



Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, March 11, 2026

Day 30

The Honourable Ric McIver, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 31st Legislature

Second Session

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van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Boitchenko, Hon. Andrew, ECA, Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)
Boparai, Parmeet Singh, Calgary-Falconridge (NDP)
Bouchard, Eric, Calgary-Lougheed (UC)
Brar, Gurinder, Calgary-North East (NDP)
Brar, Gurtej Singh, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)
Calahoo Stonehouse, Jodi, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)
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Chapman, Amanda, Calgary-Beddington (NDP),
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Party standings:

United Conservative: 47

New Democrat: 38

Progressive Tory: 1

Independent: 1

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 11, 2026

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Hon. members, let us pray. Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our King and to his government, and to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideals but, laying aside all private interests and prejudices, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: Hon. members, it gives me great pleasure to welcome the former member of this Legislature Mr. Roger Reid, who is seated in my gallery today. Mr. Reid served as the Member for Livingstone-MacLeod from 2019 to 2023. He was elected Deputy Chair of Committees in December 2022 and served in that role until he concluded his term as an MLA in May 2023. A dedicated public servant and long-time Alberta businessperson, Mr. Reid brought to the Legislative Assembly years of community leadership. We are honoured to have him here with us today. Please rise to receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Some school groups today, starting with the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To you and through you I'd like to introduce the grade 5 and 6 students, parents, and teachers from Botha school all the way from my riding of Drumheller-Stettler. I don't get many schools. Thanks for making the drive. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Mr. Guthrie: Mr. Speaker, through you I would like to introduce grade 6 students, parents, and teachers of C.W. Perry school in Airdrie. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Legislature.

Member Calahoo Stonehouse: Mr. Speaker, it's an honour to rise, and through you and to you I'd like to introduce to the members of the House the awesome and incredible students from Steinhauer elementary school. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Hon. members, also seated in my gallery today is Sandra Dyck, a strong supporter of the work of this government and of her husband, MLA Nolan Dyck, the Member for Grande Prairie. Sandra is highly engaged in her community, working aside women of all ages, and is an incredible mother of three to three strong-willed and courageous boys, Nash, Jayce, and Creed. I invite you to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Minister of Children and Family Services.

Mr. Turton: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Shali Baziuk, Devonna Klaassen, and Dr. Vivian Abboud from Alberta School Boards Association. It's been an absolute pleasure

to work alongside them and address classroom complexities and hear about the needs of school boards right across the province. Please rise and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Livingstone-MacLeod.

Mrs. Petrovic: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you my CA president, Micah Feyter. Micah Feyter is up here today making sure I'm behaving myself, which is a job that you know very well is sometimes very difficult, so I ask him to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Member Irwin: For 35 years Bev Toews has been a respected community builder in Olds, including a 24-year career as an educational assistant at l'école Olds high school supporting students. She's dedicated her time and talent celebrating diversity and fostering a sense of belonging for everyone, and if I must say, she's one of the best darned candidates our party has ever had. Please rise, Bev, and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. Williams: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce two friends of mine, Logan and his son Isaac Day. Logan is a businessman, a community leader here, and his family is no stranger to this Chamber or these halls. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The Member for Airdrie-East.

Ms Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two introductions today. First, welcome to the six or seven students from C.W. Perry.

I'd like to introduce members of the Airdrie Board of Youth Affairs Mehak Nijjar and Juan Cardenas. Please rise and receive the welcome of this Assembly.

Also joining us today from Airdrie is our new mayor, Mayor Heather Spearman, and Councillor Ron Chapman. Please rise and receive the welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The Associate Minister of Multiculturalism with two intros.

Mr. Yaseen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am delighted to rise and introduce to you and through you to the entire Assembly Mr. Jay Chowdhury and Ms Angelah Kusero from Calgary. Both are dedicated community volunteers who have spent many years supporting individuals and families through their passion and advocacy. Mr. Chowdhury is the recipient of the star of Alberta and the immigrant impact award. Ms Kusero is recipient of the inclusive leadership and Calgarian making history award. She is also my constituent. Please rise and receive the welcome of the House.

The Speaker: The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Wright: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you two amazing Medicine Hat residents, Pastor Gary Mason and his son David, who came up for the provincial prayer breakfast. Gary serves as part of my constituency association and is also currently the head of the Evangelical Association. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The Member for Chestermere-Strathmore.

Ms de Jonge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to introduce to you and through you two pastors and friends from my

constituency, Pastor Sunday Adeola and Pastor Alex Ajireloja from the Peculiar People Assembly in Strathmore, a parish of the Redeemed Christian Church of God. I ask that they please rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Assisted Living and Social Services.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two great neighbours of mine from the best village in this entire province, Bergen, Alberta, my home, Trevor and Pam Rath. I'd ask that they both rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

Funding for Parks and Public Lands

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Budget 2026 is focused on building what matters for Albertans. That is why earlier today our government was proud to announce more than \$275 million over the next three years to provincial parks and public land infrastructure. This includes \$87 million invested in the upcoming fiscal year toward more than 70 campground, day-use area, and trail enhancement projects. This investment will help fund new trails, upgrade existing trails and trailheads, and refurbish and improve infrastructure and amenities. This ensures that Alberta's government can safely and responsibly welcome visitors in every corner of our province.

In addition to maintaining and renewing existing infrastructure, we are working to develop 900 new campsites by 2033, expand trail networks on public land and in the Canmore area, and improve outdoor recreation facilities and amenities in high-use areas across the province. Even during the difficult fiscal environment that Albertans face today, we know that continued support in areas that matter most to Albertans remains a priority. It means you can get out with your families for an affordable vacation and not break the bank to experience a new adventure with those you love most. This investment is also opening revenue opportunity for Alberta's tourism and recreation industries, bringing more visitors to our beautiful landscapes every year.

Budget 2026's support for Alberta's parks and public lands demonstrates the dedication of Alberta's government to conserve and enhance these spaces. By upgrading trails, improving amenities, and supporting responsible development, we are ensuring that Alberta's backyard continues to be a top destination for everyone today and for years to come.

Thank you.

1:40 New Hospital Construction

Mr. Haji: Mr. Speaker, under the UCP government Albertans have heard heartbreaking stories that reveal the human cost of a health care system stretched beyond its limits. One of those stories that made it to the public is that of Mr. Prashant Sreekumar, who lost his life after waiting hours for care.

When Grey Nuns hospital was built in 1989, Alberta had roughly about 12,000 hospital beds. Today, despite a population that has nearly doubled and a much older demographic requiring more complex care, Alberta has just about 9,000 beds. For years long-range health care planning reports have warned that Alberta would need more hospital beds to serve its growing and aging population. Recognizing those pressures close to 10 years ago, the NDP

government committed to the construction of a new south Edmonton hospital.

Unfortunately, the current Premier cancelled that plan to build the south Edmonton hospital. Today the consequences are very visible. You see them in crowded hospital hallways and overwhelmed emergency rooms. Hospitals are operating overcapacity. The staff are pushed to the brink. Emergency doctors are calling for a state of emergency.

Since November last year the Premier and the health ministers have used every podium opportunity to promise new acute-care beds in Edmonton and Calgary, but when you go through Budget 2026, the funding simply is not there, no money allocated for the construction of bed towers for Grey Nuns, Misericordia, and Royal Alex hospitals. There is also no money allocated for the construction of a stand-alone Stollery hospital. There are simply no beds. How many more families will be left waiting hours just to end up losing loved ones? Mr. Sreekumar was a husband, a father, a friend, and no one should lose life like him.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

Official Opposition

Mr. Lundy: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I would like to highlight a recent hiring decision made by the NDP that more Albertans should be aware of, but first a little context for what led to their decision. Faced with the tricky and obvious problem that their newly minted leader is having trouble connecting to Albertans – talk about an understatement – the union bosses, elite academics, and Marxist-Leninists that run the NDP must have decided that a rebrand was in order. I guess purple was not the new orange.

Who to hire for such an important task? Well, Mr. Speaker, the NDP brought on board the same firm, Fight media, that ran New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani's campaign. For those not familiar... [some applause] For those not familiar, Mayor Mamdani is a self-identified communist whose recent election has caused a significant exodus of people leaving the city. But, hey, I guess the NDP are familiar with that pattern as the last time they were in power, people fled Alberta in droves. The NDP even famously told folks to move to B.C. Wait, was that not far enough away for you guys? Are Albertans now supposed to move to New York in some sort of socialist fantasyland?

I mean, really, Mr. Speaker. This was the company the NDP chose? What, was the Chinese Communist Party's PR firm not available? The real irony in all of this is that at the end of the day the NDP hired an American PR firm just to advise them to tell everybody how much they hate America. What happened to buying Canadian? You guys couldn't find a Canadian firm to tell you to lean more into communism? Trust me; they're out there.

Well, Mr. Speaker, thankfully Alberta is not New York, and Albertans are not interested in some high-priced U.S. PR firm telling them how amazing socialism is, nor thankfully are Albertans interested in electing another accidental NDP government to push this dangerous ideology onto the province. [some applause]

The Speaker: Just a friendly reminder that the habit here is to not interrupt member statements. I appreciate the leadership of the House leader trying to put a stop to that. It was tempting to let the member start again. I didn't do it – I think he got his statement out – but I think it's appropriate now to make that reminder.

I know we won't have this statement from the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills interrupted.

Budget 2026

Member Ellingson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just two weeks ago the minister tabled a budget that many were hoping would address the challenges faced by Albertans. People hoped for a budget that would meaningfully address the high cost of living, health care, education, and access to social services, services that are essential for so many Albertans, but what Albertans got was a budget that spends so much and delivers so little. This budget advances privatization in education and in health care but won't improve access to the average Albertan. It makes it clear that the government doesn't consider the needs of disabled people, our aging population, or Albertans in need of health care who cannot afford private services that should be delivered through the public health care system.

Last week we were all in our constituencies to discuss the budget. I met with Marie who, with her partner, is raising two children adopted from the foster system. Her son will be 18 next week, and despite having initiated the process months ago, she doesn't know if her son will have support from PDD when their FSCD coverage comes to an end. I met with Jeffrey, who's been waiting two years to know if his daughter will receive supports from FSCD. They are anxious as their daughter gets older and her challenges compound without support. There is no response as to when they might receive such needed supports.

The budget offers no hope for these families. The allocations are insufficient to meet the growing needs of Albertans. Marie is unable to work given the time required to care for her adopted children. Jeffrey is facing the reality that his daughter may never get support. The budget saddled Albertans with growing deficits and debt and offered no hope to Marie and Jeffrey that they would get the support they need for their children.

The very real challenges faced by Albertans simply weren't addressed in this budget. It's time for a government that would do just that.

Alberta in Canada

Mr. Guthrie: Mr. Speaker, this government uses the phrase "a sovereign Alberta within a United Canada," but let's call it what it is: a clever slogan designed to sound reassuring while masking their support for separation, because you cannot be sovereign and united at the same time. You either stand with Canada or you don't.

For me, that choice has never been in doubt. I am proudly, unapologetically Canadian, and that belief isn't political; it's personal. As a child my family fled a war zone in the Middle East. We crossed a desert to escape violence and instability, and in that moment of fear and uncertainty it wasn't division and isolation that saved us; it was Canadians. It was the values of compassion, peace, and responsibility that define who we are, and that experience never left me. Today my son serves in Canada's Armed Forces, wearing our flag on his shoulder like so many who believe in service, sacrifice, and protecting something bigger than themselves. That flag means something.

I've lived and worked across Alberta, from Grande Prairie to Fort McMurray, Fort Saskatchewan to Camrose, Consort to Cochrane. I've travelled across this country and around the world, and everywhere I go, one thing holds true: there's no place like home. No country is perfect, but Canada is the envy of the world for our freedom, stability, and the opportunity we provide.

We don't get stronger by threatening to leave. We get stronger by leading Canada. The Tories will defend our province fiercely but within a truly united country: confident, collaborative, Canadian. Mr. Speaker, I love this province and I love this country, and I

always will stand for an Alberta that helps build Canada, not break it apart.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Tourism Industry Support

Dr. Elmeligi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Canmore, Banff, and Jasper host millions of people from around the world and generate over \$2 billion for the provincial economy annually. This government has set ambitious goals to grow tourism, but as tourism businesses in my community remind me, growth happens best with solid, reliable investment. This UCP government wants the growth but doesn't want to invest in it. This government wants the economic benefits but rarely wants to give back to the communities who bear the cost. This is yet another failure of the UCP to truly recognize and grow economic potential.

1:50

Budget 2026 increases the tourism levy to 6 per cent and introduces a new 6 per cent tax on rental vehicles. Both of these will make it more expensive for Albertans to explore their home province. And what about the communities who host tourism? Will they see additional investments in tourism-related infrastructure or tourism-based economies funding? No.

Tourism is the main employer in our mountain towns, and more than 7,700 residents of the Bow Valley are born outside of Canada. Our region's tourism economy relies on seasonal workers, temporary foreign workers, and newcomers who eventually become permanent residents and citizens. Each of these people, no matter how long they stay, is part of our mountain communities. Through divisive rhetoric that blames immigrants for their budget woes this UCP government has made it sound like the thousands of people who work to build our community and work in the tourism sector aren't valued. Nothing could be further from the truth. In truth, the Alberta NDP appreciates each and every foreign worker who comes to our mountain towns to literally serve the world. We know that if they had to pay for a doctor or to put their kid in school, they wouldn't come, and we simply cannot live without them.

Living in Alberta's tourism hotspot means I see the implications of these decisions every day. I see how tourism infrastructure costs strain our municipal budget and how we need . . .

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: It is now just past 1:50. The first question today belongs to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Budget 2026

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, the reviews are in, and this is a bad budget by all accounts. Calgary's new mayor calls the property tax jump egregious, and a *Calgary Herald* columnist said, "It's cynical politics to begin with, made all the worse by the attempt to camouflage the tax increases by lumping them in with the municipal property tax." Why does the Premier's budget try to hide its big new tax hikes in Albertans' property taxes?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, unlike the members opposite, I'm no expert in hiding things, but I'd say that if you were going to do that, you wouldn't announce it the year before. I quite clearly said in Budget 2025 that we were moving to 33 per cent of operational expense for education while everyone on the other side clamoured for more funding in education, not to mention the fact that schools

dominate the capital plan, of which 14 of the 40 are in Calgary. These things cost money. We all value education. We've always been at 33 per cent. We're going to stay there and remain at that level.

Ms Gray: Let's be really clear. This budget makes Albertans' lives more expensive, and it does not fix health care or education, despite near-record resource revenues. It won't fix overcrowded ERs. It won't fix overflowing classrooms or reduce the cost of living. What this budget will do is double Alberta's debt in just four years, and it shows that the UCP wasted the latest boom on their mismanagement and scandals. Affordability is one of the most important things for Albertans, so why can't this government deliver on that, the most important priority for their citizens?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, it's pretty rich. The other side, when in power, brings in things like a carbon tax that they didn't campaign on, that makes everything more expensive – transportation of goods, food in the grocery store, everybody fuelling up their cars – as opposed to us. What have we done? We've doubled the size of the heritage fund while paying down \$15 billion in debt. Show me another jurisdiction on the planet that has done that. We're managing responsibly by using surpluses appropriately and weathering through the deficits. That's what Albertans should want.

Ms Gray: Our government actually built schools with construction dollars to put shovels in the ground.

The Finance minister keeps saying that his hands are tied. He's relying on near-record resource revenue to – get this – run one of the largest deficits in Alberta's history. He won't reverse the cuts to health care. He has no plan to get the budget back to balance. In fact, the budget breaks the UCP's fiscal plan in two different ways, so when is the government tabling legislation to rip up their own rules against running endless deficits now that you're running endless deficits? [interjection]

The Speaker: Calgary-Buffalo, I don't remember calling your name.

Minister.

Mr. Horner: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I should correct the member opposite, though I know she knows the truth. We're nowhere near record revenue on bitumen and on renewable resource products: 13 and a half billion. We have record oil production, you know, thanks to being a business-friendly jurisdiction that supports the industry, but we have royalties on a curve much like they did during their time. This is a \$10, \$11, \$12 billion decrease over what we've seen over the last couple of years when it comes to that, and still we're keeping our spending below population.

Ms Ganley: Point of order.

The Speaker: A point of order is noted at 1:55.

The hon. member for the second set of questions.

Primary Health Care Workforce

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, nearly a million Albertans do not have a family doctor, and a fresh coat of paint on the government's website does not solve the problem. The Alberta find-a-doctor website shows there is still not a single family doctor accepting new patients in Lethbridge and not one general family doctor in Grande Prairie, either. Not one. So why did the Premier tell her radio audience on the weekend that Albertans have all the family doctors they need when that is clearly not the case?

The Speaker: The hon. the minister of health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do want to correct the member opposite. In fact, we have 30 doctors accepting patients south of Calgary. In Okotoks we have 10 and a nurse practitioner; in Eden Valley, a physician; High River, two; Pincher Creek, two; Picture Butte, one physician; Taber, one; Cardston, Brocket, Lethbridge, a nurse practitioner; Brooks, Medicine Hat, seven; Redcliff, one. Cold Lake has six, and the members opposite said that they had none. [interjections] I know they're not in the south. I know that they're in the north, and the member opposite knows that . . .

The Speaker: We'll wait till your members stop talking so we can hear you.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, this morning we checked the website. There are no doctors in Lethbridge, there are no doctors in Grande Prairie, and doctors in Edmonton do not help those citizens.

Let's think about Albertans for a moment. For parents, no family doctor means rushing to the emergency room with a sick child. For young adults, getting prescriptions like for birth control becomes a burden. For seniors, no family doctor means that getting life-saving referrals to specialists are now harder. The government hasn't delivered on their promise for new triage doctors, and they blame doctors for that. Why does the Premier keep saying that there are enough doctors for everyone when there are not?

The Speaker: All right. Both sides of the House have fairly routinely gone past when you're supposed to stop talking. Let's just try to do that, okay?

The hon. minister of health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, in 2019 we had roughly 10,600 doctors. We now have 13,700 doctors and more coming all the time. When the members opposite were in government, we had roughly 244 doctors per 100,000. Right now we have 273 doctors per 100,000. We're continuing to attract more. We're going to continue because we pay them the highest in the country and we give them a good working environment.

Ms Gray: The Premier said on her radio show that there's a perception we have a shortage but we don't, yet 1 million Albertans don't have family doctors. The Premier talks about each patient's journey through the system. Well, let's talk about that. A patient without a family doctor goes to an ER. That ER is already overcrowded. Once inside, that patient doesn't get a bed. When they see a doctor, they might be in the hallway. That's the Alberta patient journey right now, and our casework tells us about it. Why has the government mismanaged health care so badly that ERs leave people waiting endlessly and put lives at risk?

The Speaker: The minister.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I need to correct the member opposite once more. In fact, the national OurCare Survey reported over 87 per cent of Albertans say that they have regular health care, regular primary care. That is 6 per cent above the national average. I know the members opposite don't like to hear it, but we have over 800 doctors and nurse practitioners in the province right now accepting new patients, over 400 doctors in Calgary accepting new patients, over 200 in Edmonton, and more across the rural communities.

The Speaker: For the third set of questions, the House leader of the Official Opposition.

2:00

Alberta Separatism

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, everyone knows that when the Premier talks about sovereignty, she's sending a message to separatists. She told separatist Alberta Prosperity Project that she'd be threatening Canada to meet her demands or else. Albertans know what "or else" means. It's a well-documented plan to push for separation from Canada, and now not a single member of this government will say that they unequivocally oppose separatism. Now, the Premier already said the quiet part out loud, that this was really about her party politics. Is that why the government still won't let MLAs say they denounce separatism?

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to correct the record. You can be sovereign within a united Canada. Look at Quebec. They have a way of dealing with the federal government that we would actually like to adopt here in Alberta, particularly with things like immigration.

What I can tell you is that the members opposite hate direct democracy. They hate the fact that Albertans have a say. There are four citizens' initiative petitions that were active: the Forever Canadian petition, the independent schools petition, the Alberta Prosperity Project petition, and the one on coal. We're only talking about one, Mr. Speaker, because the rest they agree with. They only agree with stuff if they like it. On this side of the House we let Albertans have their say.

Ms Gray: The talk of separatism is already chilling the business climate. That's what Alberta business leaders are saying, if the government ever cares to listen. First Nations leaders have made it clear that the government has lost confidence over this, if they ever care to listen. The Attorney General has said the unconstitutional question put forward by the Premier's separatist supporters won't be allowed on the ballot. It's unconstitutional; it won't be on the ballot. Why won't the Premier simply say that there will not be a vote on separation this fall?

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, I admire how the members opposite never let evidence interfere with their opinions. On this side of the House I can tell you that we are supporting jobs. Alberta is responsible for 69 per cent of the new jobs created over the last year in the entire country. People are coming here because there's opportunity. The members opposite have no idea how to build an economy because when they were in government, they literally attacked job creators and told them to leave the province. [interjections]

The Speaker: You know, it was easy to hear the question. It would have been nice if it was just as easy to hear the answer.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Ms Gray: Let's remember who is trying to separate, Mr. Speaker. It's card-carrying members of the Premier's own party. The calls for separatism are coming from inside the house, and now not a single member of her caucus will pledge that they stand as proud Canadians. The questions the separatists are collecting signatures for don't respect the Constitution, don't respect the treaties, and are not what Albertans want. Since a judge has already said that the question is not constitutionally valid, why won't the Premier denounce separatism and put an end to this business-harming, relationship-with-treaty harming disaster?

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's rich that the members opposite refer to card-carrying members because when we became

a party, when the UCP became a party, we were a big-tent party. Heaven forbid you have a plurality of thought within your political movement, unlike the members opposite, who would tell their members what to think, who would tell their members how to behave. This sounds a lot less like the New Democratic Party than the Old Communist Party. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. [interjection] Remember that order part? We just want to hear right now from the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Foreign Interference in Provincial Referendums

Ms Ganley: Quote: Alberta is not ready to deal with the threat of online disinformation coming from foreign actors in a possible referendum campaign on separation this fall. End quote. This is a massive concern. Elections Alberta has no mandate to deal with this. Quote: Alberta is not ready at all. This according to a former director of intelligence for the RCMP, and the misinformation is already spreading. What is this government doing to protect Albertans?

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the member opposite for the question. Cybersecurity is something that is on the top of the minds of all subnational jurisdictions and national jurisdictions around the entire world. We have put forth a bill that allows for a citizens' initiative referendum. We are going to let the process play out. While that's happening, we'll continue to consult with Elections Alberta to make sure that all elections, whether it's general elections, by-elections, or citizens' initiative referendums, will be done in a safe and secure manner and that members of the public can have confidence in the results.

Ms Ganley: Albertans are Canadians. We are not interested in becoming Americans. Everyone on the NDP side has stated that publicly; we're not so sure about the UCP. The supporters of the separatist petitions, the ones the Justice minister changed the law for to allow it to go forward even though it's unconstitutional, have admitted to meeting with U.S. administration, the same groups who are suspected of spreading the misinformation. Why is this government actively working to support a petition knowing that foreign misinformation is spreading about this issue?

The Speaker: The hon. House leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the members of the government caucus have been very clear, along with the Premier, that we're letting the process play out. We're relying upon people within the public to spread the message that they feel is important to them, unlike the members opposite who have chosen to pick an advertising firm from New York City that elected a communist mayor to bring American-style politics right here into Alberta. Shame on the members opposite. I guess there's nobody in Alberta or Canada who can carry their communist water for them. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Ms Ganley: The Premier's answer to foreign interference is apparently advertising firms and identification markers on drivers' licences. This is interference by foreign groups outside of the country. Marking noncitizens will have no impact, and the Premier's comments call into question her understanding of the issue. We have a referendum that most Albertans oppose. Foreign

interference, economic damage, unconstitutionality, instability: does the Premier think maybe it's time to disappoint her separatist friends and call it off?

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's very disappointing again to hear the members opposite talk about what the Premier does and doesn't understand, but I can tell you what the Premier does understand and fully grasps are the needs of the people of this province, which is the need to attract investment, the need for job creation, the need to build schools, build hospitals, which is all in this year's budget. Under the leadership of the Premier our province is set to lead the country again in economic growth, and we've done so for multiple consecutive years. That's because of the leadership of our Premier, not because of the advice from the members opposite who run this province into the ground.

Daycare Investigation Process

Member Batten: Mr. Speaker, when a parent leaves their child in the hands of a care provider, they expect that they will be safe and they will be protected. While that is mostly the case in this province, multiple serious instances of child abuse events this past year have left parents feeling helpless. What's worse is these shocking events have raised concerns about gaps in the Early Learning and Child Care Act, which this government has failed to do anything about. When can we expect the Minister of Education and Childcare to step up and do something about it?

Mr. Nicolaides: Mr. Speaker, the only people who have failed to do anything are the NDP. When they were in power, they made no attempts to make any changes to the relevant legislation, enhance parental notification, or do anything of the nature. That being said, I firmly believe in the importance of parental notification, and I've directed my team to take a close look at the relevant legislation and accompanying regulations to see where we can further strengthen information that's provided to parents so that they have the fullest possible transparency over operations at their local daycare.

Member Batten: Given that, wow, that was an interesting answer to that question and given that in several of the child abuse cases this past year parents were not notified of the incident until days and sometimes months after and given that I appreciate the efforts now that the minister is promising to Albertans, a family waited five months before ever learning that their child was exposed in a child care area to those who had abused others. When can we expect the minister to start taking actual action on here and not simply say that he'll look into it?

Mr. Nicolaides: I think I just said, Mr. Speaker, that I've directed my officials to take a close look at the act and accompanying regulations to see how we can strengthen notification information to parents. I'm not sure what the member opposite is referring to with respect to any kind of five-month delay. I'm not sure if the member is asking me to break the law because when an active criminal investigation is under way, there are very clear requirements and stipulations regarding possibly interfering in any kind of criminal investigation, which of course we will not do. At the earliest possible opportunity a daycare provider complied with requirements.

2:10

Member Batten: Given that their child's safety is the top consideration in every decision a parent makes and given that parents deserve the opportunity to make informed choices about

where they place their children for care by having access to a child care program's full history, inspection reports, licences, and more and given that as of today we've learned that maybe they'll look into things, will this minister commit today in this House to timelines? Tell us, Minister, through the Speaker, of course: when should Albertan families regain their confidence in this system?

