



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, October 26, 2015

Day 9

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**

First Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker  
Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Feehan, Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)	Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)
Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)	Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND), Government House Leader
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)	McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret, Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (ND)
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Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)	McKittrick, Annie, Sherwood Park (ND)
Bhullar, Manmeet Singh, Calgary-Greenway (PC)	McLean, Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (ND), Deputy Government Whip
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND), Deputy Government House Leader	McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (ND)
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND)	Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)	Miranda, Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)	Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)	Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W), Official Opposition Whip
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (ND)	Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND), Premier
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)	Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W), Official Opposition House Leader	Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)
Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (ND)	Payne, Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W), Official Opposition Deputy Whip	Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND), Deputy Government House Leader
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (ND)	Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)	Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (Ind)	Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC), Progressive Conservative Opposition Whip	Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (ND)	Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)	Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)	Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND), Government Whip
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)	Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)	Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)	Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)	Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)	Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)	Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC), Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W), Official Opposition Deputy House Leader	Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (ND)	Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)
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Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)	Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND)
Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (PC)	Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)
Jean, Brian Michael, QC, Fort McMurray-Conklin (W), Leader of the Official Opposition	Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)
Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (ND)	van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)
Kleinstuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)	Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND)
Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)	Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)	Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)	
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)	
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)	
MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)	

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 53    Wildrose: 22    Progressive Conservative: 9    Alberta Liberal: 1    Alberta Party: 1    Independent: 1

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David Eggen	Minister of Education, Minister of Culture and Tourism
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Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Advanced Education, Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour

**STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA**

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Malkinson	Taylor
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**Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

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**Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee**

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Cortes-Vargas	Nixon
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**Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, October 26, 2015

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Welcome back.

Let us reflect. As we commence proceedings today in this Assembly, let us think about and contemplate our opportunity to once again work together; to find a way in which our collective efforts will make our world and our province better; to find hope, not fear; to co-operate, not compete; to be inclusive, not exclusive; to share, not keep. As we move forward, let us reflect on all families who have shared the burden of public life. Amen.

Hon. members, as is our custom, we pay tribute on our first day to members and former members of this Assembly who have passed away since we last met.

**Mr. Elmer Elsworth Borstad**  
August 27, 1924, to July 18, 2015

**The Speaker:** Mr. Elmer Borstad was elected to the Alberta Legislative Assembly as the Member for Grande Prairie on March 14, 1979. During his term in office Mr. Borstad spearheaded the establishment of a women's shelter in Grande Prairie and then worked with fellow members to set up provincial provisions for the ongoing funding for shelters. Mr. Borstad also brought about amendments to the urban parks program to allow smaller cities in the province to receive funding for redevelopment and maintenance. In 2004 he was the first recipient of the Grande Prairie Regional College Alumni/Foundation's volunteer award, and in 2005 he received the Alberta centennial medal.

**Mr. Harry Keith Everitt**  
April 2, 1923, to August 26, 2015

**The Speaker:** Mr. Keith Everitt was first elected to the Legislative Assembly of Alberta as the Member for St. Albert on June 18, 1959. He was subsequently re-elected in 1963 and again in 1967 in the same constituency. Over his 12 years of service he sat on many standing and special committees. Mr. Everitt carried on the family tradition when he purchased his grandfather's farm and set up as a dairy farmer. After leaving provincial politics, he became a school trustee for Sturgeon county from 1977 till 1986 and a councillor from 1980 to 1992. He and his wife, Thelma, were married for 72 years.

**Mr. Stewart Alden McCrae**  
December 30, 1929, to September 2, 2015

**The Speaker:** Born in Gladstone, Manitoba, Mr. Stewart McCrae moved to Calgary to take a position in corporate law. In 1973, when a by-election was called for Calgary-Foothills, Mr. McCrae successfully ran for office. Mr. McCrae was re-elected in 1975 and again in 1979. He was a minister without portfolio from 1975 to 1979 and minister of government services from 1979 to 1982. During his tenure Mr. McCrae served on many committees, including those of the offices of Ombudsman, Auditor General, and Chief Electoral Officer.

In a moment of silent reflection I ask each of you to remember Mr. Borstad, Mr. Everitt, and Mr. McCrae as you may have known

them. Rest eternal grant unto them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them. Amen.

Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. Robert Clark, and I would invite all of you to participate in the language of your choice.

### Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all thy sons command.  
Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,  
Il sait porter la croix!  
Ton histoire est une épopée  
Des plus brillants exploits.  
God keep our land glorious and free!  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

Hon. members, welcome back to the First Session, second sitting of the 29th Legislature.

I would invite the Leader of the Official Opposition, the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin, to proceed to the main doors of the Chamber.

### Presentation to the Assembly of Mr. Prasad Panda Member for Calgary-Foothills

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I have received from the Chief Electoral Officer of Alberta the report of the returning officer for the constituency of Calgary-Foothills containing the results of the by-election conducted on September 3, 2015, which states that a by-election was held in the constituency of Calgary-Foothills and that Mr. Prasad Panda was duly elected as the Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present to you Mr. Prasad Panda, the new Member for Calgary-Foothills, who has taken the oath as a member of this Assembly and has inscribed the roll and now claims his right to take his seat in this Chamber.

**The Speaker:** Congratulations. Let the hon. member take his seat.

Thank you to the House for acknowledging the very newest member of this Assembly.

### 1:40 Introduction of Visitors

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, with our admiration and respect there is a gratitude to the members of the families who shared the burden of public life and public service. Today I would like to welcome on your behalf members of the Borstad, Everitt, and McCrae families who are present in the Speaker's gallery. If the family members would please rise as I call their name and remain standing until I've introduced everyone. First of all, from the Borstad family: Lane Borstad, son; Jeanette Borstad, daughter-in-law; Owen Borstad, grandson; Noel Borstad, grandson; Chloe McMillan, granddaughter. From the Everitt family: Judy Heap, daughter; Barb Wilcox, daughter; Murray Wilcox, son-in-law; Warren Everitt, son. From the McCrae family: Mary McCrae, wife; Clint McCrae, son; Chantal McCrae, daughter-in-law; Mike McCrae, son; Lori McCrae, daughter-in-law.

Thank you, all, on behalf of this Assembly for the service that you, your families, and each of your loved ones has paid in their public service to this province. I would ask the House to express our greetings to them.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** Are there any school groups with us today?

Seeing none, I would call upon the new Minister of Municipal Affairs and Minister of Service Alberta for some introductions.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased today to introduce to you and through you Marcel Desjarlais, a resident of East Prairie Métis settlement in the wonderful constituency of Lesser Slave Lake, who is the former treasurer of the Metis Settlements General Council, a strong member of the Frog Lake First Nation, a powerful advocate for the cause of missing and murdered indigenous women, as well as one of my very caring, supportive people in my life. Thank you so much. I'd ask that all members join me in giving these guests our warm welcome.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Advanced Education and Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour.

**Ms Sigurdson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour today to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly Mr. Bill Kobluk. Bill is a constituent of mine who kindly adorned his lawn with one of my campaign signs. Bill is a retired high school teacher, and for 28 years he brought his students to the Legislature to view question period. He also ran for the NDP four times. I'm pleased that we could make his dream of an NDP government come true and that he is here today to witness the first day of the fall session with us. He is seated in the members' gallery this afternoon. I ask that you join me in giving him the warm welcome of the Assembly.

**Mr. Westhead:** It brings me great pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two very important people without whom I would not be here today. My parents, Linda and Tim Westhead, have travelled to our fine province from Whitby, Ontario, to see for themselves if it's really true that their son was elected as the MLA for Banff-Cochrane here in Alberta. Mr. Speaker, I trust that you can vouch for me and that my attendance record in this House has been impeccable.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize the lifetime of public service both my parents gave to the province of Ontario during their careers. My mother worked the majority of her career as a court reporter and spent the last few years working at the office of the public guardian and trustee before her retirement. My father was a high school English teacher for 30 years, most of them as head of the department and also teaching English as a second language to thousands of new Canadians in Scarborough, Ontario. Having now both retired, they are gradually circumnavigating the globe and spending my future inheritance as quickly as possible. The many years my parents dedicated to public service and the deep satisfaction they derived from their working lives inspired me to choose a career where I, too, could make a positive difference to those in my community, much like they did. I'm truly grateful for their support and guidance, that helped me to get where I am today. They are now standing, and I ask the members of this Assembly to please give them the traditional warm welcome.

**The Speaker:** I'm sure the hon. member would agree that since he has a new income, his parents could spend all of the money.

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Mr. Speaker, I have two guests today. First I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Mr. Brian Brake. Mr. Brake is the executive director of Habitat for Humanity in Red Deer. Originally from the proud province of Newfoundland, Mr. Brake joined the Canadian Forces and served

our country for 37 years, retiring as a lieutenant colonel. Since then he has used his exemplary leadership skills in the private and nonprofit sectors. He has been honoured with several prestigious formal recognitions, including the 125th anniversary of the Confederation of Canada medal and the Alberta centennial medal.

Joining him today is Mr. Alfred Nikolai. Mr. Nikolai holds an unwavering belief that home ownership through Habitat for Humanity can transform generations of families from the cycle of poverty. Under his leadership the nonprofit moved from helping a handful of families per year to the largest Habitat for Humanity affiliate in Canada. Just earlier this month as a reflection of his service and commitment to the community Mr. Nikolai was recognized with a special citation award from Ernst & Young as a social entrepreneur for the prairie region.

Would the House please welcome these giving and generous individuals, Mr. Brian Brake and Mr. Alfred Nikolai.

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

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly my immediate family members: Michèle Carlier, my wife and constant companion in this exciting world of public life; my parents, Ervin and Jacqueline Carlier, visiting from my hometown of Val Marie, Saskatchewan, who in a few days will be celebrating their 65th wedding anniversary; my brother Ervin Carlier Jr.; my sisters Vickie Reid and Lesley Stone; my brother-in-law Dave Stone; and my mother-in-law, Maxine Brekke. I'd ask them to remain standing to receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

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

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be back in the Legislature with one more Wildrose MLA.

### Provincial Budget

**Mr. Jean:** Tomorrow Albertans will finally see a budget from this government. That's helpful. What isn't helpful is that this budget will have a record deficit. Indeed, we now know that this government has no plans whatsoever to balance the budget for many, many years to come. To the Premier: when exactly did her government first decide that they would not balance the budget in fiscal 2018?

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you. Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me just say that it is also a pleasure to be back in the House, and as well I'd like to extend my welcome to the new MLA for Calgary-Foothills.

As the member has outlined, our Minister of Finance announced last week that the year in which we would be balancing the budget would be pushed out one year as we become more aware of the extended low projections for the price of oil. This was an issue that was put to Albertans in the last election. They said, "Take a balanced hand, act as a shock absorber, and take care of families," and that's what this government will do.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, during the election campaign the NDP said that they would balance the budget in fiscal 2017. That's what voters voted for. But then they realized they got their budget math wrong by almost \$4 billion, and they said that 2018 would have to do. Last week the Finance minister told us that, whoopsie, 2018 wasn't going to happen. We might get a balanced budget by April 2020. To the Premier: why has she broken her most important

election promise? Why won't she balance the budget before the next election?

**Ms Notley:** Well, as I said, Mr. Speaker, what Albertans talked about in the last election was the fact that we are faced with an unprecedented drop in revenue for this province as a result of becoming unnecessarily reliant on it. They were asked to consider draconian, radical cuts, or they were asked to consider a measured, balanced approach that protects families, and we've seen the result. We will do what we promised to do for Albertans. I know that's kind of a new thing for you, but we are going to keep our promises and protect families.

**Mr. Jean:** With this many waffles by the government we'll balance in 2052.

The government is blaming the downturn in oil prices for their inability to balance the budget. Albertans might believe that except that this summer, when the Finance minister presented the Q1 fiscal update, he increased the projected price of oil. This government jacked up oil revenue projections in August, but now the low price of oil is their excuse to push back balancing the budget. Will the Premier admit to Albertans that this government won't balance the budget no matter what the price of oil is?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, we've talked to Albertans, and what they've told us is that they agree with our three-pronged plan. First of all, they want us to stabilize public services to ensure that Albertans have those front-line services that contribute to their resiliency and their ability to respond to the downturn that we face. Secondly, they want a plan to balance, a reasonable, careful one, and that's what we're going to be offering. Thirdly, they want someone who is going to focus on job creation, not layoff after layoff after layoff, and that is what this government will deliver.

**The Speaker:** Second question. The Leader of the Opposition.

**Mr. Jean:** NDP promise made, NDP promise broken.

### Provincial Debt

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, in a recent media interview the Dominion Bond Rating Service warned that it would rethink Alberta's triple-A credit rating if total provincial debt surpassed 15 per cent of GDP. For that to happen, the provincial government debt would have to be around \$30 billion. All indications are that this NDP government is going to dramatically exceed that number. Will the Premier set our debt limit at a number that does not risk our triple-A credit rating?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I urge the members opposite to stay tuned for tomorrow because I think they'll find that their concerns are allayed. But that being said, let me just say that what we are focused on doing is keeping the promises that we made to Albertans. I understand that that sort of sounds like duping the electorate over there, but in fact that's how democracy works. You tell people that you're going to make these priorities your priorities, and then you plan on that basis. That's what we've done, and that's what we're going to do.

**Mr. Jean:** Having a triple-A credit rating is very important to municipalities, to universities, to any agency that borrows through this government. A lowering of the rating will increase the interest that we have to pay on debt. That makes debt much more expensive and takes away money from programs and services that Albertans are so relying on. Losing the triple-A rating significantly increases

the amount of money that goes to paying interest on the debt. Does the Premier understand how much this issue matters to all Albertans?

**The Speaker:** Madam Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know what else hurts jobs and security for Albertans? A \$3.5 billion cut to services, laying off tens of thousands of employees and front-line service workers, and undercutting our education and our health care: that – that – is what creates instability and creates job loss and hurts the economy. So we are not going to do that. Our budget will be a shock absorber, yet it will still engage in good, sound accounting measures, which I am sure the member opposite will be pleased to see.

**Mr. Jean:** Like all Albertans, I'd appreciate a promise made by the government and a promise kept, and that hasn't happened in this case.

Recently Alberta Finance has had to increase the sweetener that it pays to place our bonds with creditors. Our 2.35 per cent, 10-year bond now actually costs the government of Alberta 2.587 per cent. Not all that long ago these bonds actually cost less than the posted coupon rate. Lenders don't think our bonds are as safe as they used to be; that's clear. Losing the triple-A credit rating will make matters much, much worse. Will the Premier commit to doing all she can to protect Alberta's credit rating?

**The Speaker:** Madam Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I will do is commit to doing all that I can to protect the people of Alberta. The member opposite may not have noticed, but essentially the price of oil has tanked, and we're going to lose over \$6 billion in revenue. So the question is: what kind of leadership navigates through those troubled waters in a way that makes sure Alberta families are protected and maintain their resilience and are able to come through it and in a way that protects and builds diversification and new jobs? That is the plan that this government will introduce tomorrow, and I just can't wait.

**The Speaker:** Third question. The Leader of the Official Opposition.

### Budget Document Preview by Opposition

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, let's stay with the budget. Tomorrow the government has said that they will release the hundreds of pages of budget documents. The media will get the documents at 8 a.m. and will have at least seven hours to analyze them before the information becomes public. Seven hours. The members of the opposition: well, we get to see the documents for about an hour and a half. That's 10 seconds per page. Now, we're really good, but does the Premier really think that this lives up to her promise to do things differently than the last government?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, in terms of the length of the lock-up, which I believe is what the Leader of the Official Opposition is talking about, the length of the lock-up will be as long as it always has been. Meanwhile we will have many, many, many hours in this Legislature to debate the details of the budget. Indeed, additional hours were offered and rejected, I'm told, but either way . . .

**Mr. Mason:** Not rejected. Accepted.

**Ms Notley:** Accepted. Were offered and accepted. Excuse me.

So there have been additional hours delegated as per the opposition's request and negotiated as per the opposition's request, and I hope that after all that time they'll vote in favour of the budget.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, as you know, we're here to help, but I have it on good authority that the Premier, when she was the leader of the third party, expressed strong feelings about this particular issue. In fact, she knew it was ridiculous – knew it was ridiculous – that the previous government had shrunk the amount of time the opposition had to review the budget. Albertans would think that it would be helpful if the MLAs got more than 90 minutes with the budget before they had to comment on it. It would certainly help. Will the Premier allow elected MLAs to have the same amount of time as the reporters get with the budget? Yes or no?

2:00

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, we're going to move ahead with the lock-up procedures that have been in place for a very long time. The thing of it is that we've got almost the full month of November laid out for budget deliberations, and I have no doubt that throughout those many weeks the members of the opposition will take every opportunity they possibly can to comment to the media over and over and over again about the budget. I feel very confident that it will be well reviewed and well canvassed in the media as well as on this floor before we get a chance to vote on it. I'm quite confident in the way we're going to go forward.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, it's obvious to all Albertans that this government is struggling to learn its business. The budget will be a record one in the wrong direction. The government's economic policies are being rejected by businesses, rejected by economists. Their policies have our energy industry more concerned than they have been in over 50 years. But this government could maybe, just maybe, get something as important as accountability right. To the Premier: what good reason is there to allow the opposition parties only 10 seconds per page with the budget? What good reason could there possibly be to ignore accountability of this government?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as I've said, I think there's a great deal more time than has already been outlined for the opposition to review the budget, so I think that's quite good. What we have heard from businesses, though, is that they're looking for a government that is actually interested in partnering with them as we move forward through the economic downturn that we are facing right now, and that's why I've created the first economic development ministry since 2006. I've heard nothing but good things from business about the fact that we've made that focus, from many of your friends across the way, who said: "You know what? This is a good thing." That is what we're doing to work with business. You'll see that in the budget, and I'm very proud with how we're moving forward.

**The Speaker:** The leader of the third party.

### Government Policies

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, after leaving Albertans without the certainty of a budget for nearly six months and actually causing tens of thousands of unnecessary job losses, to the Premier: will you give hard-working men and women in Alberta the assurance that you will not tax more of them out of their jobs or increase the cost of living with new taxes beyond what they've already suffered from under your government?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, I'll start with two things. You know, we could have had a budget already if the previous government had chosen to pass the budget before they called an election a year earlier than the legislation that was in place at the time. That being said, the budget will come tomorrow, and we will see the outcomes. You know, overall Albertans will pay less in taxes in our budget than they would have under the budget that was put forward by the folks over there.

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, Albertans have come to depend upon the Premier of Saskatchewan, who was in Alberta on the weekend, to be their go-to voice in Canada to protect jobs, the economy, and quality of life for their families since May 5 of this year. To the Premier: have you heard enough from Albertans during the summer of discontent to convince you to redirect your government in favour of creating jobs, to stick up for the great work done on the environment by Albertans, and to remove the uncertainty caused by your changes to the Energy Regulator and possible changes to royalties?

**The Speaker:** Madam Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Speaker. I had a tremendous opportunity to travel across the province over the summer and in the early fall and not only there but to meet with investors in the U.S. as well as eastern Canada. In meeting with those people, one of the things that I heard about, actually, was that they were looking for a government that would engage in a partnership on job creation and economic diversification. As I've said, I heard that message, and we developed that ministry, as announced last week, and you'll see the economic plan that will be laid out in the budget by the Minister of Finance tomorrow. I actually think that we have heard a lot of that message, and I'm very pleased with the opportunity to work collaboratively with business leaders around the province.

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, our caucus has talked to Alberta leaders who provide jobs, build seniors' housing, and create wealth to benefit Albertans. In almost all cases they feel they've been ignored with a we-know-better attitude by this Premier's ministers when they've met. Madam Premier, would you ask your ministers to go back and listen this time, do the job right, and actually pay attention to the Albertans that are already creating jobs, already supporting the economy, and actually get it right, because they don't feel heard so far?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I actually think my ministers have been consulting an incredible amount, and I've heard a lot of amazing feedback in terms of how accessible everybody in this government is. But you know what? We can always do better, and we will do better just because we love our province and we want to talk to as many people as we can. I have faith in all of my ministers that they will continue to do that. In particular with the folks that this minister is talking about, I suspect they're going to see a lot of the new Minister of Economic Development and Trade in the weeks to come.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Bow.

### Calgary Southwest Ring Road Contract

**Ms Drever:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many constituents in my riding have approached me regarding the completion of the ring road. There are many questions and concerns revolving around the west end, which crosses through my riding. Throughout this summer a question that was frequently asked was about the implications of



proceeding as a P3. My question to the Minister of Transportation: why the decision to go forward with a public-private partnership to develop Calgary's ring road, and what is the current status of the evaluation of tenders?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much for the question, hon. member. It's a very important project for the people of Calgary, and it involves a historic land transfer agreement with the Tsuut'ina First Nation. There is a seven-year time frame on the completion of the ring road; otherwise, the land will revert to the Tsuut'ina First Nation. So on the basis of that and the advice of my advisers in the department that a delay would be engendered if we moved away from a P3, I made the decision that we would proceed with a P3 development. I can tell you that we finished the . . .

**The Speaker:** I know that the hon. minister is such a novice here that he forgets to speak to the Speaker, but I'm sure it'll come back to him soon.

First supplemental.

**Ms Drever:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Could the minister go into details regarding the timeline for completion and touch specifically on the west end of the ring road?

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much for that question, hon. member. We will be announcing the selected contractor for the southwest Calgary ring road in the summer of 2016, and we'll begin construction before the end of next year. As we progress further through the construction of this important project, our government will consider future options for delivering transportation infrastructure to Calgarians.

**The Speaker:** Final supplemental.

**Ms Drever:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the minister please speak to the government's financial commitment to the ring road and whether or not it will exceed the \$1.9 billion currently committed? Thank you.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much for that question, hon. member. It is our intention to complete the southwest portion of the Calgary ring road on time and on budget.

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

#### Flood Mitigation on the Bow and Elbow Rivers

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In June 2013 Calgary and neighbouring communities were hit hard by flooding, including many members of my constituency. I know that residents in my riding of Calgary-Glenmore have been waiting for information on flood protection, and today the government announced flood protection along the Bow and Elbow rivers to protect the city of Calgary and neighbouring communities. My question to the Minister of Infrastructure: can the minister please tell us more about the project and why the government is confident that this is the right project?

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, hon. member. The minister of environment met today with Mayor Nenshi and the Calgary River Communities Action Group copresident, Brenda Leeds Binder, to announce this important flood protection for the city of Calgary. We'll protect families and businesses from the 2013 flood levels by

investing in flood mitigation. That's why the government asked Deltares, a world-leading international research institute, to look at projects on the basis of how well they would protect from floods, the cost benefits, risks, and environmental impacts. They have recommended that we go forward with the Springbank off-stream dam, and that's what we're doing.

2:10

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The residents in my riding and across Calgary have been waiting for this announcement since June of 2013. The plans have been subjected to delay after delay under the former government, and quite frankly, many Calgarians have become frustrated with the process. I need to go back to my riding with the confidence that there are specific measures to protect Calgary and the residents of Calgary-Glenmore. What exactly does today's announcement mean for Calgarians and my constituency particularly?

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, hon. member, for that question. The former government's delays and lack of action on flood mitigation have put families and businesses at risk. The Official Opposition's plan is to cut \$9.3 billion from infrastructure. That would mean no protection for Calgarians.

Our government has taken swift action to work with the mayor of Calgary, stakeholders, and experts to build a plan that's right for Albertans. In addition to the \$297 million to the Springbank project, our government also announced \$150 million over 10 years to build flood protection works within the city of Calgary, allowing the city to develop a multiyear flood protection plan.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat – my apologies. I forgot to ask at the front end about a little bit more patience, the same stuff I asked for in the spring. So this is my second time to ask for that. We had a second supplemental waiting.

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I mentioned, Calgarians have been frustrated with the process up until today, and many are saying that they're concerned that future plans to protect the Bow River with adequate flood protection will be delayed. Essentially, people need to know that future protection will move forward without delay. Can the minister please tell us in detail what future plans government has to address outstanding concerns?

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, hon. member. Well, timeliness is key to all Albertans affected by floods. Literally, thousands were directly impacted by the events of 2013, and individuals remain vulnerable to future flooding. We believe that we can build Springbank in less time than other options. The mayor of Calgary said that he's very supportive of the creation of the Springbank off-stream reservoir. We look forward to continuing to work with stakeholders and our department to move this important issue forward to protect Calgarians and other Albertans.

**The Speaker:** Now the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

#### Alberta Health Services Board

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, while in opposition the current Infrastructure minister blasted executive salaries, expense scandals, and the bureaucratic mess at Alberta Health Services. At that time, he asked the previous Health minister if he would, quote, reduce waste, confusion, duplication, and mismanagement and abolish Alberta Health Services. To the Health minister: will you follow through on your party's criticisms and reduce waste, confusion,

duplication, and mismanagement by at least decentralizing Alberta Health Services?

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, I think I need to point out the irony. That member opposite is proposing that we actually create a whole bunch of waste and confusion and decentralization through having a variety of different health regions. That is never what we proposed in the platform. The Premier was very clear in the election about what she was proposing, and while members opposite maybe don't have intentions to fulfill their commitments, we do.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Infrastructure in his previous life in opposition attacked administrative chaos, escalating operational costs, systemic inefficiencies at Alberta Health Services. He received thunderous applause from his caucus and even the Premier herself. Now, despite the promises of her own party the Health minister has declared that AHS is here to stay, with even more bureaucrats. To the Health minister: as per your own colleagues will you stop creating confusion and waste and wasting money on this bureaucratic nightmare?

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud of the board that we announced on Friday. We have seven tremendous community leaders who are willing to invest their time and dedication to make sure that we address inefficiencies and find the very best system possible for Albertans. I have to say that I am very confident in their expertise, and I would much rather have seven individuals running the board of Alberta Health Services than cut \$3 million or \$4 billion or whatever billion dollars the members opposite might propose today just simply to say: we're having a balanced budget. There will be a smart board that makes smart decisions to increase efficiencies.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, with answers in very short supply I'll change my approach and ask the Minister of Infrastructure himself. The minister has in the past boldly declared – and, again, I'm quoting directly – “A New Democrat government would abolish Alberta Health Services altogether.” To the Minister of Infrastructure, in your own words, please: what will it take for this government to admit that the structure of the Alberta health superboard was a failure and finally return to local decision-making?

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you for the question. Since it's a health question, I think it's appropriate that it be directed to the Health minister. What this government campaigned on was making sure that the services were protected that Albertans rely on, making sure that they get the right care by the right professional at the right place at the right investment, and we've got a board that's going to be amazing in helping us deliver on that. Members opposite might think that you can just rearrange, just reorganize, and blame others for the things that they would like to do, which is cut billions of dollars from the system, which would create chaos. This government is committed to stability and delivering for health care.

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

### Agricultural Policies

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past summer farmers and ranchers from across Alberta experienced some of the most challenging weather in years. Drought conditions, the worst in over 50 years in some areas, caused tremendous stress to hard-working farmers. Starting in early July, rural municipalities and

counties all across our province, some 20, declared a state of agricultural disaster, yet the agriculture minister waited until August 21 to finally offer assistance to drought-stricken farmers, assistance that was for many too little, too late. To the minister: why did you wait so long in offering assistance to Alberta farmers?

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

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. While it was true that there were some very dry, adverse conditions across the province, it's also true that the results coming in with the yield are closer to 85 per cent of our five-year average. So I do believe now that we were correct in being prudent and waiting to see how the harvest was maintaining throughout the season and helping farmers when they needed it, where they needed it.

Thank you.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, that points out just how out of touch this minister is. Given that the producers were the worst affected by the drought and that the hardest hit were cattle ranchers and that they were unable to buy feed – in some cases feed was three to five times the regular retail cost – and that summer pastures were drying up and that in some cases these ranchers were selling off the very cow herd that produces their livelihood, Mr. Minister, can you tell us why you failed to take prompt and decisive action to assist and to support our farmers and ranchers?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Farming families work hard and are an essential pillar of Alberta's economy. Working with the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation, we provided direct, timely support to farmers during this tough growing season and found creative solutions to problems posed by this year's dry growing conditions. Making sure that the member didn't misunderstand my first statement, overall the yields were good, but recognizing that there were areas that were drier, they did get the support that they needed at the right time.

Thank you.

2:20

**Dr. Starke:** Mr. Speaker, it's a given that producers all summer long were desperate for any good news on the agricultural front, then in October it came in the form of the trans-Pacific partnership. Now, given that the signing of this landmark trade agreement was universally hailed by producer groups across our province because of its potential for expanded market access, why was the agriculture minister so lukewarm in his response to this agreement? Was it because he didn't want to contradict the federal NDP's objections to this deal?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I see that we've changed gears to the trans-Pacific partnership. I think it's important to realize that the trans-Pacific partnership is still just an agreement in principle. No country has yet signed off on it, and we have yet to see any detail whatsoever. All that anyone has been able to see is in the press reports, the releases themselves. Trade is important for Alberta, and our government supports responsible growth opportunities for export sectors. When the actual text is released, for sure we will be looking very carefully at it.

Thank you.

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

### Two Hills Mennonite School Construction

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The provincial government is trying to build a school in a swamp in the community of Two Hills, and the project has been delayed for years as a result. The ground is saturated, there are barely three walls up, and those are starting to crumble. The project has had issues with mud, water, and methane gas. This is all because the previous government decided to build on an artesian well, and this current NDP government is not making any better decisions. The community has suggested a better site for this school. Mr. Minister, will you listen to the community, cut bait, and change the location?

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much for the question from the hon. member. I did meet with the hon. member, and I did investigate this issue at his request. I can tell him that the site was not ideal and that the problems have been mitigated. The cost to complete the school will be 25 and a half million dollars at the current location. That's nearly \$10 million more than originally budgeted. The cost to move the school to the other location would be in excess of \$35 million, and that does not include land. There is no guarantee that the new site will be safer.

**Mr. Hanson:** Mr. Speaker, this has turned into an expensive embarrassment for the government, and worst of all, our students and families aren't even close to having the school that they were promised in 2010. The minister has had some time to settle into his new role, and now we deserve some answers. Can the minister explain why none of the high-paid bureaucrats did a proper assessment of this land before they started building on it and why they now refuse to admit that they made a mistake? Why is the bureaucracy insisting on going ahead with an unsafe build?

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is not an unsafe building. It was not an ideal site; however, the groundwater and methane issues have been dealt with. This will be a safe school. It would cause about a three-year delay, potentially, to start over at a new site. That site is on private land and has not been acquired. No land has been publicly made available by the school board or the municipality. So those land costs would be in addition to the \$35 million to move the site.

**Mr. Hanson:** Mr. Speaker, we all know that if you're in a hole, stop digging, especially if it's a wet one. This project is already years behind schedule and \$10 million over budget. All the government has to show is three gymnasium concrete walls and a 10 per cent failure rate of the foundation pilings currently in place. The last government made a mistake in choosing this site. To the minister: why are you doubling down and making the problem worse without regard for the safety and concerns of the community?

**Mr. Mason:** Well, thank you . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. minister, I wonder if you could make your comments to the Speaker, please.

**Mr. Mason:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

I think I've answered the question. I don't think the member is hearing me. This was not an ideal site. It's now \$10 million over budget, but if we move to the other site that you're suggesting, it's an additional \$10 million over and above that plus the cost of the land, and we don't know if that land will be any different in terms

of its geology. It's a very high water table there, so there's no guarantee that the next site will be any better than this one.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Highwood.

### Disaster Recovery Program

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Following the appalling management of the disaster recovery program by the Alberta Emergency Management Agency and nearly two years of constant public pressure, the AEMA finally committed to holding an independent review of their administration of the 2013 flood recovery. We know that the review took place as hundreds of my constituents and many stakeholder groups were interviewed. We know that the report was delivered to the ministry before the election, and to date this report and its recommendations have not been released. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: what does the report say, and will you commit to releasing the full report today?

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, I have to say as someone who has lived through both flooding and forest fires in my hometown of Slave Lake that I understand how hard it is to go through something like that. It is clear that there are a number of problems with the disaster recovery program set up by the PCs and that we need to do better. Very shortly, integrating feedback from the report, we will provide an update on our plans to move forward and the lessons we've learned to make the changes to the disaster recovery program so that it's there for Albertans the next time it's needed.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Given that a similar government report launched after the 2005 flood was not released for nearly six years and given that there remains over 600 DRP files outstanding, Albertans in general deserve to see the report for themselves. To the same minister: will you please explain why you have not shared this report already so that it could provide benefits to resolving the remaining 602 outstanding DRP claims in my constituency?

**Ms Larivee:** Mr. Speaker, when disaster strikes, Albertans do need to have confidence that there is an effective and well-managed program to help them recover and that all information will be used to move forward. It is clear that there are a number of problems. The bottom line is that we will use the lessons we've learned to move forward, and we will take into consideration the member's desire to see that report.

Thank you.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Seven ministers, five years.

Given that the government committed to improving communication between the DRP and the applicants and that it's infuriating to hear that the Alberta Emergency Management Agency continues to close files without contacting the applicants in my constituency, again to the same minister: what specific actions will you commit to that will ensure that AEMA is communicating with all claimants with any changes to their applications?

**Ms Larivee:** Mr. Speaker, once again, as someone who, myself, has lived through natural disasters I have great compassion for those individuals. As I previously stated, there are a number of problems with the system that was set up by the PCs, and we do need to improve it. The bottom line is that Albertans that are hit by disaster need help and that the government needs to be there, and we're committed to making that happen.

### Affordable Supportive Living Initiative

**Mr. Gotfried:** Mr. Speaker, irrespective of political leanings we can all agree that taking care of Alberta's elderly population is a high priority. The previous government recognized this and in October 2014 announced \$180 million in grants to create 2,612 new affordable supportive living spaces. My question is to the Minister of Seniors. These projects continue to sit stagnant, delayed due to your government's inaction. Why do you continue to put Alberta seniors at risk by delaying these important ASLI projects, with a full construction season now behind us?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. The reason why we're in such a backlog in terms of needing to have deferred maintenance caught up on is because the party that just asked the question neglected it for so many decades.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Mr. Speaker, as a point of clarification, these are new projects and not maintenance projects. But thank you.

Again to the same minister: given that in the spring session we heard that a decision was imminent and a letter was sent on July 16 stating that Alberta Seniors staff would meet with proponents in the near future and that there's still no word to the affected parties confirming or denying the funding they were promised, when in concrete terms will these groups get a firm commitment on the funding already announced?

2:30

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What we've committed to do is to make sure that we have our due diligence in terms of reviewing the projects that the last government was so keen to announce over and over again right before the last election. What we've done is that we've made sure we've met with the different proponents over the summer months, reviewed the projects, and also reviewed where the demand is because we want to make sure that if we're investing public money, it's focused on addressing the needs of seniors whether they're in the hospital or whether they're at home. So we're doing that work, we're meeting with the stakeholders, and I look forward to giving an update to this House very soon.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, to the same minister: given that \$180 million in grants that was allocated to create only 1,500 ASLI spaces ended up creating a framework for 2,612 new spaces through innovative public-private partnerships, will this government do what is right and continue to partner with both public and private organizations, or will ideology win the day and reduced or more costly public, unionized staff facilities take ultimate precedence over not-for-profit organizations who have made land and other commitments in good faith and not in good time, unfortunately?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Speaker. It's interesting that the member opposite talks about how public-private partnerships are so great, when the last government realized that they weren't being effective and they changed the plan on the new school construction because they weren't able to get good proponents. I'm really proud of the fact that Albertans voted this government in on a platform that includes the building of 2,000 long-term care beds. That platform commitment is under way, and

we'll be able to update this House shortly, but know that we are committed to making sure that we bring those beds on stream in a timely fashion.

### Municipal Infrastructure Funding

**Ms Miller:** Mr. Speaker, Red Deer is one of the many Alberta communities that have seen rapid population growth, leading to many pressures from municipal governments, especially as it relates to infrastructure. What is the Minister of Municipal Affairs doing to ensure that municipalities receive the support they need to start and complete infrastructure projects?

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, our government ensured through interim supply that funding for municipalities was provided to move local infrastructure projects forward. Our government will not repeat the mistakes of the past. I look forward to the budget and capital plan being presented in the House tomorrow, which will demonstrate our commitment to building much-needed municipal infrastructure. We promised our municipal partners we would support their local infrastructure needs, and we are keeping that promise, including for the Red Deer region, where we recently invested \$6 million to expand the Red Deer airport, create jobs, and support that growing community.

**Ms Miller:** Mr. Speaker, given that many municipalities are also worried about these much-needed infrastructure projects being completed on time, how is the minister working to ensure that these municipalities have the stable, long-term, predictable funding they deserve?

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We heard from local leaders that predictable funding was critical. We listened, and we responded by delivering on these programs that they most value, such as the MSI. MSI delivers funding that is flexible, and municipalities can apply future years' allocations to fund projects. This supports long-term planning and respects community priorities. Through the MSI, Alberta community partnership, federal gas tax fund, and small communities fund the province is providing significant funding to advance long-term priorities.

**Ms Miller:** Mr. Speaker, given that the years of neglect by the previous government has led to the shortage of much-needed municipal infrastructure, what is the minister doing to ensure that projects are being funded according to priority and to help municipalities get shovels in the ground?

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, a key aspect of MSI is that municipalities get to decide what projects to spend their allocations on. They set the priority; we meet it. On the competitive-based small communities fund the selection process involved publically disclosed rating criteria, which helped us select 56 projects out of almost 300 applicants. The successful projects addressed very immediate community needs such as boil water advisories and sewer problems. I will repeat that I look forward to the budget and capital plan, that will demonstrate our commitment to building much-needed . . .

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

### Flood Mitigation on the Elbow River

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today's announcement of flood protection along the Bow and Elbow rivers is a first step, but I'm left with more questions than answers on the long-term impacts

these decisions will have. At the end of the day our province's flood mitigation plans must be made in the best interest of all Albertans and all communities. What consultation and discussion did the minister of environment have with the communities most affected and the municipality of Rocky View before making this decision?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. I am proud that our government is moving forward to provide strong protection to the city of Calgary and other communities, including in the MD of Rocky View, Bragg Creek, and Redwood Meadows. We're looking very much forward to working with them. We took these decisions today based on cost, based on environmental risk, and based on the very real risk of catastrophic failure during construction. These were concerns that folks in Bragg Creek and all along also shared and folks in the city of Calgary shared. We were glad to work with them, to go forward with essentially what amounts to a four-point plan for flood protection in Calgary.

**Mrs. Aheer:** So no consultations.

Mr. Speaker, the minister of environment spoke this morning about the emotional toll that the floods have taken on the province, and I couldn't agree more. At the same time I want to highlight the immense financial toll that a wrong decision could have on our province in the future. Can the minister assure Albertans that a thorough cost-benefit analysis has been conducted for both the Springbank and McLean Creek locations and that today's decision was cemented by fiscal and not emotional reasoning?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can assure this House that it took our government five months to review the documents, to review all of the data presented before us. We commissioned independent reports as well to ensure that we were making the right decision for the city of Calgary and for all of the communities along the Elbow. Our conclusions were that the Springbank project was the most cost-effective, carried the least amount of environmental risk, the least amount of construction risk. We can get flood mitigation in place much quicker for the city of Calgary and much quicker for the people of Bragg Creek with the option that we have chosen. We are proud to have taken this decision today.

**Mrs. Aheer:** I hear a lot about the city of Calgary. The flood mitigation preparation is about Albertans and preparing for our province's future in a responsible manner. Part of flood mitigation preparation must include the consideration of land valuation in Springbank. This valuation must be clarified. At what point do land value discrepancies and potential court delays diminish the cost and time arguments made by the government in favour of Springbank?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the members opposite cannot be trusted to get it right on flood mitigation. They would cut \$9.3 billion from infrastructure over five years. That would mean that Calgary, the community of Bragg Creek, the community of Redwood Meadows would never see flood protection under their plan. Their approach is to make hasty decisions without complete information. Our approach is to take a clear-eyed view of the facts, change our minds even when necessary, and make the right decision for all of southern Alberta.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

2:40

## Forest Industry Issues

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In this continued low-price environment the government needs to continue to build on the previous government's efforts to diversify the economy. For nine years we've had a softwood lumber agreement with the United States, which has ensured tariff-free lumber exports. This agreement expired this month, which has caused much worry in the industry that if a new agreement is not signed, the Alberta forest sector will suffer from levies imposed on exported lumber. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: what are you doing to ensure that the new softwood lumber trade agreement is reached?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. While it is true that the Canada-U.S. softwood lumber agreement expired on October 12, we do know that forestry is a critical sector of our economy. Over 15,000 Albertans work in forestry, and the industry is a key economic driver in at least 70 Alberta communities, including many in my own constituency. There is a stall of one year from expiry. We're hoping to have the opportunity to talk to our federal counterparts to ensure that forestry remains a viable part of our economy in Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Premier: given that the government announced the Premier's Advisory Committee on the Economy to diversify Alberta's economy outside of the oil and gas industry and given that the membership of this committee includes members from the Alberta Federation of Labour, the Health Sciences Association of Alberta, the University of Alberta, GE, Suncor, and ATCO, why is there is there no representation whatsoever from anyone in the forest industry?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm quite honoured to have been named the Minister of Economic Development and Trade this week. The creation of this ministry shows to Albertans that job creation, diversification of our economy, and increased trades are a focus and a priority for our Premier and our government. I'm quite happy to be working with the Premier's advisory council in order to ensure that the plan that we move forward on is the best one, and we're going to act in the best interests of all Albertans.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: given that pine beetle infestations are decreasing the Canadian timber supply and that this government's first course of action taken was to terminate the Spray Lake Sawmills agreement, how will this government ensure stable and continued timber allocations with forestry producers?

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We do recognize the importance to combat the pest of mountain pine beetle. I am proud to be a champion for Alberta forestry products, and I'm working hard every single day to support this industry and the hard-working families that depend on it.

Thank you.

## Members' Statements

### Habitat for Humanity

**Mrs. Schreiner:** Mr. Speaker and my friends here today, I am privileged to introduce Habitat for Humanity from Red Deer, an organization committed to providing dignified and inclusive housing and home ownership for all.

In the last 30 years, since its origin in 1985, Habitat for Humanity has built an impressive 2,712 homes in Canada. Working through 57 different affiliates, Habitat serves 300 Canadian communities. Six of them are located in Alberta. The Red Deer affiliate group, which has been in action since 1994, has built 25 homes, with four more under construction. Sixty-one low-income, working families have had the joy of owning a home thanks to Habitat Red Deer's efforts.

I am proud to share that one of Habitat's better known affiliates is located in Edmonton in the riding of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. Since 1991 427 homes were built in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, making 1,000 low-income, working families proud homeowners. Habitat's Edmonton chapter says that by December 25, 2015, eighteen more families will engage in the festive season in their new homes.

The Red Deer affiliate of Habitat for Humanity hosted an elegant garden party to raise funds for future development, which Her Honour the Honourable Lois Mitchell, Lieutenant Governor, attended. The event marked the introduction of Habitat to the city of Lacombe. The organization, its partners, and volunteers in the community have helped to end the cycle of poverty. This has provided the benefits of stability to those who may never have left the poverty cycle. It is a pleasure to introduce them here today.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

### Provincial Fiscal Policies

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been 173 days since the last election, on May 5, and both I along with my 21 Wildrose colleagues had hoped it would be the start of a new, moderate approach from our NDP government. We had hoped to see leadership that would put the ideology aside and focus on doing what is best for Alberta, leadership that would work for Albertans, not against them. Sadly, this hasn't been the case. In the face of massive private-sector job losses, about 40,000 this year, we have seen this government stubbornly implement policies that are inflaming the current situation – 20 per cent business tax increases, higher personal taxes, doubling the carbon tax, a royalty review – and it doesn't sound like the NDP are done yet. If not tomorrow, then sometime in the future, the message is clear. Albertans can expect even more tax increases to subsidize this government's record spending.

Alberta has been jolted into a cold reality. In my home town of Fort McMurray a 20 per cent vacancy rate exists while unemployment continues to rise. In August a new report was issued that shows that business confidence is nearing historic lows. What has the government done in response? They bulldoze ahead with their dramatic 50 per cent increase to the minimum wage, a move that would mean higher prices for consumers, fewer hours for workers, and would put the viability of hundreds of businesses at risk. This is not the moderate approach Albertans were hoping for.

In this session the Wildrose wants to let the government know that we are still here to help. Let's not intensify the problems our economy is facing. Let's put forward policies and ideas that tell the world that Alberta is a safe place to invest. Instead of calling

Alberta an embarrassing cousin, let's champion our accomplishments to the world. Wildrose remains here to help. I hope this government will listen.

### Government Policies

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, this has been a summer of discontent made worse by NDP MLAs. Ideology has replaced common sense. They began with \$6 billion borrowed, with no details provided. Government delayed the budget almost six months after the election but found time to add job-killing corporate taxes. This created maximum uncertainty, worsening Albertans' ability to make a living in the energy industry, and made the situation worse by threatening a royalty review, a regulator overhaul, and musings of new taxes. The threat of a \$15 per hour minimum wage is putting the entire tourism and hospitality industry at risk while ignoring the reality that low-income Albertans will actually get hurt more than helped by the change. Promises of building seniors' homes have been delayed or perhaps even broken depending upon the budget.

The Premier has told unemployed Albertans to settle down and called Alberta an embarrassing cousin and given up on three of the four possible pipeline directions. Rather than working to save jobs and provide support and training to unemployed Albertans, the minister of jobs spent time trying to get jobs for her pals in the NDP in B.C. The government has sown seeds of discontent so deep that Albertans thrashed the NDP candidates in the federal election. The government has taken their eye off the ball on school construction and then tried to blame the previous government, only to spend an entire week explaining, backtracking, and hoping the issue would go away, distancing themselves from – wait for it – themselves.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans have not been properly consulted or paid attention to. Our PC caucus thanks the NDP for driving Albertans in our direction, but that will not stop us from opposing bad policies. We encourage Albertans to rise up rather than settle down. PCs are proud of Alberta; it's, rather, the NDP who are ashamed. Albertans can count on us to push the government away from one blind ideological mistake after another and towards policies that are good for Alberta and ones they counted on, at least until May 5.

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

2:50

### Phil Bobawsky

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to stand here today to speak to this House for the first time about the tireless work of Phil Bobawsky. Phil was a constituent of Calgary-Shaw that I had the privilege of meeting just shortly after the spring election. Little did I know the first time I met Phil that he would educate me a lot about people suffering from vision loss. Phil first lost his vision, 10 years ago, due to complications related to diabetes, and it was then that he reached out to the Canadian National Institute for the Blind, that helped with his rehabilitation.

For the past several years Phil has volunteered with the CNIB and has become an advocate for all those suffering from vision loss. During the last provincial election Phil attended debates throughout the city and province and worked to make sure that vision loss was made the centre of attention during the election. Phil is a man who always has a lot to say, and this is a determination, advocacy work, and contribution that reflects his passion. Phil is a member of the city of Calgary's Advisory Committee on Accessibility and has continued to work with others through his work with the Canadian Diabetes Association, the Rick Hansen Foundation, and the Kidney Foundation of Canada.

This fall I had the honour to be present at an event where he was the recipient of the first annual Don Biberdorf award for his tireless advocacy. Phil would attest that his success today is directly due to the love and support of his family and the support of the CNIB. Phil, who's present in the gallery with his dog Finnegan and representative J.S. Ryu from the CNIB, is an outstanding example of the great work that the CNIB provides for those with vision loss. Their advocacy work across Alberta shows that no matter what your challenges are, everyone in this province can make a difference. I am proud to call Phil a constituent, a neighbour, a friend, and an advocate.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Acadia.

### Fish Creek Library 30th Anniversary

**Ms Payne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to extend warm wishes to the Calgary-Fish Creek area library, which is celebrating its 30th anniversary during Library Month. I personally am a big fan of the Calgary public library and of this branch in particular as it's the branch that serves the neighbourhood where I grew up, the neighbourhood where my family lives now as well as many of the communities in Calgary-Acadia and some surrounding ridings. Our library features programs for all ages, including storytimes for young children, computer coding for teens, ESL conversation club, computer technology coaching, and so much more. These programs offer valuable skills, from early literacy to computer literacy. They also offer a chance for members of our community to gather in a public space to get to know one another as neighbours and as friends.

Fish Creek library is so much more than a place to pick up books. It's a place to meet and to connect through a common interest. It is a hub in our community, a place to gather, to learn, and to play. Over its 30 years Fish Creek and the entire Calgary library system have evolved to meet the changing needs of our communities. Thirty years ago books, music cassettes, and magazines were the norm; today the library also offers newly released DVDs and an expanded collection of well over 2 million materials, with over a billion circulations per year. The library also offers online materials like the e-library, which contains academic resources for children, kindergarten through postsecondary, plus downloadable e-books, audiobooks, and magazines.

I'm confident that the Fish Creek library will continue to serve the communities of Calgary-Acadia and our surrounding ridings for many years to come. I offer a great big thank you to the staff and the volunteers at the library for everything that they do to contribute to our community and their tireless work to promote literacy and lifelong learning. I look forward to seeing what the next 30 years will bring.

### Catriona, Jana, and Dara Bott

**Mr. Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I rise to honour and remember three young Albertans that were lost in a tragic accident earlier this month at their home, near Withrow, Alberta, in my constituency. Catie, who recently turned 13, and 11-year-old twins Dara and Jana were taken from their family far too soon. In their short time on this earth these three sisters each brought joy and light to those around them, especially to their parents, Roger and Bonita, and their little brother, Caleb.

My heart weighed heavily this week as I heard their parents describe three girls who shared a common love for the farm, fishing, camping, quading, and animals, particularly their horses and cats. These girls were country and proud of it. Visiting Withrow shortly

after this tragedy, I was struck by how much these precious girls' caring hearts had touched and impacted their entire community. I offer our condolences though I know that there are no words that can be heard over the roaring silence left in their wake.

I understand the temptation, Mr. Speaker, to fill this silence with the drumbeat of our righteous anger, to seek someone or something to blame. To those who have already started down this path, let me say this: there is no justice to be found in this horrific accident. This is not about politics. However well-meaning our intention, blame will never make us whole. Instead, though words may fail us, let us offer our support and understanding to the Bott family and the community of Withrow. I can only pray that we can have hearts as big and faith as strong as the Bott family's. When asked how they were dealing with this horrific loss, they said: as far as not being able to ever see our kids again, that part is okay because we know we are going to see them again.

Mr. Speaker, let us sit up with them and see them through this night. This is where we are needed. [applause]

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, thank you for your kind remarks. I think the response you received was an indication of the importance of your words and how they struck today.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** I am pleased to table with the Assembly a report by Alberta's Chief Electoral Officer, as required by section 44(1) of the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act, and his accompanying letter to the Speaker dated October 5, 2015, concerning compliance with the election campaign financial reporting requirements.

Members, the period is to end at 3 o'clock. I've had a request to acknowledge some visitors. Calgary-Bow, please proceed.

### Introduction of Guests

*(continued)*

**Ms Drever:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly my sister Jennifer Prosser. Jenn works for the re-elected member of Churchill-Keewatinook Aski, Niki Ashton. Jenn is one of the hardest working women I know, and she inspired me to be involved in a life of public service. She is a strong voice in feminist activism and will continue to be a role model in my life. I ask you to join me in providing her with the traditional warm welcome to this House.

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

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two very special individuals in my life. The first is my mother, Mrs. Linda McLennan; the second is my husband's aunt Mrs. Carolynne Fardy. Both of these wonderful women have spent their careers helping others to learn. My mom spent her career as an elementary schoolteacher, often with a focus on special-needs education. Now she enjoys retirement as a yoga practitioner, Stollery children's hospital volunteer, and every so often, when her daughter calls, a very hard-working political campaigner.

Carolynne Fardy spent her career as an instructor in microbiology at Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops, B.C. Her work led to an interest in biosafety. She has devoted her efforts towards making people more aware of toxins in everyday products so that consumers can make more informed choices.

Both of these women are an inspiration to me. I would now ask them to stand so that they may receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

3:00

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members who have visitors to acknowledge? The Member for Calgary-Foothills.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a privilege to introduce through you and to you a few of my friends who came to Edmonton. They are here to give me support on my first day in the House. I thank them very much for being here on this special day: Venkatesh Jalubula, a PhD student at the University of Alberta, and Kanak Chamarty, a well-known social activist from Edmonton. They both come from my home state of Andhra Pradesh, southern India, where I was born. Also here are Goldy and Priyanka Mathur, a family active in the business community for many years in Edmonton. I ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills, I'm sure you will find that you have many more friends in the Assembly.

### Orders of the Day

#### Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

##### Bill 201

##### Assuring Alberta's Fiscal Future Act

[Debate adjourned June 22: Ms Babcock speaking]

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Stony Plain, I'm advised that you have some time left, six minutes, to speak to the original Bill 201.

**Ms Babcock:** I'm done speaking to that. Thank you. I'll give up the rest of my time.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

There are, I'm advised, 28 minutes of debate left on this particular bill. Are there other members who would like to speak to Bill 201?

We'll call on the hon. Member for Calgary-South East to close debate.

**Mr. Fraser:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to be back in the House and debate issues that are important to Albertans. You know, often when I go to grade 6 classes, I speak to the classes and ask them: what do you think is one of the most important, one of the most special inventions that ever was created? They put up a lot of hands, and they say things like "hockey" or "the Calgary Stampede" or "the Stampeders." A really interesting dialogue I have with those grade 6 classes. I suggest to them: what about the stone wheel? The stone wheel was a great invention, and the thing is that we never ran out of rock. There was lots of rock.

The reality is that with our resource revenue and our resources sooner or later somebody is going to come up with something better, and we need to be ahead of that curve. We need to make sure that we're planning for our future, planning for our children, and that was the whole idea of the heritage trust fund. Now, I don't want you to think in terms of parties or elections and everything that's gone on or even the history of this province. We know that the heritage trust fund was created so that we could plan for the future, put some money aside. It doesn't just affect the future, Mr. Speaker.

It's an investment that we have that also affects things like our credit rating and our standing in the global markets.

Mr. Speaker, I'm hoping that both sides, my friends on the right and my friends across the way, the government, will allow this debate to carry on. I welcome hearing what the plans from the government and the plans from my friends on the right are on how you can make this bill better. Let's have a fulsome debate. Really, it's not about Rick Fraser. It's not about any particular party. It's really about our children, right? It's about our future. That's why I brought this bill forward.

It's never too late to save. When you think about it, if you went to your financial adviser today, they would say: always make sure you put some money aside for yourself, even if it's just a little bit, because that will grow and that will help your standing fiscally, financially, to make sure that you can obtain things like loans, to make sure that you're always saving for yourself first, and then you have a plan to pay off everything else.

Mr. Speaker, I urge the House today to move this bill on to Committee of the Whole so that we can have a fulsome debate. Thank you for your time.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for second reading lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:06 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For:

Drysdale	Gotfried	Rodney
Ellis	Jansen	Starke
Fraser		

Against:

Aheer	Hoffman	Payne
Anderson, S.	Horne	Phillips
Anderson, W.	Hunter	Piquette
Babcock	Jabbour	Pitt
Barnes	Jean	Renaud
Bilous	Kazim	Rosendahl
Carlier	Kleinstauber	Sabir
Carson	Larivee	Schmidt
Ceci	Littlewood	Schneider
Coolahan	Loewen	Schreiner
Cooper	Loyola	Shepherd
Cortes-Vargas	Luff	Sigurdson
Cyr	MacIntyre	Smith
Dach	Malkinson	Stier
Dang	Mason	Strankman
Eggen	McKittrick	Sucha
Feehan	McLean	Sweet
Fildebrandt	McPherson	Taylor
Fitzpatrick	Miller	Turner
Ganley	Miranda	van Dijken
Goehring	Nielsen	Westhead
Gray	Nixon	Woollard
Hanson	Orr	Yao
Hinkley	Panda	

Totals: For – 7 Against – 71

[Motion for second reading of Bill 201 lost]



3:20

**Bill 202**  
**Alberta Local Food Act**

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to rise and speak about the Alberta Local Food Act, which was introduced here on June 18. I am grateful to the members of my constituency in Strathcona-Sherwood Park, whom I am privileged to represent in this Assembly. I am honoured to be here today to bring forward a conversation and to open up new dialogues about developing a sustainable, local food system in Alberta. This will allow our local producers to seek direct access to markets and our consumers to enjoy homegrown products.

Mr. Speaker, it has been over a decade since Albertans have been asking for a sustainable food supply chain from their own backyards. In 2004 alternative agriculture markets in Alberta were first studied. Then in 2008 and again in 2012 the intention was to see if there was any value in alternative market sectors for local agriculture products. The 2012 study showed that 95 per cent – 95 per cent – of Alberta households are using or want to purchase food grown or made in Alberta. This paralleled the responses and feedback that I received throughout the summer when engaging with constituents, with farmers, and with Albertans across the province. See, there is a very literal appetite for the increased support of local food systems.

Mr. Speaker, we have three different markets in our communities. There are international, there are domestic, and there are local markets. So why, then, did Albertans choose local markets? Well, the top five influences are freshness, quality, taste, safety, and also support for buying local from Alberta farm families.

This is where my constituents come in. I am so proud to represent them here. I come from Strathcona-Sherwood Park. Mr. Speaker, my constituency is home to farmers who would like to share their products, produce, and harvest with local markets in a sustainable manner. The farmers from my constituency, like several others, face huge challenges in connecting with the wider market. The consumers that would like to support these farmers also face these barriers.

This is an issue that intersects both rural and urban residents, and this bill has the potential of increasing awareness of how to overcome them. There are a variety of tools that producers use to sell their products: direct marketing, co-operatives, and farmers' markets. Previous work in local food systems has consistently noted an increase in co-operation in order to enhance viability of these tools.

So where do they sell their products? One example: a farmers' market. These have always supported Alberta's rural economy, typically serving as a test for small businesses. Many farm enterprises and new agriculture entrants start marketing their products in a local market, due to the lower costs, before expanding their business.

At present we have the Alberta approved farmers' market program, that has reviewed them for the past 40 years, but since 2010 the overall number of Alberta approved farmers' markets has grown by 27 per cent. As Albertans make, bake, and grow, the products have increased considerably. There is a robust market of 8,500 in all markets and at present 130 farmers' markets throughout 108 communities in Alberta. As local producers grow, the local market channels continue to grow in value and are a significant source of farm receipts. We must support the continuing diversification of market access.

According to a 2012 AF study \$878 million was the combined market value for farmers' markets and farm retail. This was up 64

per cent from 2008 at \$724 million. This increase emphasizes the importance Albertans place on where they get their food from.

When a consumer visits a farmers' market, they spend an average of \$55 per visit for everything from fresh fruits, vegetables, meat, eggs, honey, baking, preserves, processed foods, plants, and artisan craft products. That's putting a number on it. But when they visit farmers' markets, they also get the benefit of asking the farmers questions, asking the producers how they grew them.

Mr. Speaker, there's a huge market opportunity for connecting to local food producers with local consumers in Alberta. For example, Explore Local, a rural development division initiative, assists small-scale Albertan producers and processors in building skills to enhance their business. In 2014-15 the Explore Local initiative designed and delivered 27 extension events to increase producer awareness, understanding, access to local market channels. This initiative has resulted in producers and small processors investing in their business, through expansion or improvements, by 77 per cent. Positive growth in sales as a result of additional investment was 94 per cent. Increased profitability: 78 per cent. Gaining new customers due to business practices changes: 96 per cent.

The potential growth of our local food structures can be enhanced by the support provided by this bill. Very recently vertical farming indoor technology was developed in the fields of Strathcona-Sherwood Park. This is the kind of project that would enhance the variants of local food available to us year-round, so strengthening local food structures complements our drive to diversify our economy.

The procurement of local food puts regional identity and a trusting face on food. It also boosts local food economy, and we support agricultural job creators. Hence, Mr. Speaker, we need to explore and deeply evaluate the importance of how to legislate the Alberta Local Food Act, which has the potential of being a driver of the local economy by creating food security and improving a maximized return on local food infrastructure. It will also attract new generations into the farming profession by increasing awareness and opportunities. It will help local farmers grow, produce, process, and distribute locally and help buyers to opt for homegrown, ethically sourced foods.

What I know is that we are driven to grow agriculture, and I have seen that my community comes together in many ways in order to support this growth. It is my hope that with this bill the government becomes a stronger ally for local farmers. If we pass this bill, we would be the third province, after Ontario and Manitoba, to have our own local food act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to listening to my colleagues.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Strankman:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's truly an honour to rise and speak in this new session, and it's an honour to speak to the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park's bill. I did have the opportunity in the past session to speak to her in your lounge, sir, in regard to her bill. At that time I asked her what the member's goal was, and I've heard some of that going forward here, so I'd like to explain to the House and to the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park some of my points of view on the member's legislation.

It's an important piece of legislation. With food, as one radio broadcaster from Drumheller liked to say, if you eat, you're involved in agriculture. Some members across, myself included, know that some of us are somewhat more attuned to that because our clothing shows that.

3:30

**Mr. Cooper:** Some of us eat more.

**Mr. Strankman:** More involved with agriculture, Mr. Speaker, I guess we'll say.

It's a topic that's near and dear to me because as a lifetime agrarian, if you will, I've travelled across fields both in Saskatchewan and Alberta in many different ways, so some would say that I do have some experience on this matter. To the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park. I want to say that I have no malice in anything I say here; it's meant to be open information to the member's discussion and that of this House going forward, that we are trying to do this, as you said, Mr. Speaker, in your opening comments today, to be a collective and beneficial way of bringing forward something that will benefit all Albertans.

The concern that I have with the member's legislation is – and some assistants to my position entitled my presentation here Unintended Consequences. With all sorts of actions there are and can and could be unintended consequences. In this case I want to present to the House, Mr. Speaker, some of those consequences. This proposal is somewhat short on specifics and long on generalities. Again I would want to qualify by saying that I have no malice in what I say here.

Once this bill, which contains generalities, goes off to be effected, the regulators come into play. This bill in some cases does not have or state specific definitions for some of the things that are being brought forward, Mr. Speaker. There are troubling directions that this bill takes, and I have some of those concerns. One such example would be the intention to create a stable market, and I have trouble understanding what a stable market might be, in what arena that might be.

One of the comments talked about public-sector purchasing. I had the opportunity – the now Minister of Transportation made allusions to that, my experience in a facility in 2002. The initials were LCC, and they weren't Lethbridge community college. The minister made reference to that. At that facility, a public, provincial facility, Mr. Speaker, the members there, some of which I associated with quite freely, had been producing potatoes. That facility, that government institution, was completely self-sufficient, with milk, with potatoes, with all sorts of fruits and vegetables, and because of government-initiated regulation they were not allowed to do that. These people who were in there, such as myself, for some form of rehabilitation were not allowed to produce this food, and it was a valuable way that they could improve their character. The Minister of Transportation sometimes has questions about my rehabilitation.

The base of this concept, Mr. Speaker, is contrary to proven free-market values. Our agriculture industry has been calling for this for a long time, as long as I can remember. Is there a pressing need to create an artificially stable market? That's one of the questions that I have. To the member: I'd like to hear that. The member made comment that people have been consulted in regard to this. I know people in the Alberta beef industry, in the pork industry, at the farmers' markets, et cetera, and the grain commission, the Barley Commission, the barley growers, the Wheat Commission. These are commercial operators, and they haven't had any consultation with the member on that, and that's an important thing. You know, some of their questions – I've talked to them. They're asking: is it necessary to have government intervention?

The member has talked about wide and varied benefits to this, and the member has also quoted some financial numbers and everything. I'm cognizant of that, and I know that there can be developments in that regard. Alberta's agrifood markets, Mr.

Speaker, continue to grow. Former agriculture minister Shirley McClellan made comment that she was expecting and hoping for \$20 billion of export by 2010. It was a very enthusiastic number, but, you know, as an agrarian producer I'd like to see those numbers climb and grow to those kinds of amounts even though we've passed 2010.

There has never been before such a breadth and depth of products grown in Alberta as today, and the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park talks about vertical farming and vertical things growing. There is a potential for some legislation even in urban areas where people would be allowed or legislated to have a certain amount of poultry, whether that be counted poultry of four chickens per household or whatever. There's talk of that, and there seems to be some small demand or some questions, some speaking of that.

There are also, Mr. Speaker, now – and the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park talked about farmers' markets. These markets are strictly run and legislated. I'd like to know how these two acts could intertwine or interspace because there may be, as I've said, unintended consequences to bringing this legislation forward. Restaurants already source some of their ingredients from these producers. Why can't the public-sector organizations source from these markets? A fear that I have and a fear that they have is one of liability, of their ingestion of these foods. If there is something that's not of proper acceptance or quality or trace marketing, which is what's required in the beef industry – all beef that's produced and sold has to be market verifiable, producer verified back to its source. That's possibly a loophole for a safety situation here. One of these organizations that does this uses contracts between the producers and the marketers. They have their contracts privately designed, and they're going ahead with doing this. So I have a concern that this legislation may create some form of a subsection of agriculture. True or not, I'll leave that to the rest of the debate and to the rest of the House.

Would it not make more sense to expand the scope of farmers' markets, if needed, rather than starting again from scratch? The Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park is to be approved and complimented on the initiative, but there are some concerns about the demonstrative way that it's brought forward. The member again talked about farmers having difficulty to get their product to market. I'm, Mr. Speaker, a witness to that. I mean, sometimes there are commercial holdbacks and there are financial holdbacks. We are held back primarily by the conditions of what's called winter.

You know, we can't produce food the same. People in greenhouses know. For example, this summer at the Broxburn greenhouse at Coaldale – I think, Mr. Speaker, you may have been on that tour, where they are producing all of the green peppers for a good part of the Calgary Co-op. Outdoors they are producing all of the broccoli, if not the cauliflower – I'm not quite sure – for the Calgary Co-op. Irrigation in that area is a viable and financial form of wealth creation. They are doing it in a commercial fashion. In the case of commercial agriculture if you create over \$10,000 of agriculture value brought forward, you're subject to another regulation called the Alberta . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, you've served your time of 10 minutes.

I would now call upon the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak in favour of Bill 202, the Alberta Local Food Act. We've talked about urban and rural, and I am an urban MLA. One of the reasons why my urban Edmonton area is well represented by this bill is because the constituency members in Edmonton-Mill Woods care deeply about the food they set upon their table and share with their families.

**3:40**

One only needs to visit a commercial part of 34th Avenue in Mill Woods to see an array of independent grocery stores catering to a host of different cuisine preferences, and you get a sense of how deeply the people in my riding think about what they eat. The people in my riding care about local food, and we have two different farmers' markets in Mill Woods, the Millwoods Farmers' Market and the South Common Farmers' Market, both of which provide local Albertan food to my constituents.

In the absence of strong government action on this issue, local consumers have pressed ahead where they can to ensure that they're eating fresh, healthy, local foods not only for the nutritional benefits but because Albertans care about helping one another. Urban consumers want to ensure that Alberta's rural farmers are supported in their efforts, so when given the choice, Albertans prefer to buy local foods. Albertans also want to know that their food comes from the lowest carbon footprint possible, and eating locally produced foods helps to do just that.

As we try to engage people in the political process, we need to ensure that the legislation we pass in this House is reflective of the priorities of Albertans. While reviewing this bill, it came to my mind that the Edmonton Youth Council has recently been discussing food as an issue that's important to them in their efforts on Edmonton city council. Coincidentally, the sponsor of this bill is one of the more youthful members of our Assembly, so I know that this bill is not only something that a great majority of Albertans would support but is also an important demonstration of our Assembly's commitment to act on issues that matter to the younger voters in Alberta.

This bill also helps to further diversify our economy, something many Albertans want to see happen. If there is a strong, predictable market for locally grown foods in place, then we will see some Albertans deciding to enter career paths they would not have previously thought viable. We will see more small-scale producers, more local distributors, more restaurateurs catering to specific local cuisine. All of these are welcome spinoffs and things that have already begun to happen on a smaller scale as consumers clamour for these changes.

We are now in the enviable position of knowing that we can further the positive impacts that are happening around local food, absent much risk. We've seen Ontario and Manitoba each successfully pass their own local food acts, and we've seen consumers in Alberta race ahead of their own government on this issue. Now is the time for this government to do its part and to pass our local food act. Passing this bill is good for consumers, good for business, and good for Alberta. I hope all members will support this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Strankman:** Under 29(2)(a).

**The Speaker:** I'm told there is no 29(2)(a).

The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 202. To be honest, this bill has me a little perplexed as to its true intent. As a farmer I have been in the production of local food for my entire life, and with my experience on the board of directors for Federated Co-operatives Limited I've been able to experience the retail and production chain coming together for the promotion of local food production. The question I ask is: what does this bill intend to accomplish that is not already

being addressed through the ways and means already in place? The hon. member has mentioned that 95 per cent of our consumers are already able to use local. She also mentioned that production and markets continue to grow through Explore Local. The previous member talked about how consumers are racing ahead of government in their attempt to buy local, and I would suggest that this is probably the most sustainable way to grow the local food economy. Existing departments within Alberta Agriculture are currently working with the local food production industry to continue sustainable growth.

So why is this bill necessary? When I read purpose 2(a), it's "to ensure a resilient, sustainable and strong local food economy and agricultural land base in Alberta." It makes me think that the bill is pertaining to food security or, possibly, that the bill is focused on a land-use framework.

