



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, March 16, 2016

Day 6

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

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

Second Session

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

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

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 54    Wildrose: 22    Progressive Conservative: 8    Alberta Liberal: 1    Alberta Party: 1    Vacant: 1

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W.J. David McNeil, Clerk	Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel and Legal Research Officer	Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms
Robert H. Reