturbing to me. Given that I worry that this government will never allow my Bill 203 to return from committee to a debate in this House and given that I believe the reason they would avoid debating my bill in this House is so they can avoid taking a position in support of universal public health care, to the Minister of Health: will you stand today in support of Bill 203? One way or the other, will you ensure that the contents of this bill are brought forward as legislation to this Chamber?

The Speaker: I would remind the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford that that was a very good use of a preamble. Unfortunately, after question 4 they are not allowed.

The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The quick answer is no. I, at least, will not be supporting Bill 203, not as it's written. I think

that as we're looking at the 50 to 80 physicians in this province that this bill would actually affect – we see the previous government completely ignoring the rest of the system, ignoring their record for four years and wait times going up and patients seeing worse service and the costs in Alberta Health Services increasing astronomically. We're going to be focusing as a government on patients.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Feehan: And there it is: American health care right on the doorstep.

Given that the Premier has stumped for the Cambie surgeries corporation and its assembly-line approach to health care and given that the CEO of Cambie is currently leading the charge in court to destroy Canada's public health care system and given that the Premier, while touting Cambie, also implied that surgeons in our current system are lazy, can the Premier or the minister explain why this UCP government feels the need to constantly insult hard-working men and women who are literally saving lives in Alberta hospitals as we speak?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While we're talking about people and Albertans who are being insulted, let's talk about everybody who is waiting for open-heart surgery in this province. Let's talk about all the Albertans who had a 50 per cent increase in their wait for open-heart surgery. That's an insult to those patients, insults that that member's party totally forgot. The cataract surgery wait times increased nearly 30 per cent, and hip replacement wait times increased nearly 30 per cent in the four years that that government was in power.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Point of order.

The Speaker: I would just remind the . . . [interjections] Hon. members. I would remind the Minister of Health: direct your comments through the chair. You might make reference to that organization, but certainly you wouldn't make reference to that member.

Edmonton-Riverview has the call.

Support for Seniors

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Seniors built this province and deserve to live in dignity, close to their family and friends. Our government invested significantly in housing and other programs to support seniors. So far this UCP government has described our commitment to vulnerable Albertans as reckless spending and poor fiscal planning. These comments are shameful. To the Minister of Seniors and Housing: since you don't like the commitment we've made to seniors, what parts of it do you plan on cutting?

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

Ms Pon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We, this government, care about seniors. We are looking at all program services, particularly for seniors, to make sure we continue to provide high-quality services and programs to all Alberta seniors, and we do it carefully.

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

Ms Sigurdson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that despite the minister's assurances that seniors will receive "all the funding [seniors] need and want," her government repeatedly says that there

is much government waste and given that perhaps she's referring to the elder abuse programs, which serve extremely vulnerable seniors in tragic situations – sadly, the prevalence of elder abuse in Alberta is about 10 per cent of the senior population – to the minister: will you commit the funding for these programs, or are they part of what you consider waste?

Ms Pon: As I mentioned, again, Mr. Speaker, we care about the seniors. I was on a road trip for eight days and visited 16 communities and over 1,000 senior stakeholders to listen to the concerns and consult on what is the best way to serve our seniors and how to care for them. That's what we're going to do and use our taxpayer money carefully to plan for our seniors.

Ms Sigurdson: Well, given that we have over 600,000 seniors living in our province currently and given that over the next couple of decades that number will double and given that seniors deserve to live in dignity and the programs that serve them are not government waste, what is the UCP government doing to prepare for this growth? How are you going to cut this apparent waste and still support seniors?

The Speaker: The minister.

Ms Pon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To be clear, if we continue to implement the NDP programs and policies from before, we will be running almost \$100 billion in deficit. Instead, this government is doing careful line-by-line analysis of the priorities to make life better for seniors and for all Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Kananaskis has a question.

Trade Mission to Asia and Agricultural Exports

Ms Rosin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The constituents of Banff-Kananaskis know the importance of international competition and attracting international investment first-hand through our history of competing on the international stage. Our agriculture industry is a key economic driver, and our farmers work very hard every day to feed the world. Given that Alberta's agricultural industry has been facing challenges due to international trade restrictions on beef and canola, can the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism tell us how her trade mission to Japan and South Korea addressed industry concerns?

The Speaker: The Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism.

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. It was a great privilege to attend this trade mission on behalf of my colleague the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and promote Alberta's canola, beef, wheat, and pork sectors. We met with many businesses that are using Alberta's canola and beef products either in a processing or front-line sales capacity. This government is proud of Alberta, and we worked hard to spread the word that we are open for business.

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

Ms Rosin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that Banff-Kananaskis is home to many hard-working farmers and ranchers and given that the success of our agricultural sector directly impacts the livelihood of Alberta's economy as a whole and given that Canada recently signed on to the comprehensive and progressive agreement for trans-Pacific

partnership, also known as the CPTPP, to pursue market success and further given that Japan recently lifted their restriction on Canadian beef after 16 years of restrictions, can the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism tell us how her time in Japan benefited our beef sector?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to the member for the question. While in Japan I had the privilege of meeting with dozens of industry and business officials who are eager to sell Alberta's beef in supermarkets across Japan. We were happy to promote our sector as safe, reliable, and of the highest quality. These included entities such as COSCO Japan and many other businesses and front-line sales entities.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Rosin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that South Korea is an emerging market for our agriculture sector and a new frontier for international trade development and given that Alberta is seeking to diversify our international trade markets in order to achieve a competitive edge that everyone in our province can be proud of, can the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism show how her time in South Korea served our agricultural sector overall?

2:40

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

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. While in South Korea I met with Korean businesses that are planning on investments in Alberta's agricultural industry, including Canada's beef and potato industry. The member will be happy to know that we were also able to add several meetings with the tourism and oil and gas sectors, that were strictly for our delegation, in order to take full advantage of the mission from an Alberta perspective.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in 30 seconds or less we will move to the most anticipated portion of the day, points of order. I encourage you to exit the Chamber expeditiously if possible.

Hey, McIver.

Mr. McIver: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you to the hon. Minister of Transportation. Obviously, it would be inappropriate to use the name of any member in the Chamber, and if I did that, I sincerely apologize and withdraw.

Hon. members, we are at points of order. The first point of order was raised by the hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Point of Order Parliamentary Language

Mr. Ellis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I certainly rise under 23(h), (i), and (j). At approximately 1:56, while the hon. Government House Leader was responding to questions being given by the hon. opposition members, in one of the responses it was even difficult for me, as close as I am to the Government House Leader, to hear his response. I noticed that you even heard it as well, but it directly came from the hon. Member for Edmonton-North West, when he said directly in his comments, which appeared to be towards the Government House Leader, "You are such a liar,"

which, as you know, are very unparliamentary words and under (h), "makes [false] allegations against another Member; (i), "imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member"; and (j) are certainly unparliamentary. I would say, without having the benefit of the Blues, sir, that it was certainly loud enough to not only catch your attention but something that could even have been picked up by *Hansard*. I would ask that that member certainly apologize to the Government House Leader and to this House and withdraw any sort of comments in the future.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West is rising.

Mr. Eggen: Yes. Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I think the point of order was indeed in order. You know, I was perhaps getting a little excited about all this closure business. I think I said it probably the first time, and then the fourth and the fifth and the sixth times I think everybody heard. I do apologize to the hon. Government House Leader and ask that I could withdraw my comments.

The Speaker: I consider the matter concluded.

Points of order 2, 3, and 4 raised by the hon. Government House Leader.

Point of Order Epithets

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think I can – if it works for you and, of course, the Opposition House Leader, I'd be happy to roll all three of these into one in the interests of time.

Last week, Mr. Speaker, in your ruling, which can be found on page 799 of *Alberta Hansard*, June 13, 2019, edition – I know you read them all every night – about the opposition referring to Bill 8 as "Hate," your comments were:

I ask members, as we move forward, to choose their language carefully. Ask yourself whether your intention is to insult or to inflame debate or to levy an accusation against a member opposite or – and perhaps this is the important part – to knowingly cause disorder. If so, I would suggest that you find another means to make your case.

You further remarked:

However, this ruling should not be considered *carte blanche* to proceed with using the mock bill title Bill Hate on a regular basis.

I think it's quite clear that the intention of the members opposite is to insult or inflame debate on what is a sensitive and very important topic. I think we are headed to a point where any use of the term "Bill Hate" in this Chamber will lead to points of order being called, which will disrupt question period – we already saw it today – and could very well lead to a point where order cannot be maintained in this Chamber. Again, Mr. Speaker, I think the opposition has reached that stage that you referred to and that you should instruct them to stop using Bill Hate inside question period, which is not a time for debate. It's a time for questions and answers.

The Speaker: The Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This is not a point of order. I appreciate what you had said last week. I will note that on the three occasions that the Government House Leader reports that our member used the term "Bill Hate," there wasn't a peep in this House. It's not when the House was raucous. There wasn't noise. There wasn't heckling. People weren't jumping up and down. In fact, it was dead quiet in here except for the Government House Leader jumping up on a point of order.

Mr. Speaker, I'll remind you that for years members of the opposition, while we were government, referred to the job-killing carbon tax over and over and over and over. They did that to try to cause disorder. We didn't call it a point of order. It wasn't ruled as a point of order.

This is not a point of order; it's a difference in opinion. It did not cause disorder in this House. I can tell you that there were other words today that caused disorder, but that wasn't one of them. Again, this place has a history of the opposition naming bills or nicknaming bills. In fact, the opposition even did it to my title when I was minister of economic development and trade. There are numerous examples in *Hansard* for many, many years, including the Government House Leader himself using a variety of different names to name bills when we were government. Those were not ruled as points of order, Mr. Speaker.

I think that if the Government House Leader doesn't want to waste the House's time, he should stop jumping up on a point of order when there isn't one to jump up on.

The Speaker: Hon. members, thank you for your interjections.

I, too, have the benefit of the ruling from June 13, 2019, on page 799. I also would just like to provide some context with respect to that ruling as well as with respect to other debate that has taken place here in the Chamber over the last number of days. I would also make a comment that it sounds to me like the Official Opposition House Leader is asking me to rule on things that may or may not have been ruled on in the past by previous Speakers. Of course, I am hesitant to make a comment on what may or may not have happened in other situations.

Although we do have the benefit of precedent on our side and precedent has ruled on a number of different occasions on this particular issue, what I will say is that in the ruling from June 13 I provided some significant commentary around the times in which it may or may be likely to cause disorder. Specifically, in that ruling I referenced the use of Bill Hate during question period, which is an opportunity for questions and answers, not an opportunity for debate.

I would conclude by saying that I am yet hesitant to rule Bill Hate out of order during question period. I would say again that I will be listening closely, that it would be hard to imagine another time or a scenario where Bill Hate used during question period would be unlikely to cause disorder. As such, I will be left with very little option but to deliver a similar ruling to that of Speaker Zwozdesky in 2013 when he ruled "climate change denier" as something that is likely to create disorder. At this point, the point of order is not well taken but noted.

2:50

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, is there still an opportunity to seek clarification on your ruling?

The Speaker: There is no opportunity under – I suppose there is an opportunity under Standing Order 13(2), or you might question the chair. But I can tell you – perhaps you should have a seat while I'm speaking – that what the chair is likely to rule is that I have just gone through a thorough explanation of why I ruled, in which case I consider that point of order to be dealt with. But if you want to try me, feel free to do so.

Point of order 5, raised by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Point of Order

Allegations against Members

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise on 23(h), (i), (j). Around 2:05, I believe it was, the Premier in his comments, in

his response to one of the questions, talked about how the NDP is against the oil and gas sector. I rise on a point of order because, again, it is, I think, imperative in this House that members speak the truth when they are speaking in this place, and there's nothing that could be further from the truth. That comment clearly was intended to cause disorder, to paint a very false picture, which for me is concerning. Again, for those that may have tuned into question period for that moment to hear the Premier say, "Well, yes, the NDP is against the oil and gas sector," I can tell you that if you look at the history of the modernized royalty review, making us more competitive, introducing the capital investment tax credit, other means, including fighting for pipelines, promoting our oil and gas sector, getting federal dollars for orphaned wells to put people back to work, investing in different programs to use wells that were already drilled for geothermal . . . [interjections] I think I have the floor, Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. Speaker, the comment and the reason I stand up on a point of order: that was clearly done to cause disorder. It is completely false. This isn't a difference of opinion. It is patently false, and for that I ask that the Premier or the House leader on his behalf withdraw and apologize.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader is rising.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's pretty rich for the Opposition House Leader to rise on this point of order given that the member that sits behind him has been seen all over videotapes on the steps of this very building chanting, "No more approvals" at antipipeline rallies. It's pretty rich when that member's leader stood by as Energy East was killed, supported Northern Gateway being killed. Their federal party, who they belong to – they are the same party, as you know – has a leader that travels across this country protesting and saying that they want to shut down our oil and gas industry. It is utterly ridiculous.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would submit to you that what the Premier said is true, but that is also irrelevant. This is a matter of debate.

The Speaker: If there has ever been an example of a matter for debate, I think that point of order has proved it. I consider it dealt with and not well taken.

The Opposition House Leader on behalf of the Member for Edmonton-South.

Point of Order

Remarks off the Record

Mr. Bilous: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise on 23(h), (i), (j). It was around 2:05 or 2:06. The Member for Edmonton-Glenora was asking a question and referred to the 100-megatonne cap, that was mentioned, at which point in time the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka used expletives and said: yeah; it did bleep all. That kind of language in this House is not only unparliamentary; it's unbecoming of members, especially used in this Chamber. I think what's important here is that members are aware of what they say, whether the microphone is on or off, that there are people and often children in the galleries listening. That unparliamentary language is, first of all, unparliamentary, but second of all, it was used to cause disorder and successfully did that. So I would ask that the Government House Leader or the member apologize and withdraw.

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. If the Opposition House Leader is worried about decorum and how this place looks,

I suggest that he take some time this evening to go back and watch question period and watch the ridiculous behaviour of him and his colleagues inside this place.

As for this point of order, it's not a point of order. I don't have the benefit of the Blues. I don't know what he's referring to, and I will leave it at that, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity just to add a bit of my own observation. I do sit next to the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, and I did indeed overhear that particular remark. Indeed, we're exposed to some colourful commentary from that member quite often during question period and at times during debate. I referenced it during my own debate on Bill 8. While I recognize that you may not have heard that comment and it may not be contained in the Blues, I would suggest that that member give some due consideration to his own leader's admonition: work hard, stay humble, and earn every vote.

The Speaker: I am prepared to rule. [interjection] I'm prepared to rule. I'm happy to hear from the hon. member. I think that it would be reasonable and prudent for me to make reference to *Beauchesne's* 486(4), that says:

Remarks [that] do not appear on the public record and are therefore private conversations not heard by the Chair do not invite the intervention of the Speaker, although Members have apologized for hurtful remarks uttered in such circumstances.

What I would say is that if, in fact, members are using coarse language that is certainly unparliamentary, they do take the opportunity to apologize to the House should that be warranted. However, in the current circumstances I am unable to rule that that is or was not a point of order as I did not hear that. However, I will be interested to listen and see. I do have the benefit of the Blues, and it isn't recorded in the Blues, but I will have the opportunity to review that later as I'd like to encourage all members to use language as parliamentary as humanly possible.

Point of order 8, raised by the hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, those were rolled into the point of order we already addressed.

The Speaker: Wonderful. Thank you.

Orders of the Day Committee of Supply

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

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

Interim Supply Estimates 2019-20 General Revenue Fund and Lottery Fund

The Chair: Hon. members, before we commence consideration of interim 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 ...

- (e) 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 [(a), (b), and] (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 complete, 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 20, approved by the Assembly yesterday, the time allotted for consideration is three hours.

I will now recognize the hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance to move the estimates.

3:00

Mr. Toews: Sure. Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to move the 2019-2020 interim supply estimates for the Legislative Assembly and government.

I'm privileged to rise in the House to present the interim supply estimates. I would like to begin my remarks today by talking a little bit about what I've learned from my first month in this role. First of all, I've learned from day 1 about the dedication and incredible hard work of the officials I'm privileged to serve beside in Treasury Board and the Ministry of Finance. From the very first day on the job they've demonstrated the most important tenet of the public service, and that is fearless advice and loyal implementation. I know they provided the same high standard of professional advice, insight, and policy analysis that the members opposite had access to when they were privileged to sit on this side of the House.

Now, I cannot speak to the extent to which members opposite were prepared to take that advice. I say that because what I have found to date is that there is a great deal of work for this government to do to return Alberta's government to a high standard of fiscal prudence, to meticulous budget management, and ultimately to the demonstration of respect for the money that Albertans send to us through their tax contributions. I can speak for all of my colleagues on this side of the House when I say that the administration of Alberta's taxpayers' dollars is a serious and solemn endeavour.

When our fellow citizens go to work every day, they are providing for their families, and they are working hard to give their children every advantage. Like every one of us, they are working to make their life better and better for their families and to give their children advantages that they did not have, and when they go to work every day, they send a portion of their earnings to us. So I say to every Albertan, whether they are working in our oil fields, in a restaurant, in an office, or whether they are out on a farm or a ranch: thank you. When you make that incredible effort for yourself and your families, you're also building Alberta and helping to provide services and programs that lift up everyone.

I also know that many Albertans have suffered over the past four years from the severe economic downturn overseen by the previous government. I'm keenly aware of that effort and those sacrifices as I stand before this Chamber today to ask for funding that will continue to provide services and programs while we, in turn, work very hard on behalf of Albertans to build a prudent budget, a budget that fulfills the promises that we made to Albertans when we sought their votes and the ability to form government. It is because of our respect and admiration for that effort that we are taking a careful approach to how we spend every one of those hard-earned dollars. We've undergone an extensive process to ensure that we are

securing the funding necessary to continue to provide the services and programs that Albertans have come to expect, and we've also paid careful attention to the work that is required to ensure that our campaign commitments will be implemented. Of course, we have very high expectations of the work of the MacKinnon panel, expectations that we are confident they will deliver on.

What needs to be understood is that this is not a budget. These are supply estimates to continue providing quality services to Albertans until we table a full budget in the fall. These interim supply estimates represent the work we have undertaken in my ministry and across all ministries to ensure that government has the funding required to continue to operate while we prepare our first budget. This will allow the business of our province to continue until the full 2019-2020 estimates are approved before the end of November. When passed, these interim supply estimates will authorize approximate spending of \$107 million for the Legislative Assembly, \$27.8 billion in expense funding, \$2.4 billion in capital investment funding, \$786 million in financial transactions funding for the government, and \$943 million for the transfer from the lottery fund to the general revenue fund. These estimates will be fully debated when the budget documents are tabled in the fall. Approval of interim supply estimates pending the release and approval of the budget will allow the Assembly the time it needs to review and debate those plans.

Now, my colleagues and I will be pleased to answer questions from Members of the Assembly. Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. minister.

We'll now move to the opposition members of caucus for your first 20-minute block. Hon. Member for St. Albert, would you like to go back and forth with the minister?

Ms Renaud: Yes, I would if that's acceptable to the minister.

The Chair: Minister, do you agree?
Okay. Member, please proceed.

Ms Renaud: Great. Thank you. I'd like to focus right now on Community and Social Services. First, I'd like to talk a little about AISH, which is assured income for the severely handicapped. The AISH budget for 2018 is approximately \$1.133 billion, an \$85 million increase over budget 2017, which is approximately a 9 per cent increase. February 2019 saw 62,745 AISH recipients, with approximately 50 new applications received across Alberta each day. What are the projections for the number of new AISH recipients for the next budget year or interim?

Mr. Toews: Could I politely ask the hon. member just to repeat the last part of that question?

Ms Renaud: I'd be happy to. What are the projections for the number of new AISH recipients for the next budget year or interim? Maybe I'll just add a little bit to that. Was this projection influenced by the AISH intake process changes, that being centralized intake, digital upgrades, that sort of thing?

The Chair: The minister.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. At this point in time I don't have that detailed data in front of us. I'll look forward to providing that and advising the minister to provide that information. What I can say is that, again, with Community and Social Services, as with all ministries, this is not a budget. Interim supply is simply the resources required to fund government services between April 1

and the time we roll out the budget. In this case, funding is available until November 30.

Ms Renaud: Yes, I do understand what this is. Because applications have continued to come in, it's important that we understand where they're coming from and how many are coming.

Changes to intake processes have been implemented in the large urban centres, the Calgary and Edmonton regions, and have reduced decision wait time, which has a financial implication by approximately two weeks. What are the plans to extend this work, to streamline AISH processes – again, deficiencies were pointed out by the Auditor General – in communities outside of Calgary and Edmonton, so in rural communities that are also struggling with the number of AISH applications they receive?

Thanks.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will commit to the member opposite that we will take those concerns and pass them on to the minister and provide any response that's appropriate.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Ms Renaud: Thank you. Just on that theme, will the centralized AISH intake process, which reduces the time to get to the eligibility decision, be implemented in areas outside of Calgary and Edmonton? I guess I'm asking: is this the plan? Will these processes, these digital upgrades that have been introduced to the large urban centres like Calgary and Edmonton, be expanded to rural communities? If the minister doesn't have that answer, could he commit to us that he will give us those answers in writing?

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Ms Pon: Madam Chair, thank you for the questions. Yes, it's in the plan. We've been working on it. I've been working with our deputy's office. The mixture that we're working on will make it streamlined, more or less, easier for the seniors and for the AISH program. It is planned, and it's making progress.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just for clarification, AISH doesn't extend beyond 65 years of age. I just wanted to go back and ask about the projected cost savings or if there's, I guess, a thought to looking at this when the government will be budgeting for these added pressures, the projected cost savings of a reduced number of appeals due to difficult AISH application processes.

Again, going back to my earlier comment, The Auditor General spent a great deal of time informing the previous Legislature about the difficulties in that AISH application process. There has been a fair amount of work done under previous governments to streamline that, and I guess we're seeing these shorter wait times for eligibility decisions. Can the government let us know about their work or the work they'll undertake around projecting cost savings for those processes?

Thank you.

3:10

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. We will provide a response to the member opposite. Again, there will be complete details when this government rolls out a budget, but in the meantime we will provide a response.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the minister. I'd like to switch over to another area, which is PDD, persons with developmental disabilities. In the fall of 2018 it was noted that there were approximately 60 to 80 people on wait-lists for PDD supports, with average wait times of 377 days. Edmonton and the south region had the highest number of people on wait-lists by far. What are the projected increases to address these wait-lists? Are the regions in most need being targeted? If the minister doesn't have that information readily available, if he could commit to giving us those answers in writing, that would be most appreciated.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. We will certainly provide a response to the member opposite. I think it's probably appropriate to note that every ministry and certainly the Ministry of Community and Social Services will be working to find efficiencies during the weeks and months ahead up until the time that we prepare our budget. Again, we're committed to Albertans to deliver the services that they expect during this time, really between April 1 and the time that we roll out a budget this fall, and at the same time look for efficiencies and improved methodologies to continue to deliver these services.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Minister. Currently under PDD funding there are two main streams. One is that the families or people with disabilities can contract service providers, whether they're nonprofit or private, and that is how they are funded. There's also family-managed support, which is that the family undertakes the care of their family member and hires staff and all of that. There are only two right now – two – family-managed resource centres in Calgary and Edmonton. Those centres assist families to co-ordinate the work that is required to undertake those services, whether that's helping with remittances, staff training, staff hiring, and that exists to support people with disabilities to manage the funding that they receive. It's a great deal of work.

The UCP platform clearly described a commitment to increase the capacity of FMS, which is family-managed supports. Now, that is certainly great, that families will be allowed to choose how they want to support their family members. However, it's really important to address the need to support families that are undertaking this funding mechanism. What are the cost projections of the number of people who will choose the route of funding with additional support? Obviously, there's been some thought given to this stream of funding if it was in the UCP platform. I'd just like to know if there are any projections that sort of pushed that issue to the front to cause it to be on the platform document, and will we see this reflected in interim supply?

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will just respond to the member opposite that those details will be forthcoming during the budget process. Again, I'll just add that I know our Minister of Community and Social Services is actively looking for efficiencies and at the same time committed to delivering the services that Albertans expect during this time. I think within every ministry we're going to be looking for increased efficiencies, removing redundancies wherever possible, and every minister of every department and certainly the government as a whole will look forward to presenting a budget with detail this fall.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Ms Renaud: Thank you to the minister. Just a word of caution that this sector, people with disabilities, has certainly been the target of efficiencies in the past. With the incredible wait-lists and the volume of people that are involved, just a word of caution on what that looks like.

I'd just like to go back again to PDD funding. One of the things that the previous government, our government, undertook was a PDD review. It was really quite a different review. It involved stakeholders from across the province and multiple different methods. One of the discussion points in the what-we-heard document from communities all over Alberta addressed PDD eligibility.

One of those old eligibility requirements focused on IQ, currently people under an IQ score of 70, which is – let's be honest – an old standardized test that is hardly relevant anymore. To the minister: will this government commit to introducing the results of that review and also costing out what the difference is in terms of people needing supports and cost if the PDD eligibility criteria are changed, specifically the removal of IQ measure, and will the minister commit to these answers in writing?

Thanks.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will pass that request on to our Minister of Community and Social Services. Again, there will be full details rolling out as we roll the budget out this fall.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Ms Renaud: Thank you. Another question. There is a line under this ministry called specialized community supports. Those typically include behavioural consultation services, professional assessment services, and counselling. They are regularly oversubscribed. I've heard of people being on wait-lists for that service for well over a year. Given the projected intake into PDD, what will this be expanded to?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. My responses may sound a little bit repetitive, but we're excited to deliver a full, detailed budget this fall that will lay out the priorities and fiscal plans of every department. We look forward to doing it.

Ms Renaud: Thank you to the minister. Currently persons with developmental disabilities does not support people with disabilities who live on-reserve. People are forced to leave the reserve to obtain services. PDD policy states that services are not delivered on-reserve, yet the PDD program is an in-scope program of the agreement for the funding and administration of social services, the ARA. PDD has not yet accessed this funding source and is not currently part of the bill-back process. The 2017-2018 number of indigenous people served is 553: on-reserve six, off-reserve 547. Can the government describe or explain to us if there is work focusing on this change to allow people to stay in their homes, stay in their communities, and receive the support they need?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. We can, again, certainly pass that question on to the minister. I would just pose this question back to members opposite. When you were in government, which

was not many weeks ago, was there a reason why you didn't move forward with that initiative at that time?

Ms Renaud: Well, thank you to the minister. I'm going to switch gears a little bit – actually, I just wanted to respond to that. One of the reasons that we undertook the PDD review was to address these really serious concerns that we'd been hearing for years, not just four years but decades. I am anxiously awaiting this government's release of that review, and if indeed the review requires more work to get to the place where there are robust recommendations, then I look forward to hearing that.

Now I'm going to switch gears a little bit and talk about the disability advocate. In reference to I think it was page 1, after consulting with Albertans with disabilities, our government was proud to announce the first-ever disability advocate in Alberta's history. Can you confirm if the funding for this office will remain protected, and what are your plans for this office in the future? I would also like to add – actually, no. I'll go back. I'll stop and let you answer.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, we'll refer that question to the minister for a response. I think I'm happy to say that we look forward to delivering a full budget with the full details of our plans to go forward in each department.

Ms Renaud: Thank you to the minister. In terms of income support, which is another program in reference to page 1, how many more Albertans are you expecting on the expected-to-work caseload, and what are you going to do about it?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, we will refer that question to the minister, and we'll look forward to rolling out full details upon the delivery of a budget.

3:20

Ms Renaud: Focusing on sexual assault survivors' funding, we know that the previous government committed \$8.1 million in increased funding for sexual assault survivors. Do these interim supply numbers include an ongoing annual commitment to SAS? Is this an increase from the previous government?

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. The cash resources that are reflected in the interim supply certainly reflect the resources required to deliver services, high-quality services, to Albertans until the time we roll out the budget.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Ms Renaud: Okay. Thank you. I want to just skip back a little bit to persons with developmental disabilities. Certainly, with over 12,000, I believe the number is, receiving supports from PDD, there is a significant percentage, certainly not all, but there is percentage, of people on that list who are able and willing to work but are unable to work or do not have jobs for a variety of reasons. The previous government, our government, undertook some steps, I think, that were quite important. One of those, when we looked at changes for AISH, is increasing the amount that people with disabilities could earn while on AISH without their AISH being impacted, sort of encouraging that transition. We also introduced an internship program. I guess my question is: can the minister talk a little bit

about the thought around employment for persons with disabilities and how that will impact future funding? Do you see that as a way to find efficiencies?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll refer this, the detailed question regarding program spending and rollout, to the minister, but I would like to talk a little bit about job creation and the importance of and dignity of a job. I think that it's very clear that one of the greatest dignities that we can have is the dignity of a job, dignity to provide for ourselves and for our families. So it's a great priority of this government to create additional job opportunities for all Albertans, including for Albertans with disabilities. Of course, we have rolled out a series of measures to get that accomplished. As you know, we've rolled out the job-creation tax cut, which is a key plank in terms of attracting investment into this province and providing jobs and opportunities as businesses come into this province and invest again. We know that that is a prerequisite to providing a sustainable job growth for Albertans. Many, many Albertans at this point in time are out of work. We find that unacceptable, and it's been a priority for this government to reverse that trend.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Ms Renaud: Thank you for that. Just to follow up, I can't think of unemployed people with disabilities that are going to benefit from a large corporate tax cut, but okay.

Can the minister talk to us a little bit about that one of the things the previous government did was that we got rid of some regulation that allowed employers to apply for a minimum-wage exemption for people with disabilities? Now this government has introduced legislation to pay people under 18 less than minimum wage. Can the minister tell us if people with disabilities who are under 18 will also receive a wage decrease?

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. The reality is that in this province we have an incredibly underemployed demographic, and that is the youth in this province. You know, we've taken measures, multiple measures, to ensure that there are additional opportunities for all Albertans, including young Albertans, including Albertans with disabilities. Just to respond, I think, to the member opposite regarding the job-creation tax cut, individuals that are looking for a job, that want to be employed, individuals who will benefit from the dignity of a job and providing for themselves, will be benefited from this government creating a more competitive business environment, which will then attract investment and attract jobs for all Albertans.

The Chair: The hon. member. Go ahead.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Chair. I recognize that we have but a few seconds left in this 20-minute segment.

The Chair: Hon. member, are you wishing to go back and forth with the minister?

Mr. Shepherd: Yes, I would, if that's okay with the minister.

The Chair: Minister, is that agreeable?

Mr. Shepherd: Okay. I recognize that we have but a few seconds left in this 20-minute block, but I look forward to having the opportunity to continue afterwards.

I'd like to begin with talking a bit about continuing care. Now, we recognize, Madam Chair, that the percentage of population aged 65 or older in our province is expected to grow by about 3 per cent during this government's first term, about 5 per cent over the next 10 years. That's nearly 300,000 new seniors here in our province. With that are certainly going to come some particular cost pressures, and it's my hope that this government, as ours did, is making some investments in planning.

The Chair: Hon. members, we are now on our second 20-minute block. I assume the hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre will continue with the hon. Minister of Health. Do you wish to go back and forth?

Mr. Shepherd: If that's all right.

The Chair: Yes, it is.

All right. Member, please proceed.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Chair. As I was saying, there are going to be some increased costs that will come with this. Our government had planned for that and had sort of made some increases in funds going forward. Now, the total amount for continuing care, excluding capital, in 2018-19 was about \$2 billion. To the minister. Just wondering about this amount that we have here for health, just under \$14 million. In that, what portion is set aside, then, for total continuing care under the Ministry of Health, and does that include any amounts to plan for expected growth?

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Health.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Madam Chair. First of all, just to add a little bit and to echo comments that the hon. Minister of Finance had said, this is our interim supply requirement for Health, and it reflects our commitment to maintaining our health care spending. The quick answer regarding continuing care: yes, we will be increasing capacity for long-term care through bringing back the ASLI grants and allowing that to be the method by which we bring further capacity in the system.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Chair. I do recognize that this document is not a budget, but I would ask that we do have this time here to have this discussion. It's my job on behalf of my constituents to ask questions about the numbers that have been brought forward. When I have a single expense of \$14 billion, I think it makes sense to ask some questions, and if the minister is able to provide any additional detail, I'd appreciate if he could do so in writing.

Moving along on that, Madam Chair, recognizing that there are also some other areas that are directly impacted by the expected growth in the population of seniors in the province of Alberta, one of those being the coverage for seniors in terms of pharmaceuticals and drugs, we know that we have an expected growth estimated of about 4.28 per cent on that coming up, so a total cost over the next 10 years likely of about \$8 billion. I'm just wondering, then, for this minister, recognizing that in these cases we're also not only talking about seniors but in some cases they may be having their dependents: while I recognize that it can be difficult to estimate precisely, within this \$14 billion can the minister provide any

clarity on what amounts are intended to plan for growth in coverage for seniors and drugs?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Madam Chair. First of all, I can appreciate the hon. member's concerns about being given the three numbers in the interim supply. But this is interim supply. This is not a budget. This is, rather, about our cash-flow requirements to fund health care services until the full budget is presented in the fall. The NDP were quite clear when they introduced their interim supply last year.

Going back to the hon. member's question about seniors' drug benefits, I have to admit that the number doesn't sound familiar to me, Madam Chair. I think the correct number is \$576 million, which is based on the number that was spent last year, I believe. So to the hon. member's question about what is going to be happening, I guess, until we get to the fall budget: the amount that we're spending is going to be based on the previous year's budget.

Mr. Shepherd: I thank the minister for that answer, and I apologize if I was unclear. The figure that I mentioned was an expected cost over 10 years, projected cost over a decade. That's why it was a little bit higher. But thank you to the minister. I appreciate the clarity on that.

3:30

Now, of course, also one of the other things that we provide for seniors is dental assistance. Again, that similarly has a projected expected growth of about 4.28 per cent. Within this interim supply have there been any plans, then, for dental and optical assistance for seniors in terms of anticipated growth and coverage for existing?

Mr. Shandro: Madam Chair, just to go back to our campaign commitment for our government during the last campaign, our campaign commitment was to maintain or increase spending. How that was interpreted as we go through this interim supply – just a quick answer for every program for the hon. member as he asks these questions – is that every program will be maintained.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate that answer from the minister. Indeed, that's good news, in a way, that they intend to maintain spending in all these areas. But, again, as I noted, particularly in the area of seniors, we can anticipate some significant growth in the population. With that is going to come growth in expectations and demand on each of these programs and these supports that we provide for seniors. That's not even counting the costs of inflation. So while I appreciate the minister's commitment to maintain funding, we need to recognize that if that is all this government will commit to doing, we are going to see a reduction in the amounts that are available to look after seniors in this province. Of course, I look forward to seeing what the overall plan is when they introduce their budget this fall.

Lastly, I did want to ask, then, just about the Alberta aids to daily living. I recognize that that is a program that does impact more than just seniors. It certainly impacts many of the people that my colleague the MLA for St. Albert had been discussing earlier. Just on that note, to the minister: would it be the same, then, for this particular program, with expected growth of about 4.28 per cent, that your intent at this time through this interim supply is to maintain spending from last year?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Madam Chair. A couple of questions to unpack there. I suppose the first one would be about increased pressures. To also highlight another one of our campaign commitments, for the first time in Alberta Health Services' 10-year history we have begun a review of their processes, of their policies, of their structure, to be able to find efficiencies. We are also finding efficiencies and working with our partners in the health care system, including AHS; for example, AHS continuing their work with organizational best practices to be able to find efficiencies throughout the system and be able to use that money to be able to reinvest in our front line.

Regarding the second question that the hon. member had regarding AADL, my memory is that this is a budget of \$156 million. I may have to be reminded of what the question was about, but I can confirm that there would be maintaining of that budget, Madam Chair.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate that, Minister. I appreciate having that additional clarity now.

Let's move on, then. Again, we have the larger number here of just under \$14 billion. Now, we have had the introduction in this House of Bill 9, which is looking to force our public-sector workers back from the table in terms of having the opportunity to engage in the wage negotiations that they had duly negotiated and contracted. I imagine that ministers at the cabinet table may have been aware that this legislation was coming and the intentions of their government to break these contracts. I just wanted to ask the minister, then, in terms of the budgeted amount that we have here, is there any anticipation within this number of changes to salaries for nurses or other health care workers that are part of the groups with whom they are choosing not to follow through on the duly negotiated negotiations? Or are they anticipating that they aren't going to be looking at any of these wage rollbacks until after their budget is presented in the fall?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Madam Chair. First, because this is one of the first opportunities for me to be able to speak and reply to some of the rhetoric that we've heard from our friends on the other side when it comes to Bill 9, I reject all the premises that were proposed by the hon. member; for example, the rhetoric regarding forcing the front-line workers back to the negotiating table, that this is breaking some kind of a contract. I reject all those premises. But what I would say, if the hon. member is asking these questions, is to just to go back to that this isn't a budget. This is interim supply. This is our cash requirements to be able to get to a fall budget. This is not a budget.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Chair. I suppose we can have a discussion of what words mean and language, but I say that if you're passing a law to tell someone they can't do something, you are forcing them. That being the case, anyway, I appreciate the minister's clarity. I recognize again that this is not a budget, that this is interim supply. But this is an opportunity for me and my constituents to try to get a sense of the direction this government is headed. I realize we have some fairly broad platitudes from their platform, and I appreciate some of the clarification that the minister has been able to provide.

One other thing I would just ask about at this point, before I hand things off to one of my hon. colleagues, is in terms of EMS. Our

government committed an additional \$29 million last year to support EMS here in the province of Alberta. That included funds for new front-line staff, for some new ambulances, a few other pieces there. Within this \$14 billion I'm just wondering, then, if this government is intending at this point to simply continue the amounts that we had put forward and continue on the level of spending we had set for EMS from last year, or if they're anticipating within this \$14 billion any additional investment to address a growing need.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Shandro: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to reiterate, interim supply, at least for this ministry, is based on the previous year's budget, so just a very easy answer for the hon. member.

As well, before that, I think the previous question might have been for me, and that is a question about the direction where this government is headed. The answer, quite simply, Madam Chair, from our campaign commitment is to maintain or increase health care spending. That's our direction. That's the direction where this government is heading, and that's what we are doing.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Chair. At this point I think I'll cede the remaining time to the Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

The Chair: Member for Edmonton-Glenora, would you like to share your time with the minister and go back and forth?

Ms Hoffman: I would be very happy to. All of my questions are about education, but if either the Minister of Finance or the Minister of Education want to respond, I'm fine with either.

The Chair: Minister, do you agree to go back and forth?

Please proceed, hon. member.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much. Mostly I understand that this is an interim supply bill not a budget, but with the information in the interim supply bill school jurisdictions are being asked to set their budgets, and most have already done that back in May. They're trying to figure out whether or not they have sufficient funds to deliver their planned programming. I'm hopeful we'll have answers today. If not, I'm fine with responses in writing.

My first question would be around the classroom improvement fund. Will school jurisdictions, boards, or individual charter or private schools be seeing funds directed to them to fund the classroom improvement fund?

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you. As you did say, it is not a budget. Rather, it is the cash flow to fund government services until the fall budget is presented this fall. This is very similar to when you presented yours last year. The only thing I can say about the classroom improvement fund is that it did have an end date of August 31 of this year.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I think the point that many school authorities have been making to me is that they're making a plan now for the next school year. They can't – well, I guess they could – fire a bunch of teachers in the fall or hire a bunch in the fall. It certainly wouldn't be responsible planning for those kids. I think the clarity I heard is that there won't be funding

passed on to boards for the classroom improvement fund when they receive their funding allocations at the end of September. I imagine that the budget will come after the end of September, but of course school jurisdictions receive their funding based on enrolment on September 30 and their funds thereafter. If I could just have that clarity, that would be great, Madam Chair.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Member LaGrange: Thank you for the question. I can just reiterate what we have already expressed to boards. They're very well aware that we are funding enrolment growth. It's been accounted for, and it's going to be funded, and we're going to continue building schools. They're very much aware of that. The rest will come forward in the budget when it comes.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you. What about the school nutrition program? Is there any money through this interim supply allocation going towards funding for the school nutrition program?

3:40

Member LaGrange: Well, again, this is the cash that takes us to the budget time, and anything that was promised up until that point in time is covered through the interim fund.

Ms Hoffman: The question that school authorities are asking me is: "Are we feeding kids lunch in the fall? Are we going to get money to do that or not?" I just would appreciate some clarity about whether or not they should keep employing those folks and buying the bread to make sandwiches or if they should cancel those programs until after the fall budget and at that time determine whether or not they're in a position to rehire folks through the school nutrition program. It was an individual line item before, so I'm wondering: are they going to receive a transfer to fund that line item?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Member LaGrange: Again, thank you for the question. I certainly understand. I was a trustee for 11-plus years, so I know the challenges. But at this point in time we have given them all the information we can. Once the budget comes out, we'll be able to share more, for sure.

Ms Hoffman: Okay. What about the per-pupil funding? Are there any changes to the existing formula? I know that there has been messaging from the Finance minister and now the Education minister around funding enrolment growth, but is it going to be the same base funding for enrolment growth that people had previously? Is the per-pupil funding level being maintained, or are there changes to the existing formula? How many new students are they anticipating?

Member LaGrange: As far as the number of students that will be funded on enrolment growth, it will be all the new students, and we anticipate that being between 14,000 and 15,000 new students, or 2.2 per cent. As far as the actual per-student funding, that will be something that will come forward in the budget, as you well know how those things work.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you. Through you, Madam Chair, I guess the challenge is that I do know how those things work and that usually staffing is done by this point in the year, most people are getting ready for holidays, and most teachers would know whether or not

they have a job for the fall before a delayed fall budget, which is one of the reasons why I think it's so important to give that clarity at this point. There are hundreds of teachers across this province that I've heard from – and there are probably others that I haven't – through their leadership, that have said that they're cutting positions because of the lack of clarity. So I'm seeking that clarity. Is the funding formula changing for the per-pupil enrolment?

Member LaGrange: Once again, this is interim supply – it's not a budget – so I can't share that information. I've been meeting with boards, and they have not expressed that as a major concern for them at this point in time, the ones that I've met with thus far. They are very pleased with what we have brought forward, and they're very pleased to know that we will be funding enrolment growth.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Madam Chair. Bill 8 proposes to remove – I think it has already actually been done under a previous School Act and then grandparented over – the transportation minimum kilometre requirement for receiving transportation funding. I know that that's moving into regulations that will be determined at a later point, but of course you set school bus routes, probably already, to determine how people are going to be picked up and transported to school. So I'm just wondering: can we get some clarity on school transportation, on how much will be allocated to different jurisdictions, so that they can have that certainty when they're setting their bus routes so that kids don't have chaos halfway through the fall?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Member LaGrange: Thank you again for the question. Very much we had indicated with Bill 8 that it is to keep the system whole, that there is no real change to what is already currently happening because we did realize that challenge to parents. As I've said, this is interim supply. We will continue with things as they are at the moment, and more details will come in the budget.

Ms Hoffman: My next couple of questions relate to the construction season. I guess my first one is that I get that this isn't the budget, that this is interim supply, but the construction season is happening now. It's happening between now and when the budget is anticipated to come in. So how is this interim supply bill going to ensure that we're taking advantage of the summer construction season and that no existing school builds will be delayed by, arguably, a year? This isn't a budget – this is interim supply – but the construction season is today, Madam Chair.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Member LaGrange: Thank you for the question. We will continue with the building that has already been allocated. Right now in process we have numerous, numerous schools or modernizations going on. Those will continue. As far as what the priorities are in the fall, when we get the allocation for fall capital, then we will release those around the same time as the budget.

Ms Hoffman: Would the minister be willing to table in this House a list of the projects that are moving forward this summer with anticipated timelines and clarity for this House?

Mr. McIver: I can safely say that the projects coming forward are similar between Transportation and Infrastructure. It's part of the capital planning and budget process. I recognize why the hon. member is asking, but that is . . .

The Chair: Hon. members, we have now completed our second 20-minute block.

We will start with the third. Hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora, are you the first speaker?

Ms Hoffman: Yes.

The Chair: Would you like to just continue the questioning?

Ms Hoffman: Maybe I'll give the clarity, because I think it's missing from this.

The Chair: Sorry. Hold on. We need permission to proceed. Would you like to go back and forth?

Ms Hoffman: Yes.

The Chair: Do you agree to go back and forth, Minister? All right. Member, please proceed.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much. My question. I think the first answer was that all of the projects that have already started will continue to move forward throughout the summer, and there won't be delays. I'm not asking about new capital announcements. I'm asking for a commitment from the minister to table in this House which projects are continuing, where they're at in the process, and what the anticipated timeline is given that we're in the midst of the construction season right now and the new capital plan won't come out until the fall. I think I heard the minister say that construction that was anticipated to begin will have already begun. I'm just hoping that we can have a commitment to have that tabled in this House.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah, our platform did commit that we would follow the capital plan that was in place. We're committed to doing that in the interim supply that we're discussing and debating in this House today. We'll accommodate that.

Ms Hoffman: Maybe I'll do it through a written question, Madam Chair, to get further clarity just specifically around the school projects, because I know there are many throughout the province that are anticipating construction right now, that have signs up. They just, I think, need to know if those projects that were anticipated to happen this summer are continuing. That is the thrust of my question. I'm happy to have one more shot at an answer, and then I'll move on to something else.

Member LaGrange: I've communicated that those that are moving forward have already been approved, and they've all been contacted, so their boards will have been notified as the usual process in building is going forward. There's nothing new. We've committed to doing it. They're going forward. As you said, the new budget will come in the fall.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much for that clarity. I guess, then, we're safe to infer that if you didn't get a letter, it means that your project isn't going forward. I imagine that's, hopefully, not the case. I think it would be easier for the public – I appreciate that boards have been contacted individually – to just have tabled in the House which projects are moving forward or not. I'm not asking for anything that the minister hasn't said is already happening.

Member LaGrange: Again, the Minister of Infrastructure takes care of – you know how it works. Once we put things forward, then the Minister of Infrastructure takes on the building of it, so that would have to be communicated through him.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Ms Hoffman: Yeah. I'm just communicating through the opposition to the government: these are the things that would help us feel confident in voting for the interim supply that's been brought forward. To the government, whoever wants to convey that back to the Infrastructure minister: I'm wanting confirmation about which projects are moving forward or not. If they aren't able to give that, I think it causes some uncertainty in the public about those projects, especially that we're in the midst of the construction season right now.

I'll ask about two specific projects. One is the new high school in south Edmonton. Then, of course, there was planning funding for a northeast Calgary high school previously approved, and that funding, the planning work, I understand, is nearly complete. I'm just hoping for clarity about those two projects specifically. If it's not possible to have all of them tabled – I would prefer to have all of them tabled in this House – then certainly clarity on at least these two fundamentally important projects would be very helpful unless the minister wants to give that clarity today verbally. That would be fine as well.

3:50

Mr. McIver: Well, Madam Chair, I understand that the hon. member is looking for a report tabled, but I would suggest, and I hope politely, that since school starts in September and that now we're at the end of June, if there's a school project going to be ready for September, the hon. member will be able to see it. If she can't see it, it won't be ready for September, and I'm pretty sure all the school boards will be aware of what they can see and what they can't. With all due respect, I think it's going to be probably painfully obvious by now which school projects will be ready for September and which ones will not.

Ms Hoffman: My question wasn't about: ready for September. My question was about the construction season and which schools are going to be under construction this summer. I appreciate the attempt to get to the September question, but my question was just about the construction season. I imagine there are probably schools in many hon. members' ridings that are due to have either major renovations or construction done this summer. I just think that the people who plan on sending their kids to them, even if it's three years down the road, deserve that clarity that these projects are being delayed because the government isn't in a position to present a budget right now; they're presenting interim supply. The people I talk to just want to know that there's certainty and that there's a plan and which projects are moving forward. That's what I think would give greater clarity.

The other things I'm asking for – and certainly it doesn't need to be tabled. They can be provided verbally here right now. I'll certainly welcome that. I would love information, and if it's not available verbally now, then I'm happy to receive it in another form. How much are the transfers to each of our public, our Catholic, and our francophone school boards, broken down by jurisdiction, as well as to private, charter, and parents who receive direct payment for home-schooling? I think that there has been some uncertainty about whether or not they're going to have the funds that they need, so I think that knowing now how much the projected transfers will be – I know that numbers aren't solidified until September 30, but staffing happens before that because kids show up before that. I

would appreciate knowing how much those transfers are to each of those jurisdictions.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. We can provide that information in terms of specific amounts that will be going out. I think that information can be provided once it's assembled.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much. Of course, if we could have that before we're asked to vote on the final decision about interim supply, I think that would be helpful, but I appreciate the commitment to get it. That would be my goal, that that be the target line.

With that, Madam Chair, I'm happy to cede the remainder of my time to my colleagues.

The Chair: Hon. Member for Edmonton-North West, would you like to go back and forth with the minister?

Mr. Eggen: Sure. That would be great if it pleases the minister.

The Chair: Minister, agreed?

Mr. Eggen: I'm here to ask some questions about Advanced Education, but I actually have one around Treasury Board and Finance as well, so maybe I'll start with that because that's kind of your gig, and then we can move from there to Advanced Education. I had a question. I was just looking through interim supply, and I noticed that there was quite a substantial increase in transfer of funds from the lottery funds. It seemed to be more than what had been done in the past in regard to the transference of funds, so I just wanted to ask the President of Treasury Board if he could explain why there's quite a substantial increase in transferring of lottery funds into the interim supply budget. Of course, if you don't have an answer straight away, you could always send me one in writing later.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. We're just gathering up the amounts here. In interim supply, of course, the number that we've presented is \$943,387,000, and I believe that for the year ended, 2018-2019, in total it was \$1,439,443,000, or \$1.4 billion. So if we did an eight-twelfths calculation on that, it's going to be very close, I believe.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Eggen: Okay. Thank you. So it's, in your view, a percentage difference that's in keeping with the adjustment we're making month by month. Yeah. Okay. Good. I just kind of felt like it was more than we had done before, and I will certainly pursue that further together with our Treasury Board and Finance critic.

I can now move to perhaps a couple of questions in regard to Advanced Education. Actually, maybe I'll move my questions around a little bit because the previous speaker, Edmonton-Glenora, I think, was pursuing something that is on the minds of a lot of different ministries, and that is capital projects. Again, with Advanced Education does this interim supply budget capture the necessary funds to move forward on the capital projects that had been committed to and started by our various postsecondary institutions here in the province of Alberta?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. For Advanced Education I think that in keeping with our platform commitment of following through with the existing capital plan, the interim supply will provide for the Advanced Education capital plan that's in existence.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you. Again, I did hear the minister of K to 12 education say that they were reassuring or sending, you know, comfort letters to schools and school boards around covering the funding for capital projects in K to 12. Would Advanced Education be pursuing the same strategy to ensure that the postsecondary institutions can feel that they can move with confidence on the capital projects that had been approved?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. I can certainly pass this, perhaps, request on to the Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you. Good.

My next question is around, you know, my understanding that executive warrants cover spending needs from June 30 of this year. I spent some time trying to figure out the comparisons for pro-rated expenses for Advanced Education, and there seems to be some discrepancy between last year and this year. I just wanted to know if this is a reflection of sending signals or projections as to funding reductions for postsecondary institutions for this next financial year. The discrepancies between the pro-rated interim supply, I think, might suggest that postsecondary institutions must brace themselves for cuts. I just wanted to get some clarification on that.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the question. Again, at this point I'll just reiterate that the interim supply is, as the member opposite knows, the resources required to get to budget time. Upon budget time we will roll out comprehensive details of the plan forward, and I'm confident that our Minister of Advanced Education will roll out a very detailed budget at that time.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you very much. You know, again, the next question I have is in regard to technology-related postsecondary programming spaces over the next I think at least five years. I know that this government has in their platform a commitment to trades and to technology, so just as a way by which I can probe into this interim supply – and you don't have to answer it now, but if I could get a written response, please – does this interim supply budget reflect the expanded technology-related postsecondary programming, which included, you know, 3,000 new spaces in institutions around the province?

It would give us some assurance that we were moving ahead with continuity to see that this funding has continued and is reflected in these interim estimates. I wouldn't expect you to answer that at this level of detail with the people you have here today, but I would ask if that could be forwarded to me in writing, please.

4:00

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, I think we're really talking about a budget question, in fairness, and recognize the interest of the members opposite in the upcoming budget. What I

can say today is that we are and will continue to be working hard on developing a comprehensive budget. We'll be pleased to roll out those details, and when we do, members opposite will have full opportunity to discuss.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Eggen: Okay. Thank you. My last question, then. Again, I would in no way expect this now. It kind of reflects the K to 12 question we asked, and that is if I could have in writing the funds that are being forwarded to our postsecondary institutions through this interim supply budget, detailing the monies that will be forwarded to each of our postsecondary institutions on an interim supply basis as soon as possible.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will pass that request along to the Minister of Advanced Education.

The Chair: Hon. Member for Lethbridge-West, would you like to go back and forth with the minister?

Ms Phillips: Yes, please.

The Chair: Minister, do you agree? Back and forth with the member?

Mr. Toews: Sure.

The Chair: All right. Member, please proceed.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the minister and his officials for joining us here this afternoon. I want to start with if the minister could confirm with the House that budget forecasts have been prepared in the fashion that they had been in previous years; that is to say, an average of private-sector forecasting and – well, essentially just that: private-sector forecasting firms with respect to the price of oil.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, in terms of interim supply, this isn't a budget at this point in time; this is determining the resources required between now and the time we roll out a budget this fall. This period is April 1 to November 30, and our interim supply amounts reflect, again, the cash or resources required to continue to deliver government services during that time to Albertans.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm wondering. So if it is to meet the demands between now and the end of October, mid-November, if the minister can confirm, though, with the House that funds forwarded, for example, for CFEP and CIP, which are, I think, on a quarterly intake basis or perhaps three times a year – I might be mistaken on that. If that intake period will be funded for the community facility enhancement program and the community investment program, if that can be confirmed, that those funds will be there for folks who are participating in application processes right now.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. At this point in time I can't confirm. We can get back to the member opposite with that information, again, relative to the interim supply period.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Ms Phillips: Thank you. Yeah, I think there are a lot of community groups who will be waiting and will be very interested to know that potentially the next intake period will be all for naught. These are nonprofits that make those applications, so we don't want them to waste their time.

Madam Chair, I'm wondering if the member can confirm. Certainly, I represent a very large university. I know that we had some back and forth with the Advanced Education critic, but I'm wondering if the member can confirm for us that the interim supply funds that are being forwarded for the beginning of the September academic year include a 2 per cent increase and backfilling of the tuition freeze, please.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again I would say this, that this is not a budget. Clearly, the Minister of Advanced Education will be rolling a budget out this fall. At this point in time, again, these are the resources required to get us to that point. In terms of budget details, they will be forthcoming later in this season.

The Chair: Hon. member, that concludes the last 20-minute block for opposition members.

We will now go to private government members for their first 20-minute block. Hon. Member for Red Deer-South, would you like to go back and forth with the minister?

Mr. Stephan: Yes, please, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Minister, do you agree?

Mr. Toews: Sure.

The Chair: All right. Member, please proceed.

Mr. Stephan: Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, I appreciate the opportunity to ask some questions about the interim supply. I do enjoy numbers. I like numbers when they do well. Having said that, I know I'm a little bit unfamiliar with the process. As I understand it, this interim supply isn't a budget, and really the purpose of the interim supply is just to keep the day-to-day operating of government in an orderly manner to support the public interests of taxpayers.

I also understand, of course, that the reason we're having this interim supply is that the government is doing its careful due diligence, that we were elected on a platform and a commitment that we would live within our means, and that that allows for the sustainability of public services. Due diligence in this context means being in a position to make fully informed decisions, having the facts before you. I know that that's how things work in the real world. When you are entrusted with taxpayer funds, that is a sacred stewardship, and it's very important that this government has all the facts so that it can then act in a responsible way to support the public interest.

With that kind of preface in mind, I have about four questions I'd like to ask. The first question that I'd like to ask is going to be directed to the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board, and that is in respect of our financing costs that are in the interim supply.

I just want to provide a little bit of background to why I am concerned about this particular expense. Of course, our financing costs are a product of revenue less expenses. I've looked at the annual reports over the past couple of years that we have as this government. I note that the 2014-15 fiscal year was the last time that government reported a surplus. We had an operating surplus of \$1.1 billion reported in '14-15 in the annual report. That was sort of the last time. That would have been March 31, 2015. That was the last surplus we had.

Of course, we had a change in government a little over a month later, on May 5, 2015, and our world somewhat changed, and our interest costs somewhat changed, which I am going to ask the minister to comment on. But it's quite profound and dramatic, actually, as I kind of looked at the annual reports. We went from a \$1.1 billion surplus, and then the following year, just one year later, we had a \$6.4 billion operating deficit.

4:10

So that was \$6.4 billion. Then we went and we actually broke over \$10 billion in an operating deficit in only one year. That was \$10.7 billion, as I understand it. That was '16-17. Then from '17-18 I note that the operating deficit was over \$8 billion. I don't know if that's a definition of success, but compared to the prior year, it did go down. As I understand it, the operating deficit this year: based on the third-quarter reporting, it looks like we're going to have a year-end deficit somewhat towards \$6 billion.

So we have accumulated debt of over \$31 billion. I know that we lost a significant amount of corporate income tax revenue from prior-year reports as well, so we have this growing debt issue. Of course, with that, we are confronted with substantial debt-servicing costs that we've been seeing grow every year in prior-year annual reports. Of course, we're faced in this year with our interim supply costs with the interest debts that we now have inherited as well.

I was wondering if the Minister of Finance could comment on the current costs that we are now paying on our accumulated debts, that have certainly been growing astronomically over the last couple of years.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. For the year ended March 31, 2019, the expectation is that this province will be spending approximately \$2 billion in interest costs, in debt-servicing costs. That has risen, as the member noted, quite substantially in the last year. At this point in time it appears that over the last five years, again, this province will have basically moved in a negative financial way, basically lost approximately \$40 billion or in that range over the last five years in terms of balance sheet strength. That's a great concern for this government, and that concern, we believe – in fact, we know it's a great concern not only for this government but for Albertans in general, so we've taken a series of steps or are in the process of taking a series of steps to reignite the economy. We know that by reigniting the economy, the long-term effect will be to in fact enhance sustainable government revenues.

At the same time as we're reigniting the economy with a series of measures such as repealing the carbon tax, implementing the job-creation tax cut, or corporate tax cut, along with reducing our regulatory burden, our red tape in this province and modernizing our regulatory system – along with those measures, of course, Madam Chair, we will be taking a very fiscally responsible approach to our spending. We recognize that in this province we have some due diligence. There's some necessity to provide some real prudence in the way we respect and spend taxpayers' dollars.

So that will be a major initiative, and we know that it's a major initiative for all the ministries at this point in time as we head towards delivering a budget this fall.

Mr. Stephan: Thank you for those answers, Minister. I appreciate that, and I appreciate the government's message and commitment to sustaining the important public services that I think everyone in this House values and, indeed, Albertans in general.

One of the important principles often currently in terms of fiscal stewardship is the relationship between population and inflation growth and operational spending. I'm going to be asking the Minister of Finance to comment on that in respect to the interim supply estimates. In terms of general principles many taxpayer advocates advocate for governments to try and manage their spending, of course, to take into account population realities, inflation growth.

Based on information that is available in the public domain, again having looked at and having the benefit of the annual reports over the past number of years since we had a change in government with the members opposite becoming the government, by my calculations if I look at how operational spending has grown year over year with the members opposite when they were in government and if I compared a baseline comparison to inflation and population growth during that period, what we have is a divergence, Madam Chair. We have a divergence in where we would be from kind of an operating base starting point with a current operating base standing point, in other words where they ended at, of billions of dollars in difference, actually. In other words, had the government over the past four years merely increased spending to match population and inflation growth, our operating budget that they would have finished at would be billions of dollars less.

What I have a question about in respect to the interim supply numbers is: did they increase spending above population and inflation growth similar to what has occurred in the past in terms of the budgeting that has been done?

Thanks.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, with the interim supply concept, with the interim supply numbers that we are presenting before the House today, I think it would be difficult to extrapolate with a high degree of accuracy their correlation with population growth. We're confident that the interim supply amounts that are in front of this House will adequately fund this government until we roll out a budget. However, the member's question and comments I believe are quite pertinent, certainly pertinent as we go forward. I can take a look at population and inflation growth over the last few years, which have been, you know, for 2015-16, 2.7 per cent; 2016-17, 2.4 per cent; 2017-18, 2.8 per cent. Yet spending during those years on a percentage basis was materially higher at 3 per cent, 3.1 per cent, and 3.5 per cent.

4:20

I think going forward it will be very critical, as this government rolls out a budget, to be very mindful of the trajectory that we've been on under previous management and with the cost increases that have been materially beyond population growth and inflation. It will be incumbent upon this government to ensure that we are respecting taxpayers' dollars, that we are finding every efficiency possible within our departments so that we're delivering high-quality services in the most efficient, cost-effective manner, that we're reducing redundancies wherever possible, that we are

conducting performance reviews to ensure, again, that government delivers at the highest level possible on behalf of Albertans.

Mr. Stephan: Thank you, Minister. I know that some of my questions were a little bit more big picture in nature, but I want to go a little bit more granular. I want to talk about the crude-by-rail costs that are embedded in the interim supply budget. My understanding is that this was a fairly significant line item cost that, unfortunately, this government inherited, Madam Chair, which we are now having to bear the burden of, some of the uncommercial decisions that may have occurred here. So if I could just get an understanding of the estimated quantum of those costs in the interim supply. What kinds of assurances do we have going forward that these costs can be managed as one-time extraordinary costs? Hopefully, this isn't sort of a residual cost that is borne over a number of years by the government through budget cycles. If I could have the minister share with the members here and provide some more information on that cost, that would be really appreciated. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mrs. Savage: Yeah. Sure. As you know, this was a deal on a series of contracts signed by the previous government that we are committed to getting out of. We made it very clear in the election platform and subsequent to that that we will not be in the business of competing with the private sector on crude by rail. We are doing everything we possibly can to mitigate any costs associated with that, and we're pretty confident that there will be a private-sector solution to it. There have been some costs incurred prior to our government coming in, you know, some pre start-up costs that were paid, and there are some costs we're anticipating to have to incur while we're unwinding and getting out of these contracts.

Mr. Stephan: Just a follow-up question on that. Do we actually have a number in the interim supply relating to the costs for these crude-by-rail contract costs? I'm just trying to get a sense of the magnitude of that.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, I think that on a specific number on that project, we wouldn't normally divulge that at this point. But I think it's important the member knows that there is an amount in interim supply that reflects what we believe will be an obligation of this government to meet during this interim supply period for costs and liabilities committed to by the previous government but now to be paid by the current government on behalf of Albertans during the interim supply period.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Stephan: Thank you. Again, with it being an interim supply schedule, I know that like crude for rail there were certain costs that this government inherited essentially from the prior government, you know, that may be extraordinary one-line items. I'm wondering if it has come to their attention if there are any other material extraordinary one-time costs that are reflected in this interim supply that were inherited by this government due to decisions that were made by the previous government other than or in addition to the crude-by-rail contracts?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think it's fair to say that this government has inherited a number of challenges from the

previous government in terms of the spend side. I think the crude-by-rail project is certainly one of those. I think every department has challenges that they've inherited. I think the commitment that we've made to Albertans is that we're going to very competently, responsibly work through those challenges and ensure that we're providing Albertans with maximum value for their hard-earned tax dollars.

The Chair: Hon. members, we will now move on to the 10-minute block portions. The opposition will lead us off. Member for Lethbridge-West, would you like to go back and forth with the minister?

Ms Phillips: Yes, please. I'd like to share my time, Madam Chair. Thank you.

The Chair: Minister, do you agree?
All right. Member, please proceed.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you. We just heard that, certainly, the previous government made some decisions with respect to projects. I couldn't agree more. One of those projects is, in fact, the Calgary cancer centre. We do see some funds being forwarded for capital investments within the interim supply. I would like the minister to confirm either in this House or in writing that the Calgary cancer centre capital investments and the timeline of the Calgary centre in terms of construction and other timelines will continue along the same timeline as previous and that there will be no change as a result of this interim supply.

Mr. Panda: Madam Chair, yes. As far as I know, the funding will continue, the construction will go on, and the timelines will be maintained. Thank you.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Minister. I think an answer that says, "as far as I know," is probably not enough for Calgary and southern Alberta cancer patients, so I think I'd like to request an undertaking in writing, if I could, that the capital funds are going to be forwarded in the right way, whether it's planning funds or other construction funds, to ensure that that project remains on time.

Similarly, the minister just gave us a long speech about how he's worried about borrowing, and that is fine although we do maintain a very good debt-to-GDP ratio.

An Hon. Member: Unnecessary borrowing.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, hon. member, for the commentary over to my right there.

Anyway, with the cancellation of the carbon price, there is now no money for Springbank, the green line, the valley line, or the Bow River mitigation. So I'm wondering if the minister can confirm that the funds for the green line are going to continue along the same timelines with the same construction schedule and if the minister could confirm that he is in fact borrowing those funds for the green line C-Train project and the valley line LRT project.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Chair. It was a campaign promise that the funding for the LRT lines, the green line in Calgary and the valley line in Edmonton, would remain in place, and so they shall.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Ms Phillips: Thank you. I think, again, I would like some confirmation that those projects will now in fact be borrowed for.

Similarly, I am wondering about the Bow River mitigation. Mitigation along the Bow is an integral part of responding to the 2013 flood event in Calgary, which we just passed the six-year anniversary of. Can the minister confirm that he will, in fact, either for the planning funds and the various studies that are going on or in the future capital plan, borrow for those projects?

4:30

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Chair. In fact, the answer to that will come out of the budget and capital planning process. The answer is not available today, to the hon. member. Sorry that that will probably disappoint the hon. member, but that is indeed the fact today. As we get through that process, that will become more final.

Ms Phillips: Well, certainly, the lack of planning funds for the Bow mitigation won't disappoint me as much as it will the citizens of Bowness and elsewhere.

I would now like the minister to confirm. With the new funds being forwarded to the Department of Energy, will the minister confirm that requests for contracting disclosures, requests for proposals, disclosure of contracts in the blue book, disclosure of salaries for political staff will all remain in place given the public comments about how these funds will be expended; that is to say, with more of a risk tolerance? I'm wondering if the minister can confirm with me that the due diligence around disclosure, competitive procurement, and audit and all of the normal functions of government will continue for this project where the chair of Executive Council has confirmed with us that it's going to be a risky project. I want to make sure that it is not \$30 million spent on friends, insiders, or a glorified Twitter account.

Thank you, Minister.

Mr. McIver: Madam Chair, I think the question was a little more rhetorical. There was quite a flourish at the end there, actually, a rhetorical flourish. I think that the hon. member was attempting to make some type of political statement, which, I suppose, based on our surroundings, is fair enough game. Again, based on the rhetorical flourish with that finish, I will say that when our government spends money on capital projects, we would intend to use that money in the best interests of Albertans and in getting the best deal that we can negotiate while delivering on those capital projects.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Madam Chair. Now, a number of municipalities had a number of projects under the federal ICIP, and MSI was used as their matching component. Can the minister confirm that all of those provincial commitments for all of those projects will be honoured between now and September so that municipalities can continue their work on these important capital projects? Or are all those projects stalled?

Mr. Panda: Madam Chair, our government was actually magnanimous in adopting the capital plan laid out by the previous government. We said that we will maintain the spending at that level, but when it comes to specific projects, we're going through them. If there are strong business cases for those projects, whether they are shovel ready, whether they have funding in place from partner ministries or in some cases private money through donations and all, how many jobs they create, how much economic

activity they will create: those are the standards we are applying. We are reviewing all those projects, and they will be approved on that basis.

Ms Phillips: Okay. That's fine, but I think I'm looking a little deeper at what's going on with MSI capital. I'll just give an example: a new twin arena in Lethbridge. There is a provincial component through MSI that the city is using as the matching piece. I want to make sure on behalf of my constituents that that twin ice arena is not now going to lose its provincial share due to some decisions that are contained within this interim supply and that all of those commitments that have already been made are being made good upon. I do not want to return to my constituents that we've lost our twin ice arena, for example.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. Again, we've committed to the capital plan that's in place. I think our hon. Infrastructure minister has noted that there is some review of some cost-shared projects that were in various stages, but certainly in general terms we're committed to the capital plan. There is funding available in interim supply consistent with that commitment.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Madam Chair. Now, within Treasury Board and Finance I'm wondering: between now and September will the government continue the supports to small and local breweries and continue all of those various programs, or are they being cut in interim supply?

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. We recognize some of the challenges, certainly, with our small brewers. I would suggest that we've inherited a bit of a rat's nest, so to speak, from the previous government on this file. We're looking at various options going forward. We're committed to options that are fair and equitable, options that as much as possible, I think, recognize market signals, and also options that are going to serve our brewers in the best and most sustainable way going forward. We're working with that sector right now to identify solutions.

The Chair: Member, five seconds.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Madam Chair. Can the . . .

The Chair: Apologies, hon. member.

We will now move to private government members' time. Hon. Member for Calgary-Klein, would you like to share your time with the minister?

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Yes, please.

The Chair: Minister, do you agree?

Please proceed, Member.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you, Chair. I'm interested to hear conversation about debt and being worried about debt. Certainly, I'm worried about debt. I know that my constituents are worried about debt. I'm particularly happy to be able to stand here today and talk about spending and debt going forward for this government and making sure that we have adequate budgeting plans and that we're using the taxpayers' dollars wisely. Especially after campaigning on that for the last eight years, it's particularly satisfying to be here for that purpose. I would say that \$2 billion in debt servicing is

irresponsible. The other people that I know that are concerned about debt are my kids. I'm sure the members of this Assembly's kids are concerned for their future and making sure that we move forward and have a plan that doesn't leverage their future.

One of the things I wanted to start off talking a bit about, being a not-for-profit guy, is that we had to raise funds to do the work that we do. Every dollar was hard earned, not by us but by the people that donated that money to us. One of the stories that really stands out for me in my career was when a young lady came in and she poured out her piggy bank on the counter and asked us to use that money to help the poor. That's when it really hit me in regard to where this money was coming from and the importance that we exercise great fiscal stewardship of that money to make sure that it was used to the best purposes for that young lady and for the people that we were serving.

That struck home when I was door-knocking and talking to constituents in our communities as they were struggling under an increased tax burden in this community or job loss or other things, just thinking about how they worked so hard for their money and how we are going to use that money. Again, I think that we need to make sure that we frame any money conversations in that perspective, that this is hard-earned money by our constituents, by Albertans, and that we need to make sure that we're using those pennies to the best of our ability to serve Albertans and not put them into a risk situation. Certainly, hearing about the inherited risk from our previous government and hearing about the increased debt, those are all concerns and things that I think we need to make sure we're considering going forward.

I think part of that is making sure that we have realistic budgeting plans going forward and that we're using the money properly. I'm excited about the MacKinnon panel, that we're going to be fully digging into exactly how this money is being used and finding opportunities and ways to save the taxpayer and help the taxpayer get better value from that money. I'm excited to hear about those plans, that we're working towards getting all the information as we go into that process. I want to continue to be a voice for that, and I'm thankful for the minister and his hard work on this going forward.

4:40

You know, better managing our cash flow: I mean, we've talked a little bit about revenue staying relatively flat while we continue to increase government spending. Again, being a not-for-profit guy, I'll tell you that if I managed my shelter like that, I would lose my job. I guess that in a way the party to the left of me did lose their job. I'm thankful that we're here to get things back on track.

As one of the best examples of that, I think, just reading through this and being an Albertan for as long as I have been – you know, just seeing the Slave Lake fires, seeing the floods in Calgary, seeing the Fort McMurray fires – we know that emergency funding needs to be available for natural disasters. Just seeing that this was not included in this budget prepared by the previous government and seeing how much money was required in order to help support our communities that were at risk because of the fire, this shouldn't have been a surprise. One of the things I certainly want to advocate for going forward with any of this is that we are adequately preparing for emergencies in this province and that we have that money there. You know, the fact that this wasn't included or adequately planned for, knowing full well what our province has been dealing with year over year, I think is just poor planning and, frankly speaking, shameful. This is something that I think we need to make sure that we're prepared for going forward.

All that said, just within that context, I wanted to ask the minister to help me understand how delaying our budget is going to help us make better decisions in regard to our budgeting going forward.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Member for Calgary-Klein I think raised some excellent points. Certainly, his observations as he spoke with Albertans during the campaign would have been very consistent with mine. We have tens of thousands of Albertans concerned not only with, you know, the economic malaise in this province but, in fact, with the trajectory of our accumulated debt, the recognition and concern about that accumulated debt and the effect that it will have on the next generation, on their children and grandchildren.

To respond to one of the concerns raised by the Member for Calgary-Klein on our response to emergencies and disasters that may come upon us in this province, of course, we all are aware of the fires in northern Alberta, and we have included in this interim supply amounts required to cover emergency response for that event. I think it's important for Albertans to know that this government will be committed during this interim period to any emergency response that's required to ensure that Albertans' needs are looked after.

I think that to take a little forward look to future budgeting processes, I clearly heard the recommendation from the Member for Calgary-Klein that within our budget deliberation process we look to ensure that we have a realistic amount budgeted for emergency preparedness going forward. I accept that recommendation. That'll be a recommendation we'll consider as we head into budget development.

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

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: Thank you. Thank you for the work in regard to dedicating resources. I'm sure Albertans' minds and hearts will be a little more at ease when they're thinking about that stuff, so I appreciate it.

An Hon. Member: When they're listening to interim supply debate.

The Chair: Hon. member.

Mr. Jeremy Nixon: When they're listening to interim supply. I appreciate the comment there.

A little more information just for our sake and for my constituents – obviously, we want to make sure that we're taking in all the information that we have, that we're properly planning moving forward in any budget process but also in this process. You know, the NDP, of course, is committed to certain spending, and I know that you've looked at that. I'd like to understand a little bit better about what has informed the decision to ask for this money to fund the government operations over the next eight months.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll respond maybe to a question that I didn't adequately respond to in the member's first line of questioning as well. The member asked, I think, in his first line of questioning about basically the value of the interim process relative to our fiscal management for this province. I think that's a good question. What benefit does this period have for us as a government going forward, looking to ensure that we can present a very responsible budget?

While an interim period has its challenges in terms of funding government – and that’s why we’re here today. I appreciate all the members here as we’re looking to pass a bill that will ensure that we have resources to fund government until we roll out a budget. I think one of the reasons, the chief reason, why we’ve delayed rolling out a budget until this fall is so that we can really understand our options going forward to achieve balance by 2022-23, of course, achieve balance and at the same time continue to deliver high-quality services to Albertans, which Albertans expect. Of course, we have initiated the MacKinnon panel, and they’re doing a deep dive into the finances of the province, particularly on the spend side, and we’re looking forward to those recommendations. We’re confident that they will produce some . . .

The Chair: Hon. members, we are now back to the opposition line of questioning. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: My apologies. Do you want to go back and forth?

Ms Pancholi: That’s right.

The Chair: Minister, do you agree?
All right. Please proceed.

Ms Pancholi: My questions are specifically with respect to the Ministry of Children’s Services. I don’t know if the minister would like to answer. I’m looking at page 1 of the interim supply, and I see that the budgeted amount or the amount for this interim period pretty much reflects what was in Budget 2018. My question for the minister is – as I know, the minister is very aware of the action plan coming out of the Ministerial Panel on Child Intervention. There were a number of immediate, intermediate, and long-term action plans and goals. Now, the previous budget would have been, I guess, focused on achieving a lot of the immediate goals. My question for the minister, though, is: how does this reflect the work, which will be different from what had been done over the last year, to achieve the immediate goals? How does this reflect a commitment to the work that is being done on the intermediate and long-term action plan goals, and does it mean that there is still a commitment to meet the timeline set out in the action plan?

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Children’s Services.

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I think the answers that I can provide the member opposite today are very similar to what I provided last week in this House. The funding, obviously, in interim is based on last year’s budget. We’re going to continue that. A number of the shorter term, immediate-term goals outlined within the action plan have already been undertaken, and a lot of the medium- and longer term goals will require ongoing work with our community stakeholders, First Nations, community partners. I’m happy to say that some of those conversations started to happen again last week, so we will look to see what that looks like going forward.

I can’t speak to what’s going to be in the budget. As my colleagues have mentioned, we are in a very difficult fiscal position, but I do think that the numbers that you’re referencing in terms of our interim funding show that our government does value the young people in this province and that we want to make sure that our children and families, especially those most vulnerable, are safe and supported.

The Chair: The hon. member.

4:50

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the minister for her response. I guess my question a little bit more specifically is: the goals, the immediate goals, were different then, and some of them are related, but some of the immediate goals under the action plan had specific dollar amounts allocated to them whereas some of the intermediate and long-term goals were a bit more fluid and did not specify specific dollar amounts. Given that the work is going to be different – right? – because the nature of the goals and the work that needs to be done is different, I guess I’m questioning why the dollar figure amount is the same, because the work is different. I guess the question is – for some of the longer term goals you could imagine that the amount of work and investment in those would be maybe more substantial – does this figure represent that fewer funds are being allocated to the implementation of the intermediate and long-term goals or more? I’m open to hearing that. I’m just wondering how it breaks down in terms of the actual goals that are set out in the action plan.

Ms Schulz: There are, I think, two separate questions there. The first: speaking to numbers going forward, obviously, this is interim funding to get us through the time that we need to take to put forward a responsible budget that takes into account the fiscal position that we as a government are faced with but also recognizing that we have statutory requirements to take care of the children most vulnerable in our province, especially when we’re talking about child intervention. That’s what a lot of the actions outlined in the action plan and the panel work are focused on. Taking a step back, I think the member opposite is correct that not all of the mid- and long-term plans have dollar amounts allocated to them. I mean, a number of those pieces outline that we are going to begin work with stakeholders on certain things, and we are going to continue to do that work.

I also want to recognize that the work that the panel did was quite transformative in terms of changing practice. While we’ve certainly put dollars into that, one of the things that those conversations and that feedback and those recommendations that came forward had, taking into account feedback from our stakeholders, our indigenous leaders, indigenous communities, people with lived experience, was that real changes in practice needed to be made in terms of how we support children and families, trends in how we support children and families. Some of the things that we learned through that work was, ultimately, that we know that keeping children connected with their families and their communities and their culture is hugely important, especially for their longer term success. Certainly, those things have been changed in practice.