Mr. Nicolaides: Parents will definitely be able to regain confidence by our administration, because I know that when the NDP was in office, they did absolutely nothing to strengthen notification to parents. They did absolutely nothing to enhance transparency. In fact, the only thing the NDP did and continue to do is demonize care providers. They demonize for-profit child care providers, assuming that they're motivated only by profit. They continue to attack members of that industry in providing child care services. We will not be doing that, Mr. Speaker. We value our child care partners, and at the same time we will strengthen notification requirements.

The Speaker: The next question belongs to the hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

Funding for Parks and Public Lands

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's provincial parks, campgrounds, trails, and staging areas have faced a dramatic increase in the number of visitors each year. The number of visitors is growing in Alberta provincial parks and the amenities our parks have to offer. To the Minister of Forestry and Parks: what is Alberta's government doing to improve Alberta outdoor recreation infrastructure, and how are you ensuring that the increase in visitors continues to offer the safe and enjoyable experiences that Albertans have come to expect in the great outdoors?

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

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This government is focused on recreation for Albertans to make sure they have places to recreate in our provincial parks and our public lands. We have invested money this year, \$87 million, into these programs to make sure that we have the trails that the people want, the campgrounds that they want to make sure that they have the ability to recreate. We have the visitors coming from outside the province to Alberta that enjoy this great province, and we want to make sure they enjoy their time here in the province, too.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

Mr. Getson: Thanks, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for the answer. Given that Alberta's campgrounds saw 280,000 reservations in 2025 – that's right; 280,000 reservations – and given that Alberta's campgrounds experienced a 15 per cent increase in those overnight campers in 2025, can the same minister please explain how Alberta's government is planning to accommodate the increase in the number of visitors that we're seeing every year?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Loewen: Yes. Mr. Speaker, we know that a lot of people come from outside Alberta to enjoy Alberta's great parks and public lands. Investing in our trails and investing in campgrounds and making sure that we have the sites available for those people is what we want to do in this province. We have a plan to increase tourism in the province. We want to make sure that people enjoy their time here when they come, but of course we want to take care of

Albertans and make sure that they have the place to go to within our public lands and our parks.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the same minister for that answer. Given Alberta's provincial parks, trails, campgrounds, and amenities have all seen increases in visitors affecting the lands and the environment around them and given that these visitors have to rely on these emergency services following incidents at these locations, can the same Minister of Forestry and Parks explain the ways in which you're keeping Alberta's amenities friendly to the environment while also safe for Albertans?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We know that the visitation in our parks has increased dramatically in the last few years. If we look at a place like Kananaskis where we have more visitors than most of the national parks in the province, we know that we want to take care of these areas. We know that this increased pressure brings safety concerns, and that's why we're investing in making sure that Albertans and visitors can have a safe experience in the province as they have their experience here. We want to make sure that our province is taken care of and our natural spaces are, too.

The Speaker: The next question belongs to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Daycare Investigation Process (continued)

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In response to my friend from Calgary-Acadia's questions about amending the Early Learning and Child Care Act to better protect children in care, he made a vague commitment to directing his team to review the situation, so I want to press the minister for some specifics. Who exactly did he direct to conduct this review, what exactly did he direct them to do in this review, and when will the results of this review be made public so that parents can have confidence in the system going forward?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education and Childcare.

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I've already answered that question three different times. We will be taking a look at the legislation and accompanying regulations to determine if there are opportunities for improvement. We will undertake that work with diligence. It'll move through the necessary processes with respect to committee approval and evaluation, and if there need to be any legislative and/or regulatory changes, those will occur through cabinet and through the requisite process as well.

Mr. Schmidt: Mr. Speaker, this vague bureaucratic fog that the minister spews isn't enough to satisfy parents or protect children.

Given the minister's commitment to review the child care act, can he commit to considering amendments to the child care act to establish a government-led system of notifying all parents with children at a child care program when serious physical or sexual abuse occurs? We can't rely on operators to provide this notification. Can the minister at least confirm that that's one of the things that his department is considering?

The Speaker: The hon. member is an experienced legislator, so I know that your second supplementary will not have a preamble. I'm pretty sure we're both sure of that now.

Mr. Nicolaides: Mr. Speaker, the only people that we can't take seriously are the NDP. When they were in government, they did absolutely nothing – zero – to address this issue. I've already stood and responded four different times as to what our government is doing to address this issue. When the NDP was in power for four years, they made absolutely no changes to the act. They made absolutely no attempts to improve notification. They made absolutely no attempts to do anything that would strengthen parental notification and awareness. Our government, however, is undertaking this.

Mr. Schmidt: Given, Mr. Speaker, that this issue in Willowbrae Academy that I raised in November happened almost a year ago since I asked the question and now another child in Mill Woods was physically abused, the minister knew that there was a problem here and hasn't done anything. When will the minister commit to specifically reviewing the legislation and bringing forward changes to protect children? Tell us a timeline. Parents have had enough of waiting and these vague commitments that the minister makes. When will parents see change?

Mr. Nicolaides: As I've mentioned, parents will see change under our government, Mr. Speaker, because we're addressing this situation, unlike the NDP, who did nothing, who sat on their hands for four years, made no attempts to overhaul any type of process that they thought was inadequate, made no changes: no regulatory changes, no legislative changes, nothing whatsoever. So I can absolutely commit and confirm to parents that our government is addressing this situation, and we will make any necessary changes as we need to after we've had time, of course, to explore the relevant legislation and regulatory provisions. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Supports for Seniors

Ms Sigurdson: In the Minister of Finance's Budget Address he says, "We're not making massive program cuts . . . We focused on maintaining the projects and programs that truly serve Albertans." Those words may sound comforting, but seniors have been singled out to shoulder the burden of a 9 per cent decrease in the income threshold, which determines eligibility for programs. These programs help seniors living on low income manage affordability at times of high costs. Nine per cent is a massive cut. It is, frankly, insulting to seniors, who built this province. Why is the minister of seniors . . .

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Assisted Living and Social Services.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance's budget that's before this Chamber invests \$6.6 billion in supporting Alberta seniors: everything from health care to housing to benefits to prescription services and other services like that to be able to care for seniors. In fact, when it comes to the senior benefit, this budget will provide over half a billion dollars, \$553 million, in supports and maintains the best threshold anywhere in the country. What it really comes down to: is that member going to vote against seniors in this province again by voting against this budget or not?