Then when I go on to read purpose 2(b), "to improve and maximize economic return and food security by maintaining agricultural land for the purposes of farming and supporting the development of local food infrastructure for processing and distributing food," again, it looks like a bill about food security and land use but adds in an element of economic and infrastructure uncertainty.

Purpose 2(c), "to provide an increased and stable demand for local food through public sector organization purchasing." To provide economic certainty for local food producers and processors by mandating to the public-sector organizations who to purchase their food from; in other words, indirect subsidization of a certain segment of Alberta food production: is that the intent of the bill?

Purpose 2(d), "to increase public awareness of local food in Alberta, including the diversity of local food." Public education to bring awareness of local food production is occurring already through many different avenues. In fact, if any members wish to learn more, the Northlands Farmfair will be bringing public awareness to Edmonton from November 11 to 15.

Purpose 2(e), "to promote sustainable farming practices." Alberta Agriculture along with industry production units throughout the province have been doing this work for many years and are continuing to evolve and develop an industry that is sustainable for the long term.

Purpose 2(f), "to attract new generations into the farming profession." New producers, young and old, are being attracted into this way of life every day. They are attracted for many different reasons. Government interference in the natural attraction to the farm lifestyle sometimes encourages individuals to enter the profession for all the wrong reasons. This type of growth is often not sustainable.

Purpose 2(g), "to support indigenous food sources and systems." This bill gives no indication as to a definition of indigenous food sources and systems. I have no idea what is meant by this and would need more clarification. Also, what does the word "support" refer to? This could mean many things.

Purpose 2(h), "to promote diversity in scale and marketing in Alberta's agriculture and food system for adaptability and resilience." May I suggest that Alberta's agriculture and food systems are very resilient? These producers and the systems that we have in place with food processing and production have adapted over many years based on true demand. Real demand, not publicly engineered demand, is the surest way to sustainability in the local food economy.

Mr. Speaker, without clear intent of the purposes of Bill 202 it makes me very nervous to allow the Lieutenant Governor to choose an advisory committee and then to have this advisory committee that was chosen by the Lieutenant Governor in turn make

recommendations back to the Lieutenant Governor. I refer to section 8.

The Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations

- (a) prescribing limitations respecting the designation of local food under section 1(b)(ii);
- (b) prescribing organizations to be included within the definition of public sector organization;

in other words, deciding what a public-sector organization is;

- (c) concerning any additional matter or thing that is necessary or advisable in connection with the implementation of this Act.

This puts enormous weight in the hands of the Lieutenant Governor, and it appears to me that we are putting a lot of faith in the Lieutenant Governor in Council to understand the purposes of this bill.

Mr. Speaker, this bill has many areas of concern for me as a producer of local food. I am extremely concerned about the unintended consequences that this type of legislation may have. I believe that the bill's intent may be good but recognize the risks when government tries to manipulate the free-enterprise laws of supply and demand.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

3:50

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to rise today and speak in support of the Alberta Local Food Act. My family and I have spent many days at various farmers' markets making sure we supported local producers, and we've spent much time on the farm, so I see both sides of this. We've enjoyed the ability to pick out our own produce, our meats, and various products available. The goods we have always been lucky enough to acquire have been of the highest quality and seem to taste better, knowing where they came from and that the environmental cost of our food has been reduced. The impact that my family has had on their farming as well has been that my children have picked their own food out of the fields.

Let me share some of the reasons why farmers are going to get an economic boost as this support is translated into action, with more locally produced foods available. In 2012, Mr. Speaker, 95 per cent of Alberta households indicated a desire to purchase locally, and developing a sustainable local food system in Alberta, especially rural Alberta, is of prime importance to our local producers. Local economies allow direct access for producers to sell their products at reasonable prices, which supports a viable business model for producers both large and small. There is a huge market opportunity for connecting local producers with local consumers right here at home.

The Alberta Local Food Act supports a sustainable food supply chain from primary producers, secondary industry, and consumers alike. In the past the supply chain was not always guaranteed or viable for all involved. There are huge challenges to any producer who is trying to get products to market, so supporting the agriculture industry just makes sense.

When meeting with local interests such as the West-Central Forage Association, it was pointed out to me that insurance does not protect producers against cost increases. For example, because the price of feed is so high right now because some of the crops failed this year, some of the farmers will not be able to feed their animals this winter, so some are exiting the industry. Many feel that we will have fewer beef producers going forward because of this, which would also jeopardize the government's tax base coming from beef farmers.

We discussed the age gap in agriculture. The average age of a farmer is 55 years old, and due to the lack of capital available to younger people who don't have the assets already in place, entering the agricultural industry is prohibitive, to say the least. It is challenging to onboard young farmers who are purchasing farms or taking over family farms, ensuring that the expertise is being passed on and ensuring that business management skills are understood to be a very important skill and increasingly important to run a successful and efficient farm.

The agriculture industry is forward thinking and innovative. I believe that the Alberta Local Food Act is a forward-thinking way of supporting our farmers in the industry. Many producers do not have the capacity to do this very important work full time, so instead they supplement their income by working off the farm, which inhibits the growth of their production capabilities. Farmers are feeling pressure and concern for what the infrastructure is and will be to get their products to market.

There are many good things happening in this industry right now. The Explore Local initiative, brought forth in 2014-15, helped increase producer awareness and access to local market channels, which resulted in positive growth in sales, profitability, and increased business. Young people graduating with an agricultural sciences degree are being taught to approach farming and producing with a strong business model.

The Alberta Local Food Act allows and encourages local producers to grow the local market channels, which in turn increases the value of those channels. This equals a significant source of farm receipts for all producers in Alberta, encouraging stability and growth in the agriculture industry.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to stand today and discuss Bill 202, Alberta Local Food Act, brought forward by the member representing Strathcona-Sherwood Park. Wildrose supports enhancing a strong local food economy and agricultural land base; indeed, that is the foundation of our province. However, Wildrose does not support the gratuitous and vague legislation which leaves more questions and concerns than it answers.

The stated intention to create a stable market through public-sector purchasing is contrary to the free-market principles that Alberta's producers are looking for. Wildrose does not support government intervention in the economy, no matter how well intended. Will this legislation, in effect, be a kind of subsidy for certain local producers? Wildrose supports free and fair markets, unmitigated by government influence and control. If there are entities that find that it makes more sense to buy local, then great, but legislation is not the answer for such a solution.

I'm confused about the path that the government wants to follow with the proposed legislation. The member who proposed it, I know, is seeking some laudable goals, including diversifying and encouraging growth in the agriculture sector, providing opportunities for consultation with various stakeholders, promoting sustainable farming practices, increasing public awareness of local food in Alberta, including the diversity of local food. However, this bill is so vague that I'm not sure whether it will achieve these goals and whether there might not be a lot of unintended consequences.

In looking at the big picture, a few concerns become readily apparent. Establishing an advisory committee of 12 members provides some substantial challenges. For instance, how will these members be chosen? Is there some regional representation? Is there

a cross-section of large- and small-scale farming operators? It doesn't seem so. Who will guarantee the supply of produce? What happens if there is a poor yield? Will the onus, or responsibility, fall to the producer or the government to make up costs of potential shortfalls once government entities become dependent on local suppliers? Who will create the distribution system?

In addition to being extremely vague, there is a recognition of the associated costs. For instance, how much will this advisory committee cost taxpayers? The minister "may authorize, fix and provide for the payment of [remuneration] and expenses to any of the members of the Advisory Committee." Has this cost been budgeted? With limited dollars, are higher costs to purchase food going to take away from front-line services in places like schools, universities, and hospitals?

I also think that many pieces already are in place that could be used to reach some of the same goals without heavy-handed legislation leading to distorted markets and higher costs to taxpayers. For instance, the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation is a provincial Crown corporation with a private-sector board of directors that provides farmers, agribusinesses, and others with small-business loans, crop insurance, and farm income disaster assistance.

In a meeting with the agriculture minister on October 6 a business group from the community of Two Hills presented a concise business plan to diversify the agricultural economy in the region. They were willing to immediately put forward \$1 million of their own seed money and sweat equity to get the project going and were looking for a \$2 million loan, not a grant but a loan, to get the project up and running. They were referred to and turned down by AFSC. One of the reasons the group was turned down is that they had to come up with 50 per cent of the funding to qualify for the loan, unworkable for a lot of smaller operators. While they could apply for a small grant to hire a consultant to do market research, there appeared to be virtually no other support mechanisms available. Given that the group already had done their research as part of the proposal, the grant was not useful to them, and given that they did not have half of the loan amount, they were turned down for the loan.

Instead of going through with a massive piece of confusing and vague legislation, the minister of agriculture could work with branches such as AFSC to streamline processes and make lending more readily accessible for start-up ventures to support our local economy.

4:00

Another organization, by the name of Sunfresh Farms, brings locally grown vegetables from farm to local grocers. Sunfresh Farms is owned by Alberta farmers who grow high-quality vegetables. According to their website they believe in responsible industry practices while following the highest food safety programs. Sunfresh is audited every year and has earned a grade A in food safety. Even their company slogan promotes their interest in local food. As their famous saying goes, "At Sunfresh Farms produce is our passion."

The group of investors from Two Hills had worked with Sunfresh Farms and were assured a letter of intent to purchase every pound of produce that they could grow in their greenhouses, and still they were denied. Again, instead of pushing through this piece of legislation, why does the government not work with small and medium-sized businesses like Sunfresh and farmers' markets to support the diversification and growth of our local food economy? Instead, this legislation actually puts the government in direct competition with private businesses already established and promoting local producers.

What worries me the most about this legislation is the potential for unintended consequences that result from the vague and poorly thought-out elements. While I strongly support efforts to strengthen and diversify our local economies, I do not and cannot support this legislation.

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

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the opportunity to address Bill 202 this afternoon. As a practising veterinarian I had the great privilege for close to 30 years of working with what I'll call a very local food industry, and that was our producers in Alberta. I will tell you that I will stack our producers in Alberta up against any producers anywhere in terms of their ability to produce wholesome, sustainable, nutritious, quality, safe food.

The mover of this bill in her opening remarks certainly stated a number of areas in which there has been great success in the improvement and the enlargement, in some cases double-digit figures, of local food procurement and access, and I think that is very positive. You know, I think of initiatives like the 100-mile diet, which is one that has been embraced by people all around the world in terms of purchasing food that is produced closer to home. It does make sense.

As one who grew up in the city but then moved to a rural community and then had the tremendous privilege of working with agricultural producers who were tremendously proud of the food that they produced, I was able to procure a lot of the food directly from them. Anyone who has bought a 4-H steer at a 4-H sale will know all about that, and our clinic bought a 4-H steer every year. Some of them were former patients; nonetheless, we bought a 4-H steer every year and were happy to consume it because we knew who produced it, we knew we were supporting the club, and we knew quite often that we were making the dad of that 4-H child quite happy and that likely they would continue to be one of our customers. What goes around comes around.

I want to talk about a couple of other success stories that I'm personally familiar with. There is a farm south of Paradise Valley, Alberta. What a great-sounding place that is, Paradise Valley, Alberta. Well, Paradise Valley, Alberta, is in the constituency of Vermilion-Lloydminster, and I was privileged to do the veterinary work for one of the largest hog producers in that area. Now, they do something very interesting and really quite unusual in the pork industry, and that is that they finish their hogs outside. Once the hogs reach a size of 50 pounds, they turn them outside into shelters that are built out of round straw bales. They're out there year-round. When it's 40 below, they hunker down into the straw, and when it's warm and sunny, those pigs run around and play in the straw.

Because of this unique way of finishing hogs, this producer has been able to market his pork under a special label: Paradise Valley free-range pork. I'm very proud of that because those pigs were my patients, and the thing I know is that when I went out to see this farm – and I would do this on a regular basis – I'd be able to watch these pigs frolicking around in the straw, and these pigs were having a wonderful time.

**Mr. Cooper:** PC supporters.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, you know what? If members of the party to the right only want to buy and raise and eat pigs that are raised inside confinement facilities, they are welcome to do that, but I am quite happy to consume these happy pigs that were running about.

In any case, it's not just that, Mr. Speaker. Also in my constituency is an operation known as the Cheesiry. The Cheesiry is a very

dairy, and the cheese that is produced according to old-world techniques, that were learned by the owners in Italy, is used all around Alberta in some of the finest restaurants. In fact, not too long ago I happened to be at one of the finest restaurants in Edmonton, and there was the Cheesiry's pecorino cheese on one of their entrees. I'm proud of that.

You know, during another initiative, another opportunity that I had to visit, I visited a goat dairy near Morningside. I believe it's in the constituency of Lacombe-Ponoka. I visited the Rock Ridge Dairy there. The Rock Ridge Dairy milks over 300 dairy goats and produces some of the best goat milk yogurt and some of the best goat feta cheese you've ever tasted. Fantastic stuff. I was introduced to this through an initiative that was started a couple of years ago. It was a co-operative initiative between the department of agriculture and rural development and, at that time, the department of tourism, parks, and recreation, and Ag for Life and the Alberta Association of Agricultural Societies called Open Farm Days. I'd be really curious to know: how many members of this Legislature attended an Open Farm Days event this August? A few. Good.

This is an initiative, quite frankly, that I'm very, very proud of, and I think this is the kind of thing that promotes local food production. It promotes the skill and talent of our local chefs. It promotes an area of tourism that is going to be a burgeoning area, and that is culinary tourism. Tourists are different. Some like to go to museums, some like to go water skiing, some like to do other pursuits, but they all eat. Every last one of them eats. If you can add a culinary experience to their overall tourism, their tour and their time of holidaying in Alberta, I will tell you that that expands and adds to the experience, and that's through Open Farm Days.

Mr. Speaker, we've said nothing, for example, so far in this debate about the tremendous success of Alberta's small brewers. Craft breweries in Alberta are growing and burgeoning. This is an area of value-added for the producers of barley and hops in our area. I can tell you that all you have to do is talk once to the brewmaster of a small brewery here and listen to the pride in the product that they produce, and you'll know that this is an Alberta success story that we should all be proud of. So why do I tell you all this?

**Mr. Eggen:** To make us hungry.

**Dr. Starke:** That also is true, Mr. Minister, and especially thirsty.

Mr. Speaker, the reason I say all this is that all of this happened without specific government intervention from a local food act. Open Farm Days is a one-weekend initiative that is growing and flourishing and, I think, does a great deal to support and promote not just local food but the producers that make that food, that supports and promotes the diversity of the products, the wholeness of the products that we produce in the province of Alberta. But it does it without empowering the government to create regulations.

I'm particularly concerned about the regulations under section 8(c), "concerning any additional matter or thing that is necessary or advisable in connection with the implementation of this Act." That is unbelievably open ended. That places in the power of cabinet tremendous leeway – tremendous leeway – to do harm to our free-market economy and, indeed, the local producers that they're trying to help.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I have a great deal of trepidation about that. I would love to support local producers, and I will tell you that local food production is something that I am very passionate about. I will do anything to try and move it forward. If we can take this bill, for example, into committee and then amend it, because it needs amending, I am happy to support it in second reading because I am

in favour of local food and 95 per cent of Albertans are. But this bill needs amending.

**4:10**

For example, section 8(a), "prescribing limitations respecting the designation of local food under section 1(b)(ii)." Well, Mr. Speaker, what if, just hypothetically, one of those limitations is whether the farm where the food is produced has unionized workers or not? If it is the ideology of cabinet that only local food produced off premises where the workers are unionized should be designated as local food, this bill gives cabinet the power to designate any local food produced on a non-unionized shop to not qualify as local food. Is that really what you want in this piece of legislation? Is that really what you want? I suggest that it is not and that that particular clause needs to be removed from this piece of legislation.

Setting up a committee, having committee reports published on a regular basis: I don't have a problem with that. But, you know, I question whether that's really going to achieve the objectives and purposes that are stated in here. Quite frankly, I think our producers can be relied upon to do that. Our producers are already doing that. Our producers are showing tremendous resilience, tremendous ingenuity, tremendous creativity in moving their products to market and seeking new partnerships with local restaurants, with local stores and that sort of thing to sell their products. I see that happening all the time. I see that happening with the producers that I get to work with. These people are my friends, and I know the kind of work that they do. If I were to ask them, "Do we need the Local Food Act?" I think they would look at me and say: "What would that do? Why would that be of benefit to me?"

You know, I really think that a lot of this stuff can go ahead without it, Mr. Speaker. I will be in favour of the bill, but it requires significant amendments.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. I managed to forget whatever happened to my 4-H calf, but you reminded me, and a tear came to my eye again. I'm visualizing him playing in a big field with pigs.

**Mr. Westhead:** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to take this opportunity to speak in support of Bill 202, the Alberta Local Food Act. In the big picture this bill will enhance the development of a sustainable food system in Alberta and give local producers direct access to local markets while also giving Alberta consumers better access to locally grown food, as was already mentioned. This is something that both producers and consumers alike have been asking for for quite some time.

Of course, local farmers' markets are one of the most common ways to source locally grown food. On the other hand, we can also look towards the value-added supply chain as a benefit to complementary industries such as the food and beverage and tourism sectors, that were mentioned by the member opposite. These sectors will benefit from the greater awareness of locally produced food.

To illustrate this point, Mr. Speaker, I have heard from Alberta-based craft brewers and distillers who have indicated that the Alberta-grown grains that they use in the production of beer and spirits are among the best quality in the world. This creates an incredible, mutually beneficial opportunity for Alberta brewers and distillers to open up new markets to Alberta farmers to showcase the world-class grains produced right here at home.

Mr. Speaker, there is more to the value-added chain for locally produced food that we can explore. For instance, we also know that where there are beverages, there's also usually food. I know that in

my constituency of Banff-Cochrane and across the province there are many culinary destinations that have gained a reputation for their high quality and commitment to customer satisfaction.

Mr. Speaker, imagine the potential for enhancing the dining experience if more of these restaurants were to serve a greater proportion of locally grown food complemented by locally sourced beer and spirits. Of course, this comes with an added benefit: an opportunity to enhance tourism right here in Alberta, which helps to move even further up the value-added chain.

Mr. Speaker, think of culinary destinations around the world that already set themselves apart by showcasing the use of local food and pairing that with local beer, wine, and spirits. Many jurisdictions here in Canada have already grown their tourism potential and diversified their economies with this simple formula. Take Prince Edward county in southern Ontario, for example, which has seen the rapid growth of wineries, restaurants, and overnight accommodation spaces over the last decade. And where there's wine, there's cheese, of course, made with locally sourced milk.

You see, Mr. Speaker, Bill 202 has the potential to promote and enhance not only local food production and agriculture but value-added sectors such as beer, spirits, and tourism. At this time, when Alberta is striving for a more diversified economy, Bill 202 will promote increased awareness and capacity for food grown right here at home and can help take us off the royalty revenue roller coaster.

I'd like to thank the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park for introducing Bill 202 and urge this Assembly to support this important piece of legislation to enhance local food security and sustainability and the economic diversification that it will usher in.

Thank you.

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

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to be able to rise today to speak to a bill that does affect a large number of Albertans, a bill that's very important. Now that we've heard the story of Three Little Pigs – I thought the original story was about not building your house out of straw – I trust that we won't build a bill out of straw here that leads to the same kind of problems. While I totally, totally support the idea of locally grown food and support local industry – and I'm glad to hear all of the support for and the benefits of Alberta products. The food actually is better. I totally agree. I am a little bit baffled, though – and I suppose this is the most important thing I want to say – that consumers so often choose a cheaper product. It just happens all too often.

I come from a riding that actually does produce much of its own food, and although Lacombe-Ponoka is not in what I call the big smoke of Edmonton, it is, in fact, still part of Alberta. Indeed, Lacombe-Ponoka is an area that has some of the most rich and productive farmland in all of Alberta and provides a lot of the food actually sold here in the cities, where, unfortunately, we have too much concrete and pavement. Many of the groceries that you will in fact buy here in your stores do come from the producers and the greenhouses of rural Alberta, and I would really encourage you to notice where the vegetables you buy in the grocery stores are actually grown. If they're not grown in Alberta and this matters to you, then why would you buy them if they come from some other place?

The most powerful voice you have, even greater than legislation, is where you choose to spend your money, and I would say: please support the local producers, who would love that you would buy more of their products. We don't have to set up legislation to create this; we just need to be willing to buy them. While I'm inspired by

the lofty thinking, I could save you a lot of work researching and consulting if urban people would just learn what rural people could teach them. I do think, quite frankly, that this is somewhat of an urban-rural challenge for us.

The reality is that, as has kind of been stated already, in recent years the local production of industrious farmers has increased a lot in Alberta; in fact, many multiple times over. It amazes me that industrious farmers have figured out how to grow vegetables year-round, through sunny summers and freezing winters, even in minus 40 degree temperatures, in greenhouses here in this province. The greenhouses have been growing immensely in number and in acreage that they're covering. These greenhouses are major economic contributors to our agri-economy. They supply a great deal of local Alberta food, and they do it in an economically sustainable manner.

My point is that rural Alberta is producing a lot of local food and, in fact, would willingly produce everything and more that urban city dwellers would actually buy. So the challenge here is not to research the production of local food but the buying habits and biases of city dwellers. The food could be made available if people would always choose to buy it. I guess I would say to a government of primarily urban MLAs that I really invite you – and I know that a couple of you have, but I would invite the rest of you to come out and actually tour the agriproduction that's going on in this province. There is a lot of it happening, and it is increasing; it is growing. So I add my voice to those who say: I don't see, quite frankly, how legislation is going to help it.

4:20

Rural Alberta would feed you if you were not so inclined to buy food that contradicts your values for local food consumption. The stores simply can't and won't sell what the buyer won't buy. The food is available. It's being grown in huge amounts. Some of it is even being exported. The farmers of Alberta actually have the answers to your urban questions, and I really hope that you will be consulting them in more than just a condescending kind of way. Such a conversation, I think, would really increase the needed conversation between urbanites and rural people and maybe resolve, actually, a lot of tensions in our province with regard to a lot of what happens in our different levels of government.

Here are some of the issues, though, that I know farmers, at least from my riding, would begin to raise. For instance, we've talked a couple of times – several of you have mentioned the importance of the brewing industry here in Alberta. Some of the best hops – not hops but . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Barley.

**Mr. Orr:** . . . barley. Thanks. A mental stop for a moment.

Some of the best barley production that happens in the world happens in central Alberta. In Alix there's a huge facility that was seeking to expand, and rather than being allowed to, they were prevented by Alberta sustainable development, I think it was. No. Oh, again I lost track of the word there.

**An Hon. Member:** Environment.

**Mr. Orr:** Environment. Thank you.

I think we need to solve some of these problems. There are opportunities. There are farmers willing to produce more. Rather than create legislation, we need to solve the problems. That would allow so much more to actually happen. And it can happen. If you mandate public bodies to buy locally – this would be another question – does it matter that those bodies pay more? Just because

they're public bodies, can we blindly believe that it doesn't matter what they pay?

Further, farmers ask: since this is an act to study the issue and not to actually grow food – only one of those two can you actually eat – I wonder how much this nonedible product is going to cost. Has it been budgeted for? How will it be funded? By heavier taxes on those who actually produce food?

A reeve in my riding, a reeve of one of our rural counties, recently said, and I quote him, that the thing that has changed farming the most is the Internet. Farmers today know the price of world markets up to the millisecond. They know all the regulatory issues, the animal health treatment plants, the increasing values of farmland in different areas, the newest technologies, the cost of financing. The reality is that farming is a very complex, scientific, technological, economic world, and except for hobbyists, the days of going out into the dirt with a hoe are so far gone that it's almost laughable. I truly hope that as you prepare for this bill, you will take into account the complexity of these factors, because without doing so, the results will be much less than desirable.

Farm production also is not entirely in our control. We are part of an international community. We are members of trade agreements. Any research into farm production must also take into consideration the realities of our international trade agreements, or we will be embroiled in years of international legal challenges. These are some of the complexities that this bill raises.

Although I support the intent, I do think that there is a need for a significant number of amendments to it and would be willing to see that it go to second reading so that some of these amendments could be suggested. I trust that the members across the floor here would be willing to accept some of them.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

**Ms Sweet:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for allowing me to rise in support of Bill 202, the Alberta Local Food Act. The Alberta Local Food Act will allow our local producers to seek direct access to markets and our consumers to enjoy homegrown products. I know my constituents from Edmonton-Manning feel passionate about this issue and would like me to rise to address it.

There is a huge market opportunity for connecting local food producers with local consumers in Alberta. Currently many of our farmers are selling directly to Albertans at Edmonton's local farmers' markets as well as through self-directed home delivery programs. These programs have continued to grow as the increased demand for local foods continues to rise. As the cost of imported foods continues to rise, local food becomes a better fiscal alternative.

Edmonton-Manning is home to many urban farmers. Our farmers share their products, produce, and harvest with our neighbours, our suppliers, and our surrounding markets. These farmers not only grow potatoes, vegetables, and berries; they also provide community engagement and education through their amazing outreach work, such initiatives as the great potato giveaway, at which we saw kilometres of Edmontonians going and picking their own potatoes. They also have a community food garden, which provides an open-farming educational opportunity for our nonprofits and allows people to come out and support our local food banks, and, of course, Open Farm Days, where many were able to come out and pick local berries with their children.

Hence, Mr. Speaker, not only is this a rural conversation, but it's an urban conversation. We need to explore how the legislation in the Alberta food act will impact not only urban farmers but rural farmers. There's a potential for there to be a driving force in all local food economies by creating food security and improving and

maximizing the return on local food and infrastructure in both rural and urban communities.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my absolute pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 202, the Local Food Act. I do have some serious concerns about the way this bill is currently being presented. The main concern, Mr. Speaker, is how it will affect Alberta families. The important question is this. If we are mandating that public bodies buy local, how will this affect farmers' markets and those families that already do buy local? The new demand placed on buying local will drive costs as large users – end-users, hospitals, seniors' homes – drive up demand. Will the small but growing section of organic and local produce start to disappear from our grocery stores as government entities buy it up, or will the option to buy local or organic simply become too expensive for the average family and be reserved only for those that can afford it?

While the breadth of product has never been as wide as it is today, we still need to rely on other products from other markets for the health and well-being of Albertans. I've never really seen a pineapple grow in this climate.

Mr. Speaker, this leads to another important question that this bill needs to answer, and that is whether this will affect the quality of care for our seniors. By forcing seniors' facilities to buy local, the cost of providing meals to seniors could increase. How would this bill be an advantage to Alberta seniors if we drive up their food costs and eat into their budgets?

What about school lunch programs? Already school boards struggle to pay for these programs. Will mandating where these organizations obtain their food impact the cost of delivering these important programs?

Mr. Speaker, the list goes on of the negative consequences this bill would bring to Albertans. I will end my time by talking about the group this bill intends to help. What is the evidence that any Alberta farmers are having any difficulty getting their products to market? Alberta's agrifood exports continue to grow, and local farmers' markets continue to thrive. It's entirely unclear what problem this bill is attempting to solve. There is already a vehicle developed for small producers, organic or otherwise, to sell and distribute their wares, and that is through the Alberta approved farmers' markets. It would be better to expand and improve the current farmers' market system rather than to create a new, competing system with a bloated bureaucracy that might put undue burden on limited tax dollars.

4:30

Mr. Speaker, Alberta does not need a 12-member advisory council to evaluate what foods can and should be grown locally. The free market has already done an excellent job ensuring we have a wide variety of healthy and locally grown food, and I've seen it start to get advertised right here in my local grocery store. It's fantastic.

I'm concerned that we need to ensure that all Albertans can make the choice to access this locally grown produce and not lose out when this government mandates that all locally grown food be distributed to its own facilities.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to rise on this. I think that many members of the House but perhaps not all may know that I spent 25 years in the food business before I was



elected. Unlike my colleague from Vermilion-Lloydminster, who dealt with livestock while they were still walking and making noises, I dealt with them in the meat business after they were done walking, after they went to camp. As such, I have a strong feeling for agricultural producers in Alberta since I spent a good part of my life actually getting what they produce to market and, I believe, helping them get a fair price for it and bringing rewards back to the farms in Alberta, that continue to support our economy and did back then, short term and long term.

Let me also say that I want to compliment the basic idea behind the hon. member that brought the bill forward. I think it's a great idea to encourage Albertans to buy food locally. It is, full stop. I wish it was just that simple, Mr. Speaker. I know we heard an hon. member here, that obviously has some roots in the farming business, say: why wouldn't you buy local? I agree with that. The problem is that the bill talks about putting undetermined rules in place that may restrict some element of local food production. It's a place we have to be careful of.

Albertans are industrious people, so industrious that in every major area of the economy Albertans produce way more product than Albertans can consume. It's true in the energy industry, it's true in the tourism industry, it's true in the forestry industry, and it's most certainly true in the agricultural industry, in the food industry, Mr. Speaker. So we have to be careful. As well intentioned as the rules that somebody might put in might be to encourage people to buy locally, if we restrict products coming into Alberta, then there's a very good chance that someone else will restrict products going out of Alberta, and of course if that happens, then we choke off the tremendously valuable agriculture industry, that this province has depended upon since before we were a province. These are concerns of mine.

My colleague from Vermilion-Lloydminster talked about some of the restrictions that may be put on producers, and while I agree with what my colleague said, I'm going to add another concern, Mr. Speaker, and that is on how much the legislation may open it up. Some decisions need to be made locally. I live in a city. In Alberta I know that there are some cities that allow, for example, chickens to be grown in the city. Myself, I think it's a bad idea. I do. A wise person once told me: "It took us a hundred years to get the livestock out of the city. Why would you let them back in?" It's not that we don't love livestock. You know, I have a confession to make: I'm addicted. Like many members of this House, I'm addicted to three meals a day, and those meals largely don't come from the city. They come from rural Alberta.

To the hon. member that talked about giving rural Alberta credit: I applaud that. He's bang on. I think that as part of this discussion it's worth a couple of minutes to just talk about that. When we go to some of the best restaurants – and I know my colleague talked about that – whatever you see that comes out on the plate generally speaking does not come from the city. Yeah, sure, there are some exceptions – I appreciate that – but it's an area where we need to appreciate one another. I think rural Alberta already appreciates the fact that their products get consumed in greater amounts where the population is bigger, and people in those bigger population centres actually need to have a genuine appreciation for those people that toil every day to prepare those foods at the beginning, whether it's livestock or whether it's crops of some sort.

But my concern, Mr. Speaker, with this legislation is indeed the rules that may be put into place. The devil, as they say, resides in the details. I think that at this point I will repeat, because I don't want anybody to get the wrong impression, that I applaud the member who brought this forward. Encouraging people to buy local is a great idea. It really is. Unfortunately, the words, the black-and-white words that Albertans will have to live with if this gets passed,

leave it open that some of the rules may be counterproductive to Albertans' better interests and even counterproductive to perhaps the better interests of Albertans that produce food within 50 or a hundred miles of where people live. So as it is, I can't support the bill for that reason even though it's well intended.

Let me say this. As my hon. colleague suggested, if there was a motion to send it to committee to iron out some of these things, I think I could support that, but in its current form – and I mean no disrespect – not a chance. And not a chance because I'm afraid of hurting the very thing that I believe the bill is intended to help. The words don't, in my opinion, match up with the intention as well as they could, and they're left too wide open, in a way that could be negative instead of positive.

So there it is, Mr. Speaker. With the right amendments or a referral to committee I could support it, but in its current form, even though I agree that it's well intended, I'm unable to support it.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Cross.

**Miranda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in support of the Alberta Local Food Act and echo as well the sentiments that have been expressed here about the great farmers we have in Alberta and about the great produce that makes our foods very, very good. As we have heard, the objective of this bill is to promote a resilient and sustainable local food economy and agriculture land base in Alberta.

The issues addressed by the bill are important to the constituents of Calgary-Cross and, more specifically, to the community of Vista Heights, the home of the Vista Heights container food garden, where children are learning about agriculture and, hopefully, attracting the next generation of farmers from the urban centres. The community garden is a project that seeks to address the issues of lack of access to affordable and healthy food as well as limited growing space, that is a reality of an urban community. This bill is great because it will develop a local food and agriculture strategy, which is very important to my constituents as well as all Albertans. It will create a new market opportunity to connect local food producers with local consumers in Alberta, and I would ask my colleagues to support it.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 202. Like many in the House, I commend the member for raising this important issue. You know, we've seen a number of things over the past 175 days or whatever it's been since the election on the 5th of May, and one thing that we've seen very little of from this government is a discussion, a conversation, a mere mention of the agriculture industry in Alberta. In fact, if we reflect back – and I know it's a while ago – to the throne speech, there wasn't even the word "agriculture" in the throne speech. I know the constituents of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills were disappointed in that lack of acknowledgement of the importance of rural Alberta. In fact, the throne speech I think said "farmer" once but didn't address that significant, significant role that agriculture plays in our province.

**4:40**

I'm super pleased to see the private member today bring this bill to the House so that we can have a discussion, so that we can have a conversation around agriculture and its importance. One thing is very clear, that when it comes to our province's economy, it all begins in rural Alberta. Whether it's the ag industry or the energy industry, basically all of the things that power our economy begin

in rural Alberta, and it is of utmost importance that we continue to have this discussion around the importance of agriculture.

I think another thing that we've seen today is a significant difference between the government side of the House and the opposition side of the House. We've seen many government members today rise on this private member's bill and express a desire to support Bill 202, and we've seen a number of folks on the opposition side rise today and express some significant concern, and at the heart of that concern in many respects is this chasm between the government and the opposition, where we see bills like this. While they may not be intended to provide expansion in the scope of government – government overreach, adding to the size of government, and, generally speaking, growing government and providing avenues for more government intervention into the economy – we see the government supporting a bill that really has the potential of doing that. We see many of the opposition members speaking about the strength of local producers, the strength of the free market, the strength of our agriculture industry, the strength of a government that's smaller, not larger.

It's interesting. Even when we're talking about the Alberta Local Food Act, this ideological divide between government members and opposition members can present itself. As you go through the bill, you can see so many potential risk factors and areas that really should provide pause. People on both sides of the House should look and say: what sort of doors, what sort of boxes are we opening that present serious risk and, particularly in a couple of cases, some really, really big, gaping holes? While I recognize that the intention is laudable and well meaning, the risks are way too great to support, particularly when we write into pieces of legislation – and I recognize that it's not the cabinet but that it is the Lieutenant Governor. I'll just briefly read from the bill, from the definitions. We have these catch-all statements like: "any other organization prescribed in the regulations." Well, we take out of the hands of the Assembly and put into the hands of the regulations this wide-sweeping power to then begin to add into or write into legislation. Even though it doesn't actually wind up in the bill and ends up in the regulations, this is some significant risk.

Another significant risk in the intention of the bill when it comes to definitions is that it speaks a lot about agricultural lands in the bill, but there's no definition of what agricultural lands mean in the definitions portion of the bill. So we have a significant risk or concern that we wind up getting bogged down around: well, is this agricultural land, or is it not?