Then there are also different things that come up that do change some of our considerations for those action plans. Today we’re following closely what’s happening at the federal level with Bill C-92, and certainly that could have impact on the work that we do with our stakeholders. There were certainly things that were brought up by our indigenous leaders in the conversations that we had last week. I don’t want to presuppose any of that. More information will come on the actual spending when the government releases a budget this fall.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the minister. I agree with the minister’s characterization that the ministerial panel and the action plan are transformative, and I know that we share that commitment to implementing those changes because it will be very transformative for the children in this province if the action plan is fully implemented. Obviously, I thank

the minister for her comments. There is ongoing work, the day-to-day work of the ministry, that's very important. I think the action plan sets out, quite honestly, a lot of work that is on top of the day-to-day work. It is transforming. It is working with the stakeholders. It is that work.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

Having worked in public service, when there are new projects and new things, that does take a commitment of resources with respect to the people in the ministry who maybe were previously tasked with other work, are now doing other things, maybe bringing on new staff. I know a number of the action plan goals involve providing additional supports and services to indigenous communities. While I appreciate that the day-to-day work is critical and still needs to be done, I do think that the action plan calls on – and the previous government made a commitment to additional funding to support the implementation of the action plan. I just wanted to highlight that I think it's – we need to see that the dollars are reflecting that there is additional work that has been given to this ministry to fully implement these recommendations.

While I appreciate the comments that there will be a budget coming forward in the fall and there will be more details there, a number of the intermediate goals in the action plan set out a target completion date of 2020, which is just not that long after the fall budget will be tabled. That work must be being done now.

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

You know, we can't wait until a fall budget, and I'm not suggesting that that's what the minister is saying, but that work has to be happening now, not just when the budget is tabled in the fall. My hope is that on top of the additional work, the day-to-day work of the ministry, there is still a commitment to supporting the additional work related to the implementation of the action plan. So thank you to the minister for her comments.

I just wanted to ask a question with respect to indigenous services funding, both on-reserve and off-reserve. I'm wondering if the minister can comment on whether what we see in the interim supply includes additional resources to address the increasing disparity between on- and off-reserve services for children and whether or not this reflects a commitment to fill the gap between the federal government funding for on-reserve services, which we know is much weaker than the support that we provide. Do these estimates reflect a commitment to meet that gap?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Once again, the money outlined in these interim funds is based on last year's budget to get us through until our government puts forward a budget later this fall.

Ms Pancholi: Just a clarification. Does this mean that the band designate role will be fully funded by this government going forward as part of the commitment in the action plan? Just wondering if you can comment on that.

Ms Schulz: I can get back to the member opposite with a response to that question.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you. I'd appreciate if the minister could provide that response in writing. That would be appreciated.

Sort of the last area that I would like to address is the funding for the early learning child care centres. I know the minister has

commented before that there is a continued – and I see, because the dollar figure is very similar to the previous budget for the three-year pilot project that began in 2017, which will end in 2020, that that commitment is still there to funding the early learning child care centres. But the question I'm going to continue to ask is: does this mean the government – you know, we don't see a change in dollar figures. Are they planning anything here in terms of investing in continuing that project beyond 2020? If the minister can comment on that.

The Chair: Hon. members, we will now go to private government members' questions.

Hon. Member for Central Peace-Notley, would you like to share your time with the minister and go back and forth?

Mr. Loewen: Yes, if that's acceptable to him.

The Chair: Minister, do you agree?

Member, please proceed.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much. Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to take the opportunity today to talk a little bit about Bill 6 and interim supply. Since the previous government didn't produce a budget, obviously, we're in the situation now where we need to do an interim supply, or some people call it interim appropriation. Obviously, it's to fund our government operations until we do get a budget together, which will be this fall. Obviously, we're dealing with kind of a huge – I shouldn't say kind of. We're dealing with a huge financial mess that this previous government left us, and obviously this is an opportunity to enable us to keep services running until this fall, when we have a budget together.

One of the probably most startling things that I think Albertans are concerned about – and, of course, it was a topic at the doors in the election – was the debt. Of course, the previous government had us on track to head to over \$100 billion in debt. I guess I would maybe start with a little bit of a question here to the ministers. Where are we sitting at right now, or where will we be at, I guess, maybe at the end of this interim supply as far as total debt that the government is in?

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. The member raises an excellent question and, I think, again, a question that I expect all of us encountered at the doors during this last election campaign, and that is a great concern with the trajectory of the previous government, a great concern with government accumulating debt to pay for services, to pay for programming that we're experiencing today. I think, again, consistent with the member's concerns, I personally had many constituents, many Albertans really communicate to me the importance of governments delivering services in a sustainable way, the importance of one generation not expecting the next generation to pay for programming that we were receiving today.

5:00

I think many of us are parents in this House, and some of us are fortunate enough to be grandparents, and as we look down the road, the thought of actually leaving our children and grandchildren with the kind of debt that we're looking at – in fact, again, the previous government put us on a track to \$100 billion of accumulated debt. That's of great concern to Albertans. It's certainly of great concern to me.

I can certainly commit to the member that as we deliberate in our budgets going forward, we will in fact be developing a budget that's

responsible and, again, responsible in a twofold way. It needs to be responsible in delivering high-quality services to Albertans. Governments have a responsibility to protect those most vulnerable amongst us. We take that responsibility, Madam Chair, very seriously. We also have a responsibility to ensure that we're being fiscally and financially prudent. I do commit to the member that as we go forward, we will be delivering a budget that will achieve balance by 2022-23 and will continue to deliver high-quality services to Albertans.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Minister. I appreciate that.

I appreciate the comments, too, about future generations. Of course, having children of my own, which are older children, and having grandchildren now, too, obviously that's a great concern as we look forward to their future and what we leave them. I think we can all agree that we should not leave them in a situation where they're paying for the mismanagement of funds of previous governments. I think that's great to hear. I think it's also good – you know, we're all looking forward to hearing from the MacKinnon panel and hearing what they bring forward to the table as far as the government's finances and what situation we're in.

Of course, when we talk about debt, we also have to be concerned a lot about the financing charges and debt-servicing charges that we put ourselves under. Those financing charges: that's money that's not being spent on services that Albertans need and rely on. Obviously, the faster we can get ourselves to a balanced budget so that we're not going further into debt and, of course, then the opportunity to pay down the debt so that we can relieve some of those financing charges – hopefully, with the new government and a new financial plan, maybe some of these rating agencies, that decide what interest we pay, will become a little more kind to us. With the previous government I think we had six credit downgrades in four years, and that leaves us in not as good a situation as we could be; that's for sure. I'm wondering if I could have the minister just talk a little bit more about financing charges, debt-servicing charges, where we're at with that, and how things are looking as far as going through this interim supply time period.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for the question from the member. Again, for the year 2018-2019, interest or debt-servicing costs are going to be approaching \$2 billion, and \$2 billion is a lot of money that could be spent on education, health care. It could be left in Albertans' hands should we have adequate funds to fund those important programs – again, health care and education – and look after the most vulnerable amongst us. Should we have resources for those endeavours and other expectations of Albertans, I personally believe that the money after that is best left in Albertans' hands. Typically Albertans know best what to do with their funds.

We know from past experience that when Albertans have those funds, they very often reinvest them in this province, which generates economic activity, which, in fact, grows the economy of this province, creates job, opportunities, and, in the future, future government revenues. Debt-service costs are a great concern and, I think, no doubt have informed this government in terms of its goals of ensuring that we're fiscally and financially responsible and its goal of ensuring that we are on a path to balance by 2022-23.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Minister. Obviously, the situation we're in: this is a pretty difficult financial position to be in. The previous government, of course, seemed to have no problem spending and maybe a little tougher time trying to make good financial decisions. I think one thing that we've found ourselves in – you know, I guess,

to maybe use a little bit of a pun, we could say that we're in a bit of a train wreck.

I guess I would like to maybe ask the minister a little bit about this situation we find ourselves in where the previous government, you know, during the actual campaign period made agreements with rail companies to lease railcars. Of course, that's incurred hundreds of millions of dollars of debt to Albertans. Of course, we know that this isn't in the best interests of Albertans. The return on investment on that is extremely poor, with a lot of risk there. Obviously, it was a desperate attempt to try to gain some sort of favour with the voters, but I think the voters saw through that desperate attempt. Any time that you're signing multibillion-dollar deals with large corporations, when the opportunity for return is very questionable and you do that during a campaign period, I think Albertans see that as a little bit disingenuous, to say the least.

I just want to see if the minister would want to comment on that just a little bit as far as where we are in that situation, the cost, and how we'll be moving forward there.

Thank you.

The Chair: Hon. minister . . . [A timer sounded] I'm going to cut you off.

It's time for opposition members. Hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, would you like to share your time with the minister and go back and forth?

Ms Ganley: Share my time.

The Chair: Minister?

Member, please proceed.

Ms Ganley: Fantastic. I'll apologize if the question is a tiny bit detailed. I'm a bit of a detail person. My question is obviously about the total number as that's the number we're provided. Just by way of a little bit of background, obviously this number is just one number, but we can see open documents: last year's budgets and the previous year's budgets. Last year the voted expense was about \$1.38 billion, projected at Q3 to \$1.464 billion. The difference, Madam Chair, tends to arise from nonvoted funding like the motor vehicle accident fund paying out and that sort of thing. Not everything in budgets is voted.

Interim supply is intended to cover roughly two-thirds of the year. Now, obviously, the budget doesn't roll out perfectly evenly. My recollection is that in Justice legal aid grants go twice a year and municipal policing grants go earlier, so this interim supply should represent slightly over two-thirds of the total budget. In this case, the amount is \$844 million, which would make a total budget for the year of \$1.267 billion. Depending on which number you compare that to, whether that's the voted supply or the general, that is between \$113 million and \$200 million less than it was last year.

Of that \$1.4 billion from last year, now just under \$1.3 billion, about \$518 million is for public security. Now, I'm going to skip that in my questioning because the government has previously committed to increase funding, and public security is basically the contract with the RCMP. It's police grants to municipalities, ASIRT, ALERT, other sheriffs, fish and wildlife, other enforcement branches. So I'm taking it – and the minister can correct me if I'm wrong – that there wouldn't be a cut to that budget line.

5:10

About another \$100 million is for prosecutions, which, I understand, is going to increase, and \$287 million goes to corrections. Now, they've done fantastic work over the last four years to try to sort of bend that down, but the truth is that the inmate

population is actually increasing faster than the population. So it's never been the case that that number has dropped. The Ministry of Justice and the minister actually have a bit of a tough job because there's no real way to get that cost down. When people are sent to jail, we are required to house them. That takes up about \$900 million, from which basically no money can be removed. So that leaves at least \$100 million in cuts coming from the \$500 million that remain in the budget.

My question, then. The divisions which are left are the courts, which take up about \$200 million and are primarily for judges and court clerks and those sorts of people, who, in light of Jordan, we probably ought not be cutting; legal services, which is about \$58 million – and given this government's stance on things, I don't anticipate seeing those legal bills going down – justice services, which includes family support order services; the medical examiner, who, of course, we increased funds for recently for a lot of important reasons; legal aid; and the public guardian and trustee.

All of those things are very important things. I'm not saying that there are no efficiencies. I spent a long time parsing this budget, which is why I know it so well, for said efficiencies. But that's a lot. It's, like, almost 20 per cent of that remaining budget. So I'm just curious where we think these hypothetical \$100 million in efficiencies are coming from. Like, are they coming from the courts? Are they coming from the medical examiner? Where are they coming from?

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Justice and keeper of the Great Seal.

Mr. Schweitzer: You like throwing that one in.

Madam Chair, as has been covered off many times over here today, this is not a budget. This is interim supply that we're seeking here to fund the operations of government for the duration of the period of time noted in the documentation. It's not a budget.

The hon. member, though, has gone through various parts of the department here in good detail, so just let me take a moment now to talk about the situation that we're in. Obviously, we're in the process of preparing a budget, that we'll be tabling in the fall. At that point in time we can go into great detail on what we're proposing to do at that stage. This is the situation, though, that we're inheriting, Madam Chair. Crime is up substantially across Alberta. In Edmonton alone, since 2015, assaults are up 11 per cent, property crimes are up 13 per cent, and sexual assaults are up 17 per cent. In Calgary over the last five years: a 6 per cent increase in property crimes, a 25 per cent increase in financial robberies, a 26.3 per cent increase in sex offences, a 27.6 per cent increase in robberies, and a 35.9 total increase in assault crimes . . .

Ms Ganley: I apologize. I'm willing to stipulate the fact that there are increased costs and that there are reasons to increase services. My question isn't about the fact that you will need to increase, potentially, a budget in some areas. My question is about the fact that this number is significantly lower than one would have expected it to be. My question is about what you're going to reduce services in.

Mr. Schweitzer: Madam Chair, I'd like to get to actually respond. It was a fulsome question. It was about three, four minutes long, I believe, before they actually got to the question. I'm just trying to frame some context in providing my response. I would like the same courtesy . . .

Ms Ganley: I'm just stipulating . . .

Mr. Schweitzer: No, no. I'd like the same courtesy that was provided in asking the question to be extended back to me as I provide my response.

Maclean's Canada, on the most dangerous places in 2019, says that seven out of 10 cities with the worst increases in crime are in Alberta. This is the situation that we inherited from the former minister. This is the situation that we inherited here in Alberta.

If you go out and talk to people in rural communities about the lack of trust in the justice system right now, we have to go out there and restore that confidence in Alberta. We have to restore that. These galleries were filled time after time after time by Albertans that were concerned about the future. They were concerned about their communities. We're making sure that we actually don't waste any time. We're making sure that we're going out there and engaging with them and talking to them about their priorities.

In the northeast of Calgary there was gang activity, increasing crime there. We made sure immediately to go and engage those community leaders here in Alberta so they knew that they have confidence not only that their Justice minister was there for them to hear them, to help make sure that he could address their concerns in an expedient manner but also made sure that the police were there as well to engage with them and build confidence in what's happening in Alberta.

We're going to be doing the same thing with rural crime, making sure we go out and hear their priorities, making sure we tour this entire province to make sure that the stakeholders are engaged in this process. We'll be talking to them about the priorities of this government, making sure that our budget fits with our commitments in our platform that we have, to make sure that Albertans, all Albertans, feel safe in their communities.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think the challenge that I'm having is that the questions that I'm asking are about the budget. I appreciate the minister's plan. It sounds like a fulsome plan. But my questions are not about consultation but specifically about the numbers that are before us today, and the purpose of this time is to discuss those numbers.

So I think the first question, then, I'll just ask. I guess for each division I'll just begin by asking whether you intend to maintain or increase funding. Certainly, the Education minister was willing to say this over and over again. With respect to public security, which was last year about \$518 million in the budget, do you intend to maintain or increase that funding?

Mr. Schweitzer: Madam Chair, again, this is not a budget. We'll be tabling a full budget this fall, where we can answer questions relating to the future spending that would be there. This is to maintain government services in the interim period of time. If there are more detailed questions in the fall, once we've tabled a budget, we'll gladly answer their questions at that point in time. In the meantime we're going to continue to focus on the priorities of Albertans, making sure we engage in a fulsome way so they have confidence in our justice system.

Ms Ganley: Okay. I think my next question, then, would go with respect to prosecutions and the courts – those were about \$103 million and \$200 million respectively – and my question again is the same: in light of the fact that this funding would, annualized over the course of the year, represent over \$100 million in cuts, can the minister commit to maintaining or increasing spending in those areas?

Mr. Schweitzer: Again, as has been said many times here in the last two hours and 15 minutes or so that we're into this, this is not a budget. This is interim supply that we're seeking here. I will note for the record that we're going to make sure that we tackle the issues that we have around Jordan issues and delays. We'll be making decisions to make sure that law enforcement officials have the resources that they need to get the job done. Many decisions, I would say . . .

The Chair: Hon. members, we will now move to government members wishing to speak.

Hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika, would you like to share your time and go back and forth with the minister?

Mr. Schow: If it pleases the chair and pleases the minister, I would like to share my time back and forth.

The Chair: The minister agrees. Member, please proceed.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't think it's a secret that we are dealing with a financial mess and potential catastrophe left to us by the previous government, and this interim supply will help enable us to keep services running until we can present a full budget in the fall after the results and recommendations are made from the MacKinnon panel.