2:20

Ms Sigurdson: Given that the Premier says that seniors programs are too generous in Alberta and given that Alberta previously took pride in serving seniors rather than the UCP's current race to the bottom and given that she says that seniors are moving to Alberta to exploit programs and given that she provides no evidence for this and is spewing conservative myths that have no basis in fact, when will the minister reverse this cruel attack on Alberta seniors during an affordability crisis, compromising their ability to live in dignity?

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I provided evidence at estimates of people moving to our province to take social services, and I'm going to table it later, just like I promised inside estimates.

I'll tell you what was cruel to our seniors, though, Mr. Speaker. When the NDP were in power, they built no continuing care facilities. That required our seniors now to live in hospitals, sometimes for years. When the NDP was in power, they did not build senior lodges, no net new increase to affordable housing underneath the leadership of that hon. member when she was the minister. We won't be lectured by them. We're going to continue to deliver for the people of Alberta.

Ms Sigurdson: Given that the cut to the income threshold is just the latest attack by the UCP on seniors during an affordability crisis and given that the UCP has cut special-needs assistance by almost \$9 million, eliminated the caregivers tax credit, deindexed income support, significantly increased the copay for prescriptions, cut 40,000 Albertans off the seniors drug insurance plan, eliminated the office for the Seniors Advocate, and many other cruel program cuts, when will the minister stop attacking seniors and show them the respect they deserve by supporting them to live in dignity? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Make sure the minister gets a fresh 35, and let's go.

Mr. Schow: Point of order.

Mr. Nixon: Mr. Speaker, it was interesting in estimates yesterday because each time that member and others would get up and say that this government was cutting something, we actually weren't, and I could bring forward the evidence that that was not the case inside the budget, which shows again that the NDP don't actually read the budget. To this Chamber: when it comes to seniors, we take it very, very seriously, as we do for all Albertans, to provide the social service supports that we need to in this province. My department is going to provide over \$12 billion worth of supports this year to the people of Alberta that need the care that they need. Are they going to vote for it, or are they going to vote against it?

The Speaker: A point of order was noted at 2:22 p.m.

Now we'll only hear from the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

CFB Cold Lake Improvements

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm excited to announce that big changes are coming to the Cold Lake air force base. The F-35 program is due to kick off in the next couple of years, and with it will come a colossal investment into the infrastructure at the air force base, starting a new chapter in the history of my region. To the Minister of Jobs, Economy, Trade and Immigration: can you explain how important the F-35 program is for Alberta and what benefits it will bring to my constituency in Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Folks, you've got a room in the back if you want a private meeting. Use it, please.

Otherwise, we're only going to hear from the Government House Leader right now.

Mr. Schow: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank that member for the question. I am pleased that the federal government is taking defence spending seriously in this province as well as creating huge opportunities for Alberta and northern regions like Cold Lake with jobs and investment. Now, 4 Wing Cold Lake is one of Canada's Armed Forces' two primary fighter wings and makes Cold Lake region a leader in Canada's air defence strategy. This major investment is in the tune of \$10 billion to \$15 billion to upgrade training bases, operational facilities, and military ranges. Our government is working with the government of Canada to secure this funding and support the region.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for that response. Given that the historic upgrades to CFB Cold Lake will require the effort of thousands of skilled workers in a time of unprecedented labour market challenges and further given this government's priority to create good-paying jobs for Albertans right here at home, to the same minister: how will this government ensure that we have enough skilled workers to fill all the jobs that are going to be needed to build up this wonderful F-35 program that's coming to my region?

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, the members opposite hate it when there's new investment coming into Alberta because it shows how much they're losing on this. On this side of the House we're going to continue to build a workforce right here in Alberta to support the expansion of the air force base to establish the F-35 program. [interjection] We need construction workers, skilled trades, technology. This demand is going to be very important for us, and we're going to fulfill that need with jobs and skills-training programs that we have here to support the development of Cold Lake area as we see the F-35s come right here into Alberta.

The Speaker: Thank you. [interjections]

Lethbridge-West, I can hear you more than I can hear the person talking right there.

The hon. member.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for that fantastic answer. Given that many of these workers will want to bring their families while they're building up our nation's defence in the beautiful lakeland region and further given that these new community members will rely on local services like health care, education, housing, and even more, to the same minister: how will this government adapt to the influx of population into the region, and how will we make sure that there are adequate resources for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul during this transition period?

Mr. Schow: Well, Mr. Speaker, people coming to Alberta by record numbers is nothing new for us. It's new to the NDP because they couldn't see it, not in their wildest dreams. I can tell you that Alberta families recognize that we need to continue to support the development and growth in the area, and that's why we're investing in this budget. Led by the Finance minister and the Premier, we're investing in new schools, we're investing in new hospitals, we're investing in new infrastructure, in roads. Alberta is leading the charge in economic development, we're leading the charge in growth, and we're investing in the future of Alberta because we know it's

important if people are going to keep coming here because they love this province.

Affordability Measures

Member Tejada: Albertans are feeling the pinch. Grocery bills, gas prices, utilities, housing costs, and insurance rates are all higher than they've ever been. Wages haven't kept up with inflation, and this government refuses to do anything about it. The latest UCP budget offers no relief. They want families to do more with less, have increased fees and property taxes, and are making life even harder for those already living in poverty. Albertans want to know: what will this government do now to make life less expensive for Albertans?

Mr. Neudorf: Mr. Speaker, here is the irony of the convoluted, hypocritical thinking of the NDP. Do you know what they campaigned on last election? Raising taxes, phasing out coal, the carbon tax, fertilizer tax, plastics ban, expiry dates: all things that drive up the cost of living in Alberta. In contrast, what does our government do? We cut income tax, we're lowering insurance costs, we're lowering the price of utilities, and we're putting Albertans first, something the NDP has always failed to do. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Member Tejada: Given the increases to fees, taxes that they're downloading on to cities in this budget are hitting everyone from workers to homeowners to seniors who have built this province and given that the UCP is now proposing drastic cuts for the most vulnerable – those on AISH, low-income seniors, and families – and given that the UCP has spent the last seven years nickel and diming Albertans while increasing their own allowances, citing affordability, when will the UCP government stop helping themselves and instead make life more affordable for Albertans?

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to people facing disabilities in this province, this budget is going to invest \$3.7 billion to help individuals facing disabilities, the most in provincial history. In fact, since the United Conservative Party took over from the NDP, who were destroying the province in 2019, we've increased disability funding by \$1 billion, almost 40 per cent. The real question becomes again: why didn't those members do that when they were in power? They don't actually care about Albertans; they just care about making noise. On this side of the House we care about getting things done.

Member Tejada: Given that bluster isn't a strategy and given that this UCP budget has downloaded costs of their fiscal mismanagement to Albertans and given that instead of taking accountability, the Premier has instead stoked divisions and then suggested that Alberta is too generous to vulnerable Albertans and given that this government has had years of record resource revenues and went from surpluses to a \$9.4 billion deficit, can the UCP just admit that they have nothing to offer Albertans on affordability, that they wasted a boom, and that it's time for an NDP government?