I guess a couple of other questions really need to be asked. What exactly will another committee do or solve that's not already being done out there amongst the agricultural producers? We've seen so many times in previous governments and other forms of democracy where these well-intentioned committees wind up costing extreme amounts of money but never actually produce anything that's meaningful to the front-line producer.

As we continue through the bill, we ask the question: why do we need more government intervention? I guess the other real question that I have when it comes to this particular piece of legislation and certainly for the member is: what sort of discussion has actually taken place with producers? We have all sorts of committees right across the province, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to agricultural committees, whether it's hog producers' associations, beef producers, grazing lease folks, just all sorts of different committees who are already working diligently on issues of feeding not only the province but, in fact, our country. What sort of consultation has taken place? I think that we run the risk of passing a piece of legislation and then consulting after, and we've seen many of the detrimental effects of that in the past when we take this sort of government-knows-best approach.

I think some members from the third party have made a reasonable suggestion to send this to committee and allow expert testimony. I know it's something that we have spoken about a lot, the need to reform this Assembly and be able to utilize committees so that we can provide expert witnesses because not everyone – I know it's hard to believe – on that side of the House actually has all the answers, and not everyone on this side of the House actually has all the answers. But there are producers and experts out there that, if it was a committee, we would have that opportunity to receive information from and find out if this is, actually, really needed.

The other question that I'd like to know about – and some people have talked about it today – is a cost-benefit analysis. The cost that's going to be spent on the committee: is it, in fact, going to deliver any tangible results for Albertans? And not only just for Albertans but for producers of local food as well, because it's so critical that we don't get in the way of producers any more than is absolutely necessary. If the government can do one thing well, it should be to get out of the way of Albertans.

We see that every time the government expands their role, every time we see the government adding ministries like diversification and trade, we run this risk of providing more intervention. We run the risk of the government being in charge of picking winners and losers, the government providing more corporate welfare. While that may not be the discussion exactly around the Local Food Act, this divide between ideologies is so clear, where they want to expand the government and we want to shrink the government. The government ought to be doing what they can to get out of the way of local producers, not getting in the way. I love it when we talk about these ideological divides as well because it gets the government so excited about the ideas that the Official Opposition have to provide for them.

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

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I'm honoured as a retired, well, semiretired, I guess, restaurant manager to kind of clarify a lot of the things that I saw with my experience in the market. As it comes to buying local, we have started seeing that huge trend of it becoming something that's very big. The one thing that I want to say that's a little bit unfortunate that I see, to clarify for the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, is that while there is food tourism that does exist, there's a surprising amount of it that does exist out of province. So what I think that this bill – and I'm happy to stand here and support this bill – really looks at encouraging is finding ways for a lot of these local restaurants to get access to the local products that they need. This will really help us diversify our tourism sector and really help a lot of these markets grow as well.

**4:50**

Some of the things that we see the biggest challenges in are a couple of things. One is from local suppliers not being able to fully grasp what the demand is for products. I had an opportunity recently to speak with a local brewer, several actual local brewers, and they outlined that there is an issue seeking out local hops in Alberta. The problem is that they have difficulties connecting with the farmers and letting them know that there is an existing demand for local hops. So a lot of hops for microbrews, unfortunately, come from out of province, where this could be ultimately a more profitable margin for some of the local farmers to seek out. Ultimately I see that this bill has a good way of encouraging growth within local farms and also local businesses as well.

Some of the other challenges that we see for smaller restaurants that are looking to diversify is that they are actually one of the

biggest purchasers of local products. A lot of the larger chain restaurants use prepackaged, precooked foods, not all but some of them, which is buying outside of the province, buying products that are not manufactured here, locally. Now, the challenges that we see of these smaller restaurants is that because they are competing against larger players, they are having to buy local products, they are having to seek out the providers for them, and subsequently it's costing them a lot more than it would the larger businesses, and it's creating a difficulty for them to diversify and ultimately expand.

The biggest challenge that I saw as a local restaurant manager was the fact that these smaller players are having a lot of challenges getting access to the products, and some of the local farmers are having a challenge selling these products. Ultimately I think that we have an opportunity with this bill to bring it forward to a review panel that can identify some of these issues and then bring them forward and help us remedy these. We see a lot of successes out of other provinces. In Ontario, when it comes to some of their local farm products, you see tagging of this. As much as we see in this province that there's a huge amount of pride for things like Alberta beef, I would love to see that pride exist for Alberta potatoes or even Alberta greenhouse cucumbers, if you will. We've already seen some players embracing this concept. In Calgary the Calgary Co-op chain out there has really embraced the buy local model. Unfortunately, they are a large player, so they have the resources to do this, whereas the smaller players may not necessarily have those.

Mr. Speaker, just speaking in regard to this, I support this motion because I really believe it will help a lot of the smaller players excel and help us diversify this economy.

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

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank, too, the member for bringing this forward, for the opportunity for both sides of the House to discuss one of the most important things to us in such great length and to hear so many different viewpoints. Five thoughts have been running through my mind as I've been hearing the debate, and I would just like to briefly touch on those.

I'd like to tell you a little about the constituency that I'm very fortunate to represent, Cypress-Medicine Hat: about a hundred miles by a hundred miles, with ranches on one side of it often as big as a township. You say to the rancher, "How many cows does that section support on an annual basis?" and the answer is quite often: one, maybe two. You move west, and we have the irrigated land and the type of crops that the Member for Calgary-Shaw just talked about – because of irrigation we grow potatoes, we grow sugar beets, we grow beans, and we grow all kinds of alfalfa and wheat – turkey farms, all kinds of wheat farms, all kinds of strong, independent farmers.

Then I heard the word "greenhouses" used in this debate quite a bit. The town of Redcliff, with 6,500 people, right beside Medicine Hat in the constituency of Cypress-Medicine Hat, has 160 acres under glass, that produces an amazing \$40 million to \$50 million a year. At the opposite ends of this production a lot of greenhouse operators, when they're busy working somewhere on their facilities or when they're just away, leave the front door open with a little cash box that says: "Help yourself to a tomato or a cucumber or whatever you want. Leave me two bucks or three bucks or whatever you think." It's an absolutely vibrant local community, a local economy.

On the other end the producers have set up Red Hat Co-operative, with probably 300 or 400 employees, that packages and provides food for the entire province, for Canada, and for the northwestern United States. Such a good business now, a big business now, where in the winter, when things are a bit slow or when production gets

too good, they actually buy from California or Mexico and repackage. It's a strong, strong local business that has become almost an international business.

In three and a half years of being an MLA and asking many, many of these producers what they think government needs to do to support a strong local food economy, an agriculture land base, the answer is consistent, and it's: "Get out of the way. Stay out of the way." I think of the greenhouses going along great guns until the federal government changed the legislation on temporary farm workers. They are scrambling as to what the changes may mean.

I look at the Red Hat facility, that provides so much for the constituents of Cypress-Medicine Hat, for the recipients of tax dollars for Alberta. It's in the town limits of Redcliff. If it was a mile or even half a mile further away, totally different zoning rules would apply, totally different government rules would apply, and the temporary farm workers would be under agriculture, not under the work part, and the whole problem would go away. Colleagues, this is government regulation at its worst.

The second thing that I think about when I hear the debate, not so much in the last throne speech but certainly in the PC throne speeches before, the talk was always: "Let's do what we can to reduce interprovincial trade barriers. Let's reduce interprovincial trade barriers. Let's strengthen our trade with B.C., Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and the rest of Canada. Let's build trade like what's going on around the world so we can have more jobs, so we can have more value, so we can have more diversification with added value in food processing." This could be a huge step in the way of that. I absolutely believe and I absolutely hope that the one thing that your government does is go as far as you can to reduce interprovincial trade barriers so that there are more opportunities for all Canadians.

The third thing I thought of: let's look at a business that the government is not involved in, the food business. In Medicine Hat when I walk my dog at 10:30 at night, I see Safeway and Superstore and Co-op and Sobeys with trucks lined up and food being provided and the work going on all night. You go into the store the next day: all kinds of selection, all kinds of good prices, and on top of that we've got vibrant farmers' markets. We've got the greenhouses that I was talking about. We have a strong, vibrant business that works on its own, that has great prices, great selection, and provides great, great value for Albertans.

Let's look at a business that the government is involved in. Let's look at the opposite. Easily the number one concern, the number one complaint in my constituency office is Alberta Health Services. People call me that have just paid \$27,000 to go to Kalispell or Great Falls, Montana – yeah, those two booming economic metropolises – to get their knees or hips done because we couldn't do them in Alberta.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, particularly about Cypress-Medicine Hat. However, the time limit for consideration of the business has concluded.

## 5:00 Motions Other than Government Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

### Child Care Facilities

502. Cortes-Vargas moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to consider the feasibility of including child care facilities in new government buildings where these facilities

are in short supply and urge the federal government to do the same.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to rise again and speak about the need for child care facilities in our government buildings. It is my privilege to be here today to suggest the opportunity that our government buildings present in providing much-needed child care spaces. To provide some context, in March 2015 Alberta had just over 105,000 child care spaces, with approximately 86,000 enrolled. Provincial enrollment is at 82 per cent of space capacity, and I know that within my own rural constituency finding buildings with extra space to accommodate child care facilities is hard.

Large urban centres, in particular, are pressure points for child care spaces. In March 2015 Calgary enrolment was 95 per cent of the total space capacity, down slightly from March 2014, when enrolment was 98 per cent. By comparison, enrolment in the Edmonton region was 81 per cent of the total space capacity, closer to the provincial average of 82 per cent. In March 2015 there were just about 2,500 active child care programs, and approximately 50 per cent of those were for-profit programs, and 50 per cent were not for profit.

As of December 2014 825 child care programs, approximately 35 per cent, were located in schools and provided around 32,000 child care spaces. School spaces, however, are subject to the demands of educational needs; therefore, these programs must relocate if the school's need demands more space. This kind of disruption to programming creates uncertainty for many working parents that plan months in advance to co-ordinate their busy schedules. Preschools and out of school care programs linked to schools have several benefits. Preschools attract new children into school communities and provide an early learning opportunity for preschool children prior to entering kindergarten. Moreover, out of school care programs extend the hours of care for kindergarten and school-aged children for parents who are working or studying.

Mr. Speaker, access to child care space plays an important role in advancing women's equality by enabling more women to enter the paid workforce or pursue education. It is in this way that we can support both jobs and families in Alberta, by providing child care facilities. In the early 1990s the federal government helped establish workplace daycare centres in federal buildings across the country, providing full rent subsidies as long as 70 per cent of the spaces were used by parents working in the public service. One excellent local example of child care spaces is the Canada Place Child Care Society, which is a not-for-profit organization that operates a daycare program, giving priority to children of employees of the Canada Place federal building.

Currently, assistant deputy ministers of Human Services, Education, and Infrastructure have identified that further work is necessary to find workable solutions under the current legislation's framework, and longer term solutions may involve legislation changes to support government capital investments for child care programs in government buildings such as schools, civic centres, leisure centres, and museums. Mr. Speaker, we should not miss out on this opportunity to support Albertans' families through child care spaces in our government buildings.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Airdrie.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, it's my pleasure to rise today as shadow minister for Human Services and the Status of Women. As a working mom I understand the pressures parents face when it comes to making child care choices for their families. I

would like to thank the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park, the luckiest member in this House, I might add, for putting forward this motion. I know this motion is an attempt to make child care more affordable and accessible for families, and this is an admirable goal, as most parents here would agree. The motion we are debating today urges the government to consider the feasibility of building child care spaces in new government buildings.

Let me start off by saying that I agree with the spirit of the motion. Meeting the need to access child care for working families is a very noble goal, but I do have some concerns about the way this motion is worded. Maybe the wording is too vague, but I can only assume that any potential outcomes from this initiative would either be aimed towards provincial employees as primary clients or moving in the direction of making the provincial government the primary supplier of child care services.

Let me be clear. We highly value the work of our public-sector officials. They keep our government running and help deliver the services that Albertans rely on, whether it's in education, health care, or transportation. They deserve, just like any other Albertan, to have the best child care choices available to them, that are best for their families. The question is really not whether public servants deserve quality access to child care but whether, given the extraordinary financial circumstances our province is facing, it is a good way to spend limited resources on improving child care support for all Albertans.

The way this motion reads, it certainly gives the impression to most Albertans in the private sector that they would have a limited ability to use these new mandated child care spaces. For the thousands of parents who work in the private sector or who are self-employed it's hard to imagine a scenario where they would benefit from this. Let's remember the pain that Albertans are feeling right now. In the energy sector alone there have been 40,000 jobs lost. In several companies there have been wage reductions and hours cut. Many parents are working without the piece of mind of knowing that they'll have a job at the end of the month.

However, it's hard for us to understand whether or not this proposed study would focus just on new buildings for MLAs and government-sector employees here in Edmonton or apply to new schools and health care facilities as well. Would it apply to seniors' homes or just buildings like the new federal building? How beneficial would it be? What would the cost be? How would these facilities operate? Would the new government allow for choice and private operators, or would it be strictly government run? Would private operators pay rent to help cover the costs of construction? Would there be changes to the programs that currently exist, and how much choice would this take away from families who want freedom in choosing the type of child care that works best for their families? Ultimately, this could create massive new spending increases while producing limited benefits for the majority of Alberta families.

If the province is going to spend valuable taxpayer resources studying ways of improving child care in Alberta, I believe that there are better ways to do it. The Wildrose wants to see government child care grants become more flexible in the type of child care they can be used for. The Wildrose wants to maintain a child care approach that prioritizes support for parents with the highest financial need. This means supporting parental choice in child care and ensuring the province has resources available to support these decisions. With Alberta's birth rate among the highest in the country, we need to make sure that every parent who needs access to support can receive it.

I tend to think our Premier had it right when she said in opposition, "We still at the end of the day in this province need a child care strategy that actually addresses the growing child care

needs of Alberta's young families." This motion as it reads fails to achieve this goal. There would be no caps on potential costs, and it would leave tens of thousands of young Alberta families paying more in taxes to subsidize child care for MLAs and their government-sector counterparts.

For these reasons, while I applaud the member for the spirit of this motion, I cannot support it as it is written. There are just too many questions that can't be answered. I'm concerned the motion will mean the waste of valuable resources as we prepare for the province's largest deficit in provincial history. I want to look towards strategies that will benefit all families from Medicine Hat to Calgary to Edmonton to Airdrie to Grande Prairie and to Fort McMurray. At the end of the day this motion falls short in achieving that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

5:10

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wasn't going to stand up, but the Member for Airdrie has gotten me thinking about a couple of things, and I did want to speak now because I feel like I have to correct something that is just jarring me a little bit.

First of all, I want to say that I absolutely support this motion. Absolutely. I have to say that as a single mom with a child, who worked shift work for an entire 25-year broadcasting career, I really needed daycare. It was the first thing I thought about when I woke up in the morning; it was the last thing I thought about before I went to bed at night. Who's going to pick my daughter up in the morning? Is she going to be sick, and will I have to call in sick because of it? All of these stresses you have to face as a single mom.

When the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park brought this forward, sure, there are a lot of questions. Frankly, these are things that – you know, motions are motions. They're an opportunity for us to sit and discuss things that are very important, and for that I say kudos. I think this is a fantastic opportunity to discuss something that is badly needed. Moreover, I think where I would like to see this discussion go is where it helps people like me when I was working shift work, moms who work shift work.

As associate minister of family and community safety a little over a year ago I had an opportunity to go to Yellowknife for a first ministers' meeting on women's issues. One of the things the ministers around the table talked about was the need in every single province in this country for not only affordable child care but child care at times when women needed those child care spaces so they could take the kinds of jobs that were available mostly to men, especially when you look at areas like the trades and you look at oil and gas jobs, et cetera.

I would say this. I am fully supportive of this motion. I think it's a fantastic opportunity to discuss something. The details, to me, are there to be worked out in the discussion, and I think that that is really not the most important part of it right now. To me the important part is: how do we make it accessible for women so that they can access the kinds of jobs so they have that equality, the equality of pay, to look forward to as well?

So kudos to you, Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park. I would look forward to discussing this in our committees and hopefully moving forward with it somewhere. I applaud you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to raise a few questions and concerns about the motion brought forward by the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park. The motion says that all new government buildings should receive daycare facilities. Does

this mean daycare for schools, daycare for hospitals, daycare in seniors' centres? Now, I understand that the motion says: where feasible. The question I have relates to the meaning of the word "feasible." Where do we draw the line to determine what is feasible?

As the Member for Airdrie said, we do support the spirit of this bill. Increasing child care spaces in the province is something that we need to study and we need to take a look at very seriously. It is a noble goal. It's something that as Wildrosers we support. We believe that it should be supported by the government and by all members in order to be able to help all Albertans, not just one sector.

I do believe that this motion is vaguely phrased. An evaluation of child care programs in Alberta may be a good thing, but this motion focuses on spaces only and ignores other aspects of provincial child care. Since the motion is for government buildings, the government would need to perform an evaluation of the need and plan for the space. It does say: child care in new government buildings. We know that in Alberta we need more spaces, but we also desperately need other new infrastructure. We just heard about the need for major changes to the Royal Alexandra hospital in Edmonton, as an example. The motion says: where feasible and where in short supply. But, again, who decides what that means?

Allowing Albertans to have access to child care through this motion is, again, as I said earlier, a noble goal. But there are many ways to allow people to have more access to child care; for example, lower taxes, which we promote. A strong economy benefits everyone, including families and low-income families. We need to take a look at the big picture as well as the single issues to make sure that we've got the right solution.