I think about where we were heading over the last four years, and the immediate thought that comes to mind would be a fiscal cliff, one that has lasting effects for generations, potentially. That reminds me of a 1991 Hollywood classic where you find two women sitting in a 1966 Ford Thunderbird, staring at the Grand Canyon. Now, if I'm in that car – I'm in the passenger seat – and right as we begin going towards this Grand Canyon, I'm begging Louise not to do this, ultimately what do I do? I grab the steering wheel and I jerk it back around because that's the responsible thing to do, not to drive right off that fiscal cliff and make those promises that cannot be kept and put Alberta in a financial mess that will last and hurt our children and our grandchildren.

The previous government did have us on that path. They made promises they couldn't keep, and they used, say, interesting math. They made promises, for example, that were too high in their revenue projections for 2019-2020. They were \$379 million over, according to Stokes. In 2020-2021 they were \$2.9 billion over. In '21-22 they were \$3.7 billion over and in '22-23 \$1.6 billion over.

5:20

Now, I'm not sure. It's one of two things: these numbers are either bad math or maybe deliberately misleading the public. The previous government made three consecutive promises and broke each one of them. They promised to balance the budget in 2017-2018: epic fail. They promised to balance the budget in 2018-2019: same result. This year, 2019-2020: same thing. Why would electors believe them when they say they are going to balance the budget several years in advance?

The Chair: Hon. member.

Mr. Schow: I'm getting to my point if you would allow me, Madam Chair.

The point here is that there were some egregious mistakes made. I'm going to ask the minister if he could elaborate on what measures are being taken in the context of interim supply and also in future budgetary considerations to avoid a fiscal cliff and avoid the disaster that we were on until April 16 of this year?

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you, Member, for that question. Within the interim supply period, of course, ministries are going forward in a very responsible way. I think every ministry is looking for every efficiency that's available. They're looking at methodologies, where they need to be improved, to ensure that during this interim period we're delivering high-quality services but delivering them, again, in the most cost-effective manner. I think that as we head into the budget development process, it will be incredibly important for all ministries to take a very hard look at the way we deliver services and ensure that, again, we're delivering those services in the most efficient way.

Of course, we're waiting to hear from the MacKinnon panel. We're looking forward to the results of that panel. I think many in this House know that that panel has significant expertise, significant depth of experience, significant diversity and, I might add, is really a bipartisan panel. I'm confident that that panel will serve Albertans well, and they'll provide some very valuable recommendations in terms of a path to balance for this government and also, along the way, ensure again that we can deliver the services that Albertans expect from their government.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Schow: Thank you to the minister and to the chair.

Going back to this fiscal cliff that I referenced before, there were some problems, again, with the numbers leading up to when the former government planned on balancing the budget. Stokes Economics suggested that we would be somewhere in the ballpark of about \$100 billion in debt by the time this previous government was done. Now, the debt is certainly a huge problem, but in addition to the debt we also experienced six credit downgrades over the last four years. While those downgrades were announced, to my astonishment we saw the former Finance minister smile and downplay this as if it wasn't a big deal.

The Chair: Hon. member, we are on interim supply. I assume you are talking about that at some point rather quickly.

Mr. Schow: I certainly am, Madam Speaker. I appreciate your patience with my intro here.

To the minister, I am hoping that he may help us understand a little bit about, in the context of interim supply and future budgets, the government's plan to get our credit back to where it once was before this financial train wreck that we were on for the last four years.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. Certainly, relative to our efforts during this interim supply period we are working actively to bring a discipline and fiscal prudence to the delivery of services. We're not waiting to roll out a budget to do that. We're embarking on that immediately, so that is very relative to the interim supply period.

There's no doubt that the credit downgrades that the member spoke of were significant, and credit downgrades, of course, do increase the cost of borrowing for the province. From that standpoint, even during the interim supply period we believe that it's really critical to send a message out to the capital markets that we are being fiscally responsible as a government, to ensure that the markets understand that we have a path to balance and a realistic path to balance. I think it's critically important that as we develop projections, we develop them in a very responsible and realistic manner, recognizing the volatility that this province can have in

terms of its revenues but, in that light, ensuring that we're using responsible and realistic forecasts.

I do believe that, again, the capital markets will look upon our measures as we exercise fiscal discipline and fiscal responsibility. I believe that the capital markets will recognize those efforts. As they take a look at our long-term initiatives to attract investment back into this province, create economic activity, jobs, and opportunities, I believe that, again, all of those things, the greater picture, will be considered by the capital markets, because I think, as many members have noted here today, excessive debt service costs are really untenable for Albertans. You know, to pay bondholders and creditors as opposed to teachers, nurses, and other recipients of program spending is really unacceptable in the long term for Albertans.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Schow: Thank you. I want to thank the hon. minister for his answer and for the incredible work that he is doing to ensure that this 1966 Ford Thunderbird does not go off a fiscal cliff but, rather, we right the ship. I also understand – in the context of interim supply, I'm hoping that the minister can update the committee on the status of the enterprise resource planning system going forward.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Service Alberta.

Mr. Glubish: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would also like to thank the Member for Cardston-Siksika for this question. I'd like to just say that, you know, with my background as a venture capital investor I do understand the value of a well-designed enterprise resource planning system.

The Chair: Hon. member, I hate to interrupt. The time is now in the hands of the opposition.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods, would you like to share your time with the minister?

Ms Gray: I would, yes. Thank you.

The Chair: Minister, do you agree? Yes. Absolutely.

Member, please proceed.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much. Thank you to the ministers for answering questions today. Understanding that we are only talking about the interim supply period and funding the operations of government, I wanted to ask about some of the delivery of services to Albertans because, particularly with knowing that employment standards and occupational health and safety hadn't been fully updated in 30 years, there was a significant amount of change over the last several years. One of the needs that was identified was additional front-line supports for the delivery of services, additional FTEs, that essentially were happening not through new hires but just moving resources around government. Within this interim supply, to make sure that there's still timely and efficient delivery of services when someone has an employment standards complaint or when there is an OH and S issue, I was wondering if you could just speak to if the continued support for those front-line workers and making sure those resources are there are part of the interim supply budget that's been put before us.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the member opposite for the question. We're confident that the resources that we have in interim supply will ensure that government can deliver those services until we roll out a budget.

We recognize the importance of those services to Albertans, and we're confident that interim supply numbers will meet that need.

5:30

The Chair: The hon. member.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much. It's my hope that the plan to continue to kind of staff up in the areas where we needed to do that will continue. There was a very large backlog in complaints, particularly in employment standards. Making sure that when somebody hasn't gotten the paycheque that they were supposed to, that complaint can be dealt with in a really timely way I think continues to be important. It is a performance measure in the annual reports and budgets and so on. That's something we can continue to discuss in more depth with the actual budget, my concern being just the interim supply period and making sure that if there needs to be somebody hired or trained or moved, that can continue to happen, because there has been some language in the public about hiring freezes or job postings not being filled. Would you be able to speak to that? That's more of a government-wide question, but my concern is specifically front-line service delivery within the ministry of labour.

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, to answer the question of the member opposite, we will be looking for efficiencies. We're going to be looking to do things better. By saying better, it's more efficiently. There may be instances where ministries may find an opportunity where they can deliver services with fewer resources. I think that's always the goal of government, to ensure that we're delivering a maximum service with the fewest resources possible. That is a big focus for our government during this time of interim supply, and it's certainly going to be a focus of our government as we head into budget preparation.

Madam Chair, with the consent of the member opposite I would like to make a request. There was a question by the Member for Edmonton-Glenora to our Education minister around capital expenditures, and I believe our Education minister has an answer. If I can indulge the member opposite, we'll ask the Education minister to deliver that into the record.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you. These are constructions and renovations that are currently ongoing. Ross Sheppard high school for Edmonton public school district No. 7 is in construction or renovation. I'm not sure which; it doesn't highlight it here. Alberta School for the Deaf, redevelopment, Edmonton school district; l'école J.E. Lapointe school, Black Gold regional division No. 18; St. Francis high school, Calgary Roman Catholic separate schools; Eagle Butte high school, Prairie Rose regional division No. 8; Holy Trinity senior high expansion, 10 to 12, Edmonton Catholic; St. Edmund Catholic elementary, junior high school, major modernization, Edmonton Catholic separate schools; l'école McTavish expansion to add grades 10 to 12, Fort McMurray public school district No. 2833; St. Kateri Catholic school, modernization, Grande Prairie, Grande Prairie Roman Catholic separate school district No. 28; St. Kateri Tekakwitha academy, greater St. Albert Roman Catholic school district No. 734; Meadow Ridge school, Foothills school division No. 38; Westpark middle school, Red Deer public school district No. 104; Joseph M. Demko school, St. Albert public school district No. 5565; D.A. Ferguson/W.R. Myers, Horizon school division No. 67; Four Winds public school,

Sturgeon school division No. 24; Airdrie elementary school, Calgary Roman Catholic separate school district No. 1; west Airdrie, Hillcrest, Rocky View school division No. 41; Banff elementary school, phase 2, Canadian Rockies regional division No. 12; Auburn Bay elementary school, Calgary Roman Catholic separate school district No. 1; Evergreen elementary school, Calgary school district No. 19; Forest Lawn high school, Calgary school district No. 19; Cranston elementary school, Calgary school district No. 19; Coventry Hills Village elementary school, Calgary school district No. 19; Evergreen elementary school, Wildrose school district No. 66; Pilot Sound K to 6; Soraya Hafez school, Edmonton school district No. 7; Larkspur 7 to 9, Thelma Chalifoux school, Edmonton school district No. 7; l'école Joseph Moreau school, greater north central francophone education region No. 2; Irma school, Buffalo Trail public schools regional division No. 28; Huntsville school, Palliser regional division No. 26; l'école les cypres, southern francophone education region No. 4; St. Patrick's community school, Red Deer Catholic regional division No. 39; Wye school, Elk Island public schools regional division No. 14; Woodhaven preservation-modernization, Parkland school division No. 70.

The Chair: Hon. minister, my apologies.

Member LaGrange: I've got four left to go.

The Chair: Okay. Please proceed, Minister.

Member LaGrange: Sorry.

Peerless Lake school, Kee Tas Kee Now Tribal Council education authority; Trout Lake K to 12 school, Kee Tas Kee Now Tribal Council education authority; South Lethbridge school, Lethbridge school district No. 51; and Sturgeon school, Sturgeon school division No. 24 is tendered. Those do not include the design phase ones.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. My questions start off – and I know I'm going to run out of time – to the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance on behalf of the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. First question: is the amount that's estimated here higher or lower than our budget, what we had budgeted for interim? Have you increased it or decreased it? Well, I'll start with that quick, easy question.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: All right. Thank you, Madam Chair. In terms of the question relative to the budget, again, because interim supply is just the funding required and doesn't consider, you know, nonvoted amounts, doesn't consider amortization and other noncash amounts and because the spend is not linear, it's difficult to compare to budget. Again, I think what I can commit to the member opposite is that we're confident that the amounts here will take us to budget time, and we're going to look forward to rolling out a full budget.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Minister. I'm curious to know if the budgeted amounts or allotments in the current economic development and trade budget include monies for the investor tax credit, the capital investment tax credit, and the interactive digital media tax credit as well as if Alberta Innovates will continue to be funded or if you are changing their funding formula between now and November. I'm just grouping the questions. As well, for the artificial intelligence and high tech we committed \$50 million over

five years, and some of that would be coming through this interim supply.

The Chair: Ten seconds, hon. minister.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. At this point in time those programs are under review. Again, we're confident that . . . [Mr. Toews's speaking time expired]

The Chair: Hon. members, the time goes to government members. The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

Mr. Rowswell: Thank you.

The Chair: Sorry. My apologies. Would you like to go back and forth with the minister?

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah.

The Chair: Minister?
Okay. Please proceed.

Mr. Rowswell: My question is on some of the new associate ministries. The red tape ministry: like, there are lots of panels that are going to have to be started and funded. I know there are some specific things with the Associate Minister of Natural Gas and some of the issues he's working with in regard to linear assessment on dry gas and also the pipeline access for natural gas and what it's doing to the price of AECO gas.

I know that from the red tape side there are a lot of industry panels that are involved in there. When I was talking to Lakeland College in my constituency, I asked them if they are impacted by red tape, and they said yes. They had actually quantified it where it was going to cost them – the regulations that they felt they could get rid of would save them about \$3 million a year. Then when I talked to municipalities, they were saying: well, we'd like to have a panel, too, because there's lots of red tape that we have to deal with in order to, you know, just operate more efficiently and save money. My question is that these are new ministries. My understanding of interim supply is that we're funding what's existing and carrying on. What things are you trying to accomplish between now and this fall with regard to the associate ministries, and how are they funded? Where do you get the money for them?

5:40

The Chair: The hon. Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the member for the question. As we've stated in the past, the associate ministries are going to be funded under the various ministries. For instance, my ministry will be under Finance, so it will be funded under Finance. We will not be actually increasing any cost or expense cost to Albertans. We would be just reallocating some of the resources within Finance to be able to fund this important endeavour. As you've already mentioned, the issue of regulatory burden affecting our job creators is substantial in this province, and it has been for many years. This government's commitment to being able to address this issue quickly and effectively is to put a specific associate minister responsible for this and centralize the efforts for all of the ministries. Now, that is going to be funded through Finance, and that's something that this government has been committed to and the Premier has been committed to. It was very clear in the mandate that we received from Albertans.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah. If I could get the Associate Minister of Natural Gas to respond to that as well.

The Chair: The hon. Associate Minister of Natural Gas.

Mr. Nally: Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, to begin, we have to sort of understand where we came from. You can appreciate that when you have an accidental government staffed by paper candidates managing a \$50 billion economy, it's going to create some neglect, and that neglect over four years became rot. We have an industry that is absolutely in dire straits right now.

I'll give you just one example, and it's one that's been in the news lately, the issue with the dry gas producers. The dry gas producers in this province are absolutely hurting. They are paying 60 per cent linear assessment. Now, I'll give a shout-out to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, who has done a stellar job of stepping forward and partnering with us to work on this, but it's a difficult situation.

I'll give you one example. It was actually in the *Calgary Herald* yesterday. There was a great article about the natural gas industry. They interviewed the president of Pine Cliff. Pine Cliff has an enterprise value of \$120 million; unfortunately, they have an assessed value of \$691 million, and that's because their linear assessment hasn't changed. Just imagine any business, Madam Chair, that is going to have 60 per cent off the top of their revenue before they even touch operating costs or labour or anything like that. That's what's happening right now, and it's creating tremendous pressure on that industry.

This, of course, was, you know, also demonstrated by the recent Trident bankruptcy. When Trident went bankrupt, Madam Chair, they left 4,700 abandoned wells that were turned over to the Orphan Well Association. Now, I understand that some of those are going to get picked up, but at the end of the day it just becomes a death spiral for that entire industry, and it has become extremely painful.

One of the things that we've been doing, to the member's point: I'm a brand new associate minister, and we are embedded in the energy industry. What that essentially means from a cost perspective is that it's about reallocating funds. It's about priorities. The previous administration did not make it a priority. They neglected natural gas producers for four years. We're making it a priority. We're moving those funds around so that we can staff, you know, just a skeleton crew, if you will, that's going to focus on this important business.

We're also doing some work with stakeholders. Presidents and VPs of some of our biggest natural gas producers are actually part of a working group and are actually doing some work for us, and they're doing it at their own expense, Madam Chair.

You've got to appreciate that this industry has been neglected for so long. They are thrilled just to participate in the solution-building process. So they're doing it at their own expense, and I have to give a shout-out to them as well.

Thank you for the question.

Mr. Rowswell: I'll focus a little bit on agriculture. I notice the minister of agriculture is not here, so maybe Finance? Can I do that?

The Chair: Please withdraw your comment.

Mr. Rowswell: What's that?