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Affordability and Utilities.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, the track record shows what the NDP would do: raise taxes, drive businesses out of Alberta, make the cost of living increase for every single Albertan. That is what the NDP campaign on. It's what the NDP continue to do. That's why our government does the opposite. We put Albertans

first. We cut income tax. We're lowering the cost of insurance. We're lowering the cost of food. And you know what? We're standing up to the NDP overlords in Ottawa to stand up for Albertans so we don't bear the cost of every other Canadian taking money out of Alberta.

The Speaker: The next question belongs to the Member for Chestermere-Strathmore.

Continuing Care Facilities in Chestermere-Strathmore

Ms de Jonge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Chestermere-Strathmore has seen significant new investments in seniors care, including an AgeCare centre with 207 beds under construction in Chestermere and a new Strathmore long-term care facility with 96 care spaces, including supportive living and hospice spaces. These projects will add critical capacity for local families as our population ages. Can the Minister of Assisted Living and Social Services update this House on the construction and opening timelines and explain how these facilities will ensure high-quality, integrated care for seniors in our region?

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to report that the AgeCare Dawson facility in Chestermere will be opening this spring, and the Strathmore care centre is under construction, expected to open in 2027, largely because of the great advocacy of that member for her constituents. We're proud of this because we're actually investing the most money in continuing care capital in the history of the province, creating 15,000 more units over the next 10 years, spending billions of dollars, and that's a huge step forward from when the NDP were in charge for their programs, which built no new continuing care facilities inside this province.

The Speaker: Chestermere-Strathmore.

Ms de Jonge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister. Given that many families and seniors in Chestermere-Strathmore are eagerly awaiting long-term care placements and further given that opening new beds requires staffing and clinical supports from day one, can the same minister share the steps that are being taken to ensure that they are adequately staffed so that new long-term care beds are available to seniors as soon as possible?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Nixon: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to report that the budget this year, assuming it passes in this Chamber, in my division provides another half a billion dollars just for staffing costs in this space to make sure that we can bring forward the staff that we need to run these facilities. That's in addition to the work that's already taking place for my colleague in charge of primary care and my colleague in charge of acute care as we work to be able to make sure we can bring in all the staff that we need. We're having great success, and a lot of that is because of our excellent Minister of Finance, who has helped us be able to get the labour piece in these areas so we can make sure people are properly paid for and everybody has the services that they need.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms de Jonge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the minister. Given that affordability remains a concern for seniors and families navigating long-term care and further given that accommodation costs can create barriers to access even when new facilities are built, can the minister explain to the Assembly what measures are in place to ensure that the long-term care homes in Chestermere and

Strathmore remain affordable, including access to publicly funded beds, minimizing unexpected costs for fixed-income seniors facing rising living expenses?

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Nixon: Yes, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned earlier today, in this budget we're going to spend \$6.6 billion on providing supports for seniors in this province, including increases to Assisted Living Alberta's line item, increases to home care line items, increase to senior lodge line items, increase to staffing line items to make sure that we're ready to care for our fast aging rates inside our province. We're taking huge steps forward from, unfortunately, what the NDP did, who did not plan for this. We came in, though. We planned for it. We're fixing their mess, and we're making sure Alberta is not only the best place to live, but it's the best place to retire in, too.

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

Postsecondary Education Funding

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the seventh straight budget in a row this UCP government has cut provincial funding to Alberta's colleges, universities, and polytechnics. A dollar invested in postsecondary will pay an exponential return to our economy and to the health and welfare of Albertans. Why has this UCP government cut the Advanced Education budget for the seventh straight year, by this year to the tune of \$207 million?

Mr. McDougall: Mr. Speaker, the information that is provided by the member opposite is not accurate. The budget for Advanced Education has increased in this fiscal year. We are going to be expanding spaces and a number of seats. We've provided for increases in salaries for faculty members and other support staff. We are growing, we're increasing, and what the member is talking about is not accurate.

Mr. Eggen: Well, given that a responsible economist would include inflation and population growth when building a budget – this minister has not included either of those things – and given, Mr. Speaker, creative writing programs have faced deep cuts across Alberta, but clearly fiction composition is alive and well in the Ministry of Advanced Education, given that students, instructors, researchers, and Albertans know very well they are suffering through another cut, how can this minister characterize this budget as an investment?

Mr. McDougall: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad that the member has the creativity to try to explain his incorrect statement previously.

The reality is that we live in times when resources are always limited. With an increased budget and within the budget we'd look to find optimization and readjust accordingly. The budget is including increases in seats, increase in apprenticeship programs, increase in support for a number of areas. That is what we're doing. We're preparing to educate our people for the . . .

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Eggen: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, I just sat through the K to 12 estimates this morning, and there was at least some recognition that we need to build for our growing population. In postsecondary there's plenty of sound and fury around targeted funding, signifying nothing in overall capacity if you do not increase the budget dramatically. Here we can do better and we will do better. When will this UCP government take responsibility for the biggest cuts in

Alberta's history, followed by stagnant backwater funding like this current . . .

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. McDougall: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite continues to talk with misinformation that, you know, we're cutting the budget. As we indicated before, the budget is not cut; it is increasing. We are increasing the number of seats. The target enrolment funding will be going to those areas that are increasing demand by Albertans and for the industry. We're talking about engineering. We're talking about health services. We're talking about apprenticeship programs. These things will be happening. We're proud to be here supporting Albertans and the ability to provide their education skills for the future.

The Speaker: The hon. the Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

Film and Television Tax Credit

Member Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's film and television industry is a vital economic driver for our province and critical to helping us diversify our economy. Despite the UCP government's platform commitment to make Alberta's screen industry competitive with other provinces, Budget 2026 lowered the projected allocation for the film and television tax credit by \$35 million, bringing it down to \$60 million. How will this government ensure that foreign producers making use of the film tax credit do not choose to go to other jurisdictions which offer more generous incentives?

Thank you.

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for the question. Through the film and television tax credit our province is expected to have \$1.6 million spent here in this province with productions that are choosing Alberta because of our pristine landscapes and because it's a great place to shoot a film. There have been many wonderful productions that have been filmed right here in Alberta. We continue to welcome these major cinematic productions because we know that Alberta is the best place to do film, to do television, and we welcome future investment.

Member Ceci: Given that in 2025 Alberta fell to fifth place on the list of busiest provinces for motion picture production despite our world-class crews, locations, and production assets and given that high-budget projects like *Little House on the Prairie*, which Netflix just commissioned for a second season, are choosing Manitoba over Alberta despite having scouted our province as a potential location and given the recent changes to B.C.'s incentive, the strength of Manitoba's program, and growing incentives in other jurisdictions, why did the UCP government decide to reduce Alberta's current film tax . . .