If they follow the public model, then they may be paying caretakers close to minimum wage. I spoke with a daycare facility in Grande Prairie just recently. They pay their employees \$12 for minimum experience and \$17 an hour for a full-time degree in that industry. Not only that, but with the increase to minimum wage a person with a degree may not want a job that only pays \$2 an hour more than minimum wage. This daycare pays their graduate employees over 50 per cent more than minimum wage. The increase to minimum wage to \$15, which we will see shortly, will hugely increase the cost of daycare. Those people with a degree are still going to want a 50 per cent increase over the minimum wage, which will be closer to \$22.50 an hour.

Now, as a father of five children I'm concerned and interested when it comes to the options for child care in Alberta and look forward to future discussions in the House on this topic. I appreciate what the member is trying to achieve with this motion. I just believe that we need more details and a wider consideration of this issue at this time. One of the things that I believe is very important is to understand the consequences of other policies that this government is bringing forward – and I've talked about it a little bit – such as the \$15 minimum wage.

We have 50 per cent of the child care spaces provided by public and 50 per cent provided by private. The question that I've received as I've talked to different people in this industry throughout Alberta is: where is this government wanting to take the child care industry? Is it going to be all public, or are they going to keep the ratio at 50-50? In my opinion, this is something that a lot of people need to have discussion on, and I hope that the government will take this and look seriously at the implications before driving forward with this.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

**Mr. Mason:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll just speak very, very briefly to this. I believe that members should support this motion. I think that it is actually very valuable.

It is not a comprehensive report or a comprehensive policy on child care. It merely says that when the government is opening new buildings, it should consider the feasibility of including child care. Now, somehow that has been transformed by our colleagues opposite in the Wildrose into a tremendous number of things that it doesn't say. It doesn't say that it has to be public child care or private child care or any kind of child care. It doesn't say that it's going to increase the deficit. It doesn't say that it's going to bring the end of civilization as we know it. It just says that we should consider the feasibility of including a child care centre when we build a new government building.

Now, it doesn't mean that that takes away from private child care. We believe that child care should be available on an affordable basis for all Albertans who are working. I as a father had a wonderful opportunity with our youngest son. My wife worked, and I worked. We had access to a city child care when he was very young, and we also used a private child care, and we were satisfied with both. But to read into it all of these things in order to create a pretext for voting against the motion – and that's all it is, Mr. Speaker – belies the Wildrose's claim that they actually support child care. I don't think they do. I think they are being a little bit disingenuous.

When the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner talks about the minimum wage adding to the costs of child care, he's simply underlining the low value which society places on child care workers. It's women's work, it's undervalued, and it's not needed: Mr. Speaker, that seems to be the implication that is being made here.

5:20

**Mr. Cooper:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** A point of order has been noted.

#### Point of Order Imputing Motives

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to a point of order under Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j). The hon. minister knows it well. Language that

- (h) makes allegations against another Member;
- (i) imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member;
- (j) uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner never, ever once in his comments implied, discussed, or said anything of the nature that child care work was women's work. In fact, I'm quite insulted. This language is clearly creating disorder in the House, and I think it would be wise for the member to withdraw his comment.

**Mr. Mason:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I appear to have touched a nerve on the opposite side, and it's not unusual to create disorder on that side. In the event that I perhaps went too far in imputing that, I would apologize to the hon. member in the House for that comment.

Having said that, Mr. Speaker . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. It was going so well that I thought we were going to get there before.

Please proceed. You were making another point.

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Having said that, it does really speak to the fact that child care work is undervalued in our society, and the suggestion that it should be done for minimum wage is, I think, an unfortunate one. Our children are our most valuable assets, and they deserve to have very high-quality care and to have the people that provide that care properly compensated. That was the point I was trying to make.

The basic point that I'm trying to make is that it's a simple motion to say that we should review whether or not child care facilities are needed and warranted when we build new government buildings. I think the same thing applies and should apply across the board in the private sector as well. It's no reason to fear that this is the thin edge of a wedge of some sort of socialist master plan to enslave our children, Mr. Speaker.

I think we should support this motion. Thank you.

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

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Hopefully, the words that I say aren't going to incite a riot or anything here. I don't think they will.

I rise today strongly in favour of this motion. You know, there are many parents in this room who can understand the difficulties in finding accessible and affordable child care. I live in Beaumont, but my constituency of Leduc-Beaumont was one of the seven fastest-growing in Canada for a number of years, and it's extremely hard to find child care. The opportunity to offer child care spaces in public buildings such as schools would be invaluable to a large number of Albertans, especially women looking to re-enter the workforce or further their education.

Preschool and out of school care linked to schools is incredibly helpful to many parents. I know this personally because having my youngest son in preschool at the same school as my older son was a godsend to us. My wife works shift work, and it's extremely hard to find child care for shift workers. We don't have any family here. Actually, truth be told, my brother-in-law lives in the city, but he's an urbanite and never comes out to Beaumont, so it's a little tough to get him out there. So having a shift worker in the family and myself working full-time was always very hard, but having the preschool in the school, the opportunity to work together and have out of school care after was fantastic for us and a lot of people that I know in my area.

I think that as has been said here, this motion is a positive step forward. It's a base for us to go from. We can have discussions about it. It's not talking about details or giving any, you know, specifics right now because we want to have this discussion. It's extremely important to have this discussion because Alberta is just a burgeoning province that people move to, and to have no child care spaces available is extremely difficult.

I'll keep mine short – the minister said his was brief, but mine will be sweet, I guess – and say that this is all because I think of what my wife had to go through working shift work a lot, and it was extremely difficult for us. I'm hopeful that this will make it a lot easier for a lot of Alberta families.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members who would like to speak to Government Motion 502? Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you very much. Like my colleague from Calgary-North West, I was somewhat inspired by what many people had to

say here. I was a shift worker for many years. In fact, I knew nothing different. So I can tell you on behalf of emergency services such as the police and fire and, I'm sure, my colleague here to my right from the EMS that affordable child care is something that I would be in favour of. I can tell you that there are many, many police officers that have had to put their careers on hold, male and female.

For those of you that do not know – and why would you? – I was a single father for a number of years. My significant other had died in a tragic car accident. Like many of my teammates that I worked with downtown, we were on our way to the tactical team, but I had to sit back and reflect: do I really need to make my daughter have no parents? I can tell you that child care was an issue for me back then. I'm very fortunate that I had my mother and other family members to rely upon, but I can tell you that not all Albertans have that.

I was kind of not sure what this motion was. I give kudos where kudos are due. The hon. Infrastructure minister, you know, really explained that this is just a motion to sit there and say: "Hey, you know what? It's just something that we want to consider for new buildings that are being created." I don't have an issue with that. If it's something that's going to spark further discussion and it's going to help, as I say, single parents or any young family or women that are trying to re-enter the workforce or even men trying to re-enter the workforce, then I would be, of course, in favour of that.

Thank you very much for your time.

5:30

**Ms McKittrick:** Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to point out to the members opposite that one of the best examples of child care in a seniors' home is located in Strathmore-Brooks, where a seniors' home not only houses a child care facility and therefore provides a child care operator with good, permanent space at a reasonable rate, but it provides the children with the ability to interact with the older residents, and it's really been of mutual benefit. In the same riding there's a project going on where a child care facility is going to be located in a long-term care centre. I think it's really important for the members opposite to know that even in their own riding there are some very innovative projects that model what the motion is trying to do, and I really commend the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park for bringing this forward.

I recently had the owner of a private child care come to my office because the landlord had raised her rent about 300 times. This is one of the best operated child cares in my riding and is facing a lot of uncertain time. By providing child care in provincial and federal government buildings, we are going to ensure that child care operators, be they private or nonprofit, have access to secure rents so that they can continue to provide the kind of child care we need in our communities.

I really would urge everyone to support this motion.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members who would like to speak to Government Motion 502?

**Ms Luff:** Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured today to rise to speak to Motion 502. I also am a mother. I have two children under the age of three, so this motion particularly speaks to me and particularly as an MLA from Calgary. Calgary is one of the fastest growing cities in Alberta, and in Calgary enrolment in daycare is often 95 per cent of space capacity. In talking to people in Calgary, space is hugely an issue. I have a friend who runs a day home. She has a master's in education degree. She arrived here from the Philippines. She's really making a go of it, but a huge barrier to her expanding her daycare, which is in huge demand, is lack of available space. What we're really talking about here is space and making space

available. We're not talking about whether we're having public daycare or private daycare. We're just talking about looking at making more space available. I support that absolutely.

One type of opportunity I'm particularly interested in is the linking of child care centres to schools. Many of the schools that we're building are in these new communities that are growing. They have young families. These are communities that need daycare, and I can tell you that you really can't underestimate, as my colleagues have said, being able to drop all your children off at daycare and school in the same place. I have friends who drive across the city an hour – they add an hour of commute to their day every day – to drop their children off at a child care space that they feel comfortable with. To be able to have child care in your school so you can drop off all three of your children at the same place every day really can't be underestimated.

We actually have a really amazing example of school-based daycare, not quite in my riding. I believe it's in the hon. Minister of Finance's riding, but our ridings hug. It's a preschool program. It's at Jack James high school, and it's a really innovative program. It's unique. It provides quality, community-based preschool, and it also helps high school students study for a career in child care. It's a community-based preschool – anyone can go there – but it's also a training program. There are two qualified preschool teachers but also on any given day 10 to 16 grades 11 and 12 students who are practising to be child care providers. As a mom I can't imagine a better spot for my kids than somewhere where there are all of those people helping to create a positive educational experience. That's the kind of model that we could look at when we're thinking of school-based child care programs.

Really, I just feel that I wanted to speak to this bill because it really speaks to who we are as an NDP government. We're a government that's really striving to create a more equal society and one that celebrates parenting. Too often women, especially, get punished for having children because it means they're going to have to take time out of work, and the lack of child care spaces is a major issue.

**An Hon. Member:** Men, too.

**Ms Luff:** Yes, men too. My husband is a stay-at-home parent, so he's struggling right now. Absolutely men. I mean, that's a whole other subject. There are all sorts of things that we need to do to make it more okay for men to stay home and take care of children – oh, my goodness – but we won't get away on that.

Really, here I just feel that this motion speaks to our government. It speaks to what we want to do. We really want to make a more equal society, one that values children and honours them by providing spaces close to where their parents work. I think it's hugely important, and I really commend the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park for putting this forward. I know that when I was her age, I was certainly not thinking about child care issues. I'm so proud to be part of a government that's brought this forward.

I just wanted to say that I speak in support of this motion. I think we should all support this motion. More options for child care are always better.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. And my apologies for not identifying you by the correct constituency.

It's been pointed out to me in my preface to the last point that it is a motion other than a government motion, Motion 502.

Are there any other members who would like to speak? I recognize Calgary-Shaw.

**Mr. Sucha:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to touch briefly on these mentions that were made about how fathers can stay at home as well, prior to my becoming an MLA, I was a stay-at-home dad. I was on parental leave with my baby daughter. As the father of three young children I stand here in support of this motion. There are a lot of things that worry me. The job market has changed. To kind of go on the theme that we've been seeing about the struggles that many of the parents who are in this Chamber have had, for my wife and I, prior to my having this position, one of the biggest struggles that we had was that in order for us to make ends meet, we both had to work. In many ways I had to hold myself back from a promotion, and it was simply from the fact that it would not have worked out well when we are transferring kids between each other. We would literally pack them up in the car, drive off to the next place, and pass them on. So I can really appreciate the challenges that many parents across this province have on the simple merits of child care as well.

Now, one of the biggest concerns that I have as the father of three young children is: what would happen if my wife or myself weren't around anymore? Where would my children go? Now, our government is working towards providing affordable, accessible, and good quality child care for all Albertans, but it is important to recognize that in this province space is at a premium. We are not asking to reinvent the wheel here. We are just asking for an assessment that would find some good alternatives for child care space.

We've already seen this with schools across the province converting classrooms, gymnasiums, and common spaces into noontime supervision space. We also have some schools that already have supervision programs in place, and it accounts for 35 per cent of the existing programs within this province as of this year. It seems quite wasteful to me to allow these spaces to go unused during certain parts of the day when they could normally be better suited to things like child care. As we continue to work towards economic recovery, many individuals in my riding are looking to go back to school and into university programs themselves, but one of the biggest concerns that they have is finding access to affordable child care and to child care currently.

Mr. Speaker, one of the biggest challenges that is occurring across areas like the city of Calgary is access to commercial space for the use of child care. As the Member for Calgary-East attested to, 95 per cent of child care spaces as of March of this year are at capacity, so there is very little room. It's not uncommon throughout this province to see government space that is unused, and many government buildings have already established this as well. At city hall in the city of Calgary we see child care space incorporated, and we also see it at the Canada Place federal building in Edmonton, as the member alluded to as well.

You know, at the end of the day, we're looking at something that can help individuals thrive, and this will help many individuals, from the father who's going back to school to the mother who's doing her apprenticeship to the single parent who's trying to keep a roof over their child's head as well. That is why, Mr. Speaker, and for the benefit of all families in this province I support this motion.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.  
5:40

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park has brought forth an interesting motion that would allow parents to bring their children to work if you work in the public sector, possibly. While the motion pertains to new government buildings, how does the member opposite define government buildings? In my estimation, very few new government buildings are needed, but publicly owned schools and

hospitals are required. Would that also be in the definition of government buildings?

One of my concerns is also that once we start down the road of government involvement in starting to supply facilities for child care spaces, the natural extension of this is to go down the road of not only new buildings but retrofitting existing buildings. Where does the mandate stop? The mandate to include daycares in new government buildings is too broad for me. Is it for schools? Will this possibly delay the process of getting schools built? We are always behind on schools, and they are often at over capacity as soon as they are open. Forcing school boards to include daycares up front is not effective. On the other hand, allowing daycares to open up in schools with declining enrolment makes a lot of sense, and this is already happening across the province.

I appreciate that the member has said: where feasible. The question then becomes the element of feasibility. I heard from the Member for Sherwood Park the discussion about secure rent and that by allowing a facility to be available in government buildings, it allows the daycare operator to have secure rent without the fear of increasing rent. Is that the government's intention, to essentially provide subsidized spaces for the daycare operators?

I do believe that efforts to encourage more child care should help all families equally. The Wildrose wants to explore policies for child care that help to support families equally, and this means programs that help all Albertans. I'm a father of five and a grandfather of four. I love each child dearly. Government support for child care choices should and must be available to all families. It should respect their decisions, much like the federal government's universal child care benefit. A program such as the universal child care benefit provides child care support to all parents and gives them the choice as to how their children should be looked after. While I'm not advocating for the introduction of such a program at this time, it is this sentiment of inclusion, equality, fairness, and choice that the spirit of Motion 502 should adopt.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On October 5 my baby turned 39. This conversation was going on then. Like the hon. member across the floor, I was a single parent, and that was a pretty important discussion for me. I hate that we're still having this discussion. It is time to make something happen. I applaud the member for putting this motion forward, and I urge everybody to support it.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any other members who would like to speak to this motion? I will call upon the Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, I'll be brief. It is, as was said, just a motion, but things that happen here sometimes have consequences down the road, so it's worthy of discussion. One of the things that's missing for me here is that it says: in new buildings. I think that probably the bigger opportunities for Albertans might be in old buildings. One of the members of the other party talked about that. There are many municipalities in Alberta that are short of schools, but there are other municipalities where the population is shrinking. There are inner-city communities where the population is shrinking. I think there could be opportunities to save the taxpayer some money, keep those inner-city schools open by taking a wing of the school that doesn't have classrooms full anymore and maybe look for other services that – actually, and respectfully, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't have to be a daycare. It could be any other publicly provided service.



At any rate, Mr. Speaker, I think it's worthy of discussion, hopefully at committee at some point where all these things – again, I think probably there are more opportunities in old buildings than new ones because presumably the government won't consider it feasible in a new government building where you're storing sand for the highways. I'm just making the assumption that the government's going to get that one right. I will say this with a warning, that we and particularly the government will be judged on the decisions they do make where they consider it feasible, and I caution them to get it right. But I will say that I think it's worthy of discussion.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park to close debate.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think we had a very lengthy discussion about the pros and cons to the extent that this can go, but I think it is important to highlight, once again, that it is a consideration of feasibility of new government buildings. I think it has been explained multiple times that we are looking for alternative ways to have more child care space available to Albertans. It has been explained, through multiple experiences from the members of this Assembly, that it is needed.

So I urge you to support this motion and to continue the conversation that was started today. Thank you.

[The voice vote indicated that Motion Other than Government Motion 502 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:47 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Gotfried	Miranda
Babcock	Gray	Nielsen
Bilous	Hinkley	Payne
Carlier	Hoffman	Phillips
Carson	Horne	Piquette
Ceci	Jabbour	Renaud
Connolly	Jansen	Rodney
Coolahan	Kazim	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinstauber	Sabir
Dach	Littlewood	Schmidt
Dang	Loyola	Schreiner
Drever	Luff	Shepherd
Drysdale	Malkinson	Starke
Eggen	Mason	Sucha
Ellis	McIver	Sweet
Feehan	McKitrick	Turner
Fitzpatrick	McLean	Westhead
Ganley	McPherson	Woollard
Goehring	Miller	

Against the motion:

Aheer	Fildebrandt	Panda
Cooper	Hunter	Pitt
Cyr	Loewen	van Dijken

Totals: For – 56 Against – 9

[Motion Other than Government Motion 502 carried]

**The Speaker:** We stand adjourned until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m. to Tuesday at 1:30 p.m.]



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