The Chair: If you can withdraw that comment.

Mr. Rowswell: Oh. Okay. All right.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Mr. Rowswell: Crop insurance is a very vital tool for farmers – I'm sure they're putting out those grain bins right now – and we share in the cost of that. Also, as a matter of fact, agricultural societies normally would have their funding by now, and they don't have it. So I'm wondering: do we have to wait until this interim supply bill passes before they can expect that money? How is the crop insurance dealt with, and how are ag societies going to be dealt with?

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. In response to the question around the important programs for agriculture, there is a special warrant in place, and consequently there will be no disruptions to program spending or need relative to perhaps events of loss for the agriculture industry.

In terms of ag society funding, I will have to defer that question to the agriculture minister, and I expect that the minister can reply to the member on that directly.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Rowswell: Yeah. I'd just like to have the Minister of Service Alberta continue to speak from when he got cut off if he can remember.

Mr. Glubish: Well, thank you very much to the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright for giving me an opportunity to expand a little bit on the topic of the ERP system upgrade, or the enterprise resource planning system upgrade. As I said before, with a background in venture capital, as an investor I certainly understand the value of a well-designed ERP system and the critical role that that plays in ensuring that large organizations run smoothly and efficiently. Certainly, the government of Alberta would qualify as a very, very large organization. I can assure the member and you, Madam Chair, that our plans for interim supply will allow us to continue with our upgrade to the ERP system as we continue to roll that out.

Again, as we've said before, this is not a budget. It is simply the cash flow to fund government services until a full budget is presented in the fall, very much in the same way as when the NDP presented an interim supply last year. But what I can tell you is that we are focused on bringing overdue discipline to government spending, cleaning up the mess from the previous administration that was left behind for Albertans.

And, to be clear, we are also working very hard with our department officials to develop . . .

The Chair: Hon. minister, I hate to interrupt.

The time goes to the Official Opposition. The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre is rising. Hon. member, would you like to share your time with the minister?

Mr. Shepherd: If that would be all right, yes.

The Chair: Minister, would you agree?

Please proceed, Member.

Mr. Shepherd: Okay. I assume a minister of some form will respond.

Thank you, Madam Chair. Just returning, then, to some of the areas that I've been looking at, again, I appreciate what we heard from the minister earlier, the Minister of Health, and his discussions on how the just under \$14 billion that's allocated to his budget for the interim supply would be applied. I did have some additional questions.

In regard to the capital in particular, so looking at the \$165 million that's set aside for capital in the interim supply period, there are a number of projects that we know have been under way. To begin, we know that this minister has chosen, for reasons that haven't really become clear yet, to put a pause on the construction of the Edmonton clinical lab hub. That was something that we had put forward funding for and was actually under construction. To the minister: can you clarify if those dollars are still included in the capital investment portion here under Health, and if so, how are they being allocated since they are clearly not being spent on construction of the lab?

5:50

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think, you know, our concerns with the lab hub were clear in our platform. At this point in time I can say that this government, the Minister of Health, the Minister of Infrastructure are making some final decisions around that project. Again, I think we put that question out to Albertans in the platform. I think we were quite clear.

Mr. Shepherd: Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair. So there's no accounting currently for those dollars. Understood.

My next question, then, would be: do these capital commitments, then, include dollars for the completion of the Grande Prairie hospital? We know that that project has been under way. Individuals in that area have been awaiting the completion of that project. I just want to clarify, then, if the about \$166 million here includes the funding for the completion of the Grande Prairie hospital.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Mr. Panda: Thank you for the question, Madam Chair, about the Grande Prairie hospital. The full funding is in place, actually. Myself and the Minister of Finance and our local MLAs from Grande Prairie and from Central Peace-Notley: all four of us have visited that hospital, reviewed the progress. There were some issues with the subtrades because the previous contractor, Graham, had some commercial disputes with the subcontractors there. But the new contractor, Clark Builders, actually mobilized. Now they've brought back 90 per cent of the previous trades, so the construction is going well. There is about 30 to 40 per cent of the work left but mostly interior work, so it's progressing really well. I think it will be completed next year.

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you to the Minister of Infrastructure for that detailed answer. I appreciate that update. I'm glad to hear the project is going well and that those dollars are included here, then, in this figure.

While we have the Minister of Infrastructure here, actually, I'd be interested to ask this. I know there are a number of projects that had been approved or were in the process with the new federal government program, by which they provide funding for many different cultural institutions and projects but require that the provincial government submit a list of approved projects. I forget the name of the program off the top of my head, but I know that there were projects such as the Telus World of Science, the Winspear Centre, a completion project here in my own constituency, and several others that, unfortunately, due to some of the abundance of paperwork, shall we say, that was required by the federal government were not able to get completed before the election happened. I was wondering. To the minister: do you know if the capital amounts, then, that are included here for culture would

include those projects or the funding that would go toward those projects which your government chooses to approve for that federal program?

Mr. Panda: Madam Chair, the previous government had approved 17 projects before the election, and they announced those projects. Our government came in in the last few weeks, and we are reviewing that list of projects based on the cost-effectiveness of those projects, whether they're shovel ready or not, whether they would create economic activity in those areas where those projects are proposed, and whether the partner ministries have enough funding. We're looking at all those projects case by case, and very soon, probably in the next couple of weeks, we will let those stakeholders know which projects we are going ahead with.

Thank you.

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you, Minister, and, again, I deeply appreciate the very clear answer and the update on that. I know that our stakeholders will be very happy to hear that they will have some sense of clarity on that soon. Thank you again for that.

I did wonder, then, also – there were a couple of other projects that were approved for planning stages: of course, the southwest Edmonton hospital, which was a significant commitment for the city of Edmonton, which has not seen a new hospital in some time, and, as the Member for Edmonton-South West well knows, his constituents in that area and others have been under quite some pressure for some time with relying on the aging Misericordia. I think many are quite excited to see that project move forward. We also have the child and youth mental health centre, that was committed to by our government, along with some funding from the Stollery foundation. To the minister: do you know if the capital amounts that are listed here for Health, just under \$166 million, include the amounts that were committed for the planning on those projects?

Mr. Panda: Madam Chair, all those projects are still happening. Money was allocated. I don't know the exact details, how much of it is for what stage. Some of them are in program planning and different stages. The money is allocated based on the progress the projects are making. If the member is interested, later on I can give him the project phase details. Currently I can say that those projects are all well funded.

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you again to the Minister of Infrastructure. Indeed, Madam Chair, if I may say, I think this has probably been some of the most fruitful rounds of questions I've had the opportunity to take part in today. Thank you to the minister, who has clearly been doing his homework and has some good knowledge on his file.

Just looking through what opportunities I have here in the remaining minutes that we have, the one other question that I might have is to the Minister of Health. I know that there was funding that our government had committed for moving forward on supervised consumption sites in various jurisdictions across the province. This government has chosen at this time to put that funding on pause. I just wanted to clarify, while the government is conducting its review and considering whether or not it's going to fund these particular life-saving services . . .

The Chair: I hesitate to interrupt, hon. member, but pursuant to Government Motion 20, agreed to on June 17, 2019, the allotted time of three hours has elapsed.

I will allow a few minutes for the hon. minister.

Mr. McIver: Do I really need to ask for unanimous consent to go to as much as five minutes here to get this done, or can we get this done by 6 o'clock, do you think?

The Chair: No. We will just proceed with the vote as long as we need. Thank you.

Vote on Interim Supply Estimates 2019-20 General Revenue Fund and Lottery Fund

The Chair: All right. After considering the 2019-20 interim supply estimates for the Legislative Assembly for the fiscal period from April 1, 2019, to November 30, 2019, I will now put the following questions.

Agreed to:
Support to the Legislative Assembly \$47,398,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Office of the Auditor General \$18,000,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Office of the Ombudsman \$2,717,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Office of the Chief Electoral Officer \$22,153,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Office of the Ethics Commissioner \$630,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner \$4,582,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

6:00

Agreed to:
Office of the Child and Youth Advocate: \$10,132,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Office of the Public Interest Commissioner: \$696,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Office of the Election Commissioner: \$1,018,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Department of Advanced Education:
Expense \$1,685,728,000
Capital Investment \$192,288,000
Financial Transactions \$459,133,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Department of Agriculture and Forestry:
Expense \$426,430,000
Capital Investment \$8,925,000
Financial Transactions \$873,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Department of Children's Services:
Expense \$883,063,000
Capital Investment \$25,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Department of Community and Social Services:
Expense \$2,230,621,000
Capital Investment \$365,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

| | |
|--|---------------|
| Department of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women: | |
| Expense | \$199,106,000 |
| Capital Investment | \$1,111,000 |
| Financial Transactions | \$523,000 |

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

| | |
|--|---------------|
| Department of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism: | |
| Expense | \$221,228,000 |
| Capital Investment | \$4,183,000 |

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

| | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Department of Education: | |
| Expense | \$3,270,586,000 |
| Capital Investment | \$75,043,000 |
| Financial Transactions | \$10,900,000 |

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

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|------------------------|---------------|
| Department of Energy: | |
| Expense | \$309,651,000 |
| Capital Investment | \$300,000 |
| Financial Transactions | \$95,094,000 |

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|
| Department of Environment and Parks: | |
| Expense | \$435,307,000 |
| Capital Investment | \$44,768,000 |

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

| | |
|----------------------------------|--------------|
| Department of Executive Council: | |
| Expense | \$13,555,000 |
| Capital Investment | \$17,000 |

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

| | |
|------------------------|------------------|
| Department of Health: | |
| Expense | \$13,792,748,000 |
| Capital Investment | \$165,923,000 |
| Financial Transactions | \$45,213,000 |

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|
| Department of Indigenous Relations: | |
| Expense | \$136,899,000 |
| Capital Investment | \$17,000 |
| Financial Transactions | \$14,157,000 |

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

| | |
|-------------------------------|---------------|
| Department of Infrastructure: | |
| Expense | \$330,730,000 |
| Capital Investment | \$981,000,000 |
| Financial Transactions | \$37,000,000 |

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

| | |
|--|---------------|
| Department of Justice and Solicitor General: | |
| Expense | \$844,474,000 |
| Capital Investment | \$2,968,000 |

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---------------|
| Department of Labour and Immigration: | |
| Expense | \$155,730,000 |
| Capital Investment | \$767,000 |

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Department of Municipal Affairs: | |
| Expense | \$1,222,467,000 |
| Capital Investment | \$5,467,000 |
| Financial Transactions | \$31,905,000 |

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------|
| Department of Seniors and Housing | |
| Expense | \$336,926,000 |
| Capital Investment | \$107,430,000 |
| Financial Transactions | \$14,807,000 |

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

| | |
|-------------------------------|---------------|
| Department of Service Alberta | |
| Expense | \$405,937,000 |
| Capital Investment | \$65,800,000 |
| Financial Transactions | \$8,500,000 |

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

| | |
|------------------------------|---------------|
| Department of Transportation | |
| Expense | \$804,955,000 |
| Capital Investment | \$702,338,000 |
| Financial Transactions | \$66,626,000 |

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

| | |
|--|---------------|
| Department of Treasury Board and Finance | |
| Expense | \$139,976,000 |
| Capital Investment | \$17,000 |
| Financial Transactions | \$908,000 |
| Transfer from the Lottery Fund | \$943,387,000 |

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

The Committee of Supply shall now rise and report.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Milliken: Madam Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

6:10

The following resolutions relating to the 2019-2020 interim supply estimates for the general revenue fund and the lottery fund for the fiscal period from April 1, 2019, to November 30, 2019, have been approved.

Support to the Legislative Assembly, \$47,398,000; office of the Auditor General, \$18 million; office of the Ombudsmen, \$2,717,000; office of the Chief Electoral Officer, \$22,153,000; office of the Ethics Commissioner, \$630,000; office of the

Information and Privacy Commissioner, \$4,582,000; office of the Child and Youth Advocate, \$10,132,000; office of the Public Interest Commissioner, \$696,000; office of the Election Commissioner, \$1,018,000;

Advanced Education: expense, \$1,685,728,000; capital investment, \$192,288,000; financial transactions, \$459,133,000.

Agriculture and Forestry: expense, \$426,430,000; capital investment, \$8,925,000; financial transactions, \$873,000.

Children's Services: expense, \$883,063,000; capital investment, \$25,000.

Community and Social Services: expense, \$2,230,621,000; capital investment, \$365,000.

Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women: expense, \$199,106,000; capital investment, \$1,111,000; financial transactions, \$523,000.

Economic Development, Trade and Tourism: expense, \$221,228,000; capital investment, \$4,183,000.

Education: expense, \$3,270,586,000; capital investment, \$75,043,000; financial transactions, \$10,900,000.

Energy: expense, \$309,651,000; capital investment, \$300,000; financial transactions, \$95,094,000.

Environment and Parks: expense, \$435,307,000; capital investment, \$44,768,000.

Executive Council: expense, \$13,555,000; capital investment, \$17,000.

Health: expense, \$13,792,748,000; capital investment, \$165,923,000; financial transactions, \$45,213,000.

Indigenous Relations: expense, \$136,899,000; capital investment, \$17,000; financial transactions, \$14,157,000.

Infrastructure: expense, \$330,730,000; capital investment, \$981,000,000; financial transactions, \$37,000,000.

Justice and Solicitor General: expense, \$844,474,000; capital investment, \$2,968,000.

Labour and Immigration: expense, \$155,730,000; capital investment, \$767,000.

Municipal Affairs: expense, \$1,222,467,000; capital investment, \$5,467,000; financial transactions, \$31,905,000.

Seniors and Housing: expense, \$336,926,000; capital investment, \$107,430,000; financial transactions, \$14,807,000.

Service Alberta: expense, \$405,937,000; capital investment, \$65,800,000; financial transactions, \$8,500,000.

Transportation: expense, \$804,955,000; capital investment, \$702,338,000; financial transactions, \$66,626,000.

Treasury Board and Finance: expense, \$139,976,000; capital investment, \$17,000; financial transactions, \$908,000; transfer from the lottery fund, \$943,387,000.

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

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed, please say no. So ordered.

I would like to alert hon. members that Standing Order 61(3) provides that upon the Assembly concurring in the report by Committee of Supply, the Assembly immediately reverts to Introduction of Bills for introduction of the appropriation bill.

Introduction of Bills

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

Bill 6
Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2019

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 6, the Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2019. This being a money bill, Her Honour the Administrator, having

been informed of the contents of the bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

[Motion carried; Bill 6 read a first time]

[The Assembly adjourned at 6:17 p.m.]

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----|
| Prayers..... | 893 |
| Introduction of Guests | 893 |
| Members' Statements | |
| Property Rights Legislation | 893 |
| Education Act GSA Provision Enforcement..... | 893 |
| Skilled Trades Caucus | 894 |
| Support for Young Parents | 894 |
| Skilled Trades Training | 894 |
| LGBTQ2S-plus Youth and Bill 8 | 894 |
| Notices of Motions | 895 |
| Tabling Returns and Reports | 895 |
| Oral Question Period | |
| Bill 9 Debate Time | 895 |
| Gay-straight Alliances in Schools..... | 896 |
| Energy and Environmental Policies..... | 897 |
| Crime Rates and the Criminal Justice System | 898 |
| Public Service Wage Arbitration Postponement..... | 898 |
| Calgary Ring Road Completion..... | 899 |
| Oil Transportation | 900 |
| Racism and Religious Discrimination | 900 |
| Road Construction and Wetland Conservation..... | 901 |
| Health Care User Fees and Wait Times | 901 |
| Support for Seniors..... | 902 |
| Trade Mission to Asia and Agricultural Exports | 902 |
| Orders of the Day | 905 |
| Committee of Supply..... | 905 |
| Interim Supply Estimates 2019-20 General Revenue Fund and Lottery Fund..... | 905 |
| Vote on Interim Supply Estimates 2019-20 General Revenue Fund and Lottery Fund | 928 |
| Introduction of Bills | 930 |
| Bill 6 Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2019 | 931 |

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