2:40

The Speaker: The minister.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I appreciate the member opposite referencing another province. It's true. Everyone is trying to keep up with Alberta. We are number one, and it's not hard to see why. Since 2020, which is when the film and television tax credit was introduced, we've had 228 productions participate in the program. We've seen tremendous spending right here in supporting local businesses, supporting lodgings, supporting restaurants as they spend their time here, as they work here, and as they create incredible productions that people see around the entire world. That's a great way to advertise Alberta and its advantage.

Member Ceci: Given that Alberta's film and television tax credit has not remained competitive with other Canadian jurisdictions, which is a primary reason for the steeply declining production volumes and massive job losses we are now experiencing in the sector, and given that members of the industry have met with representatives of the government in charge of the FTTC to ask reasonable changes be made to the incentive to reflect the current marketplace as industry falls further behind here in Alberta, what is the minister's plan to ensure that this vital industry can continue to compete by keeping our incentives competitive?

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, the Alberta film and television tax credit will continue to make Alberta a competitive place to film television and movies. We've seen huge success with programs like *The Last of Us*, where they blew up this very building that we sit in today. If you haven't seen it, I highly recommend you go watch it.

Our government is focused on a number of industries, making sure we're attracting investment from around the world to come here to Alberta, creating jobs, supporting local businesses, and supporting our industries. Mr. Speaker, we will be laser focused on that while the NDP is laser focused with zero plan.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we will resume in 30 seconds with the daily Routine.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Mr. Dyck: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship I am pleased to rise today to table a requisite number of copies of the committee's final report on its review of the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Act. In addition to thanking my committee colleagues and the staff at the Legislative Assembly Office, I would like to specifically express the committee's gratitude to the representatives from the Ministry of Justice and the office of the Public Interest Commissioner who provided technical expertise and support throughout the review process.

Thank you.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give oral notice of a bill to be introduced, which I will sponsor, being Bill 206, Accessible Alberta Act.

Thank you.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Assisted Living and Social Services.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today with the appropriate number of copies of an *Edmonton Journal* article entitled Why Are So Many Ontario Families Flocking to Alberta for Autism Support?

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings. The first is from *Claresholm Local Press*, February 18, Council Calls for Pause to Changes to Handicapped Assistance Program.

The second is a policy passed by the Alberta Chambers of Commerce last May after Calgary and Airdrie worked together to bring it forward. It's about passing accessibility legislation.

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

Mr. Wright: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the five requisite copies of a letter I received from a constituent talking about delays and impacts on victims in the justice system.

The Speaker: Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Member Irwin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of an e-mail from a housing worker who worked at Boyle Street Community Services until yesterday when she lost her job due to the UCP horrific cuts.

The Speaker: Calgary-Buffalo.

Member Ceci: Thank you. I'm tabling 30 letters from supporters of the Historical Society, Archaeological Society, and Genealogical Society, protesting the elimination of their grants, totalling less than \$200,000. These writers are urging MLAs to reverse it.

The Speaker: Okay. Tablings aren't really an excuse to make a speech, even if it's a short speech.

I see no other tablings.

We have now come to the point of the day where we turn this around shamefully because we don't have another accident-free day: points of order. First one called at or around 1:55 p.m. The Deputy Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to withdraw that point of order. Hoping that the Government House Leader might do the same.

The Speaker: The next point of order was at or around 2:22 p.m.

Point of Order Imputing Motives

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate the example set by the Deputy Opposition House Leader. However, this point of order I do believe requires attention from the chair.

At the time noted, 2:33, the Member for Edmonton-Riverview was posing a question to the minister of seniors and of course Sundre's favourite son and in that question said, "When will the minister stop attacking seniors?" Mr. Speaker, I rise under 23(h), (i), and (j). These are, of course, my unofficial records, but if that is in fact what the member opposite said, that is an egregious breach of decorum in this Chamber. To suggest that the minister is attacking seniors creates disgusting imagery that is not acceptable in this Chamber. The members opposite know better.

This has been called out of order multiple times. Without reading through my long but not exhaustive list of examples, I'll say that Speaker Cooper ruled that on March 27, 2024, "attack the rights and safety of transgender Albertans" was ruled out of order. "She normalized bullying against the most vulnerable children": the same Speaker, Nathan Cooper, required an apology. There's a lot from Nathan Cooper and then others going down the list.

Mr. Speaker, it's gross. It's disgusting to suggest the minister is attacking seniors, particularly vulnerable seniors. The member knows better. The member works with seniors and should apologize and withdraw that remark.

The Speaker: The hon. Opposition Deputy House Leader.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the Government House Leader has noted some instances where the word has been found as a point of order in the context, but it's a bit rich that earlier when the minister himself was answering a question, he used the word "attacking" as well.

What the member was saying in this instance: she listed a number of things, policies that government adopted such as lowering the income threshold for qualification of senior benefits, cutting their benefits. It was used in that context. It was not meant to be that the minister was attacking somebody. It's just government policy damaging senior benefits, so it was used in that context.

The Speaker: Well, I would say to you that you've acknowledged the point was said, that the minister was attacking seniors. Let me say this. The hon. member could have accomplished the same thing by saying shortchanging seniors, disappointing seniors, but attacking seniors or anyone by a member of this House is probably not parliamentary in the bare bones reading of it, so I would just ask the hon. member to apologize and withdraw those remarks.

Ms Sigurdson: Mr. Speaker, I apologize and withdraw.

The Speaker: Thank you. For all those watching, that is the proper way to do that. Thank you.

2:50

This takes us to the end of the daily Routine. On Tuesday and Wednesday afternoons during consideration of the main estimates,

which is where we are now, the Assembly stands adjourned upon the completion of the daily Routine and any matters arising in connection with the Routine – points of order, emergency debate, privilege, et cetera – to allow for committee considerations of the main estimates.

Pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(5)(b) the Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 1:30.

The legislative policy committees will convene this afternoon, this evening, and tomorrow morning for consideration of the main estimates. This afternoon the Standing Committee on Families and Communities will continue consideration of the estimates for the Ministry of Education and Childcare in the Rocky Mountain Room, and the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Infrastructure in the Grassland Room.

This evening the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Transportation and Economic Corridors in the Rocky Mountain Room, and the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Arts, Culture and Status of Women in the Grassland Room.

Tomorrow morning the Standing Committee on Families and Communities will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Justice in the Grassland Room, and the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates for the Ministry of Energy and Minerals in the Rocky Mountain Room.

[The Assembly adjourned at 2:51 p.m.]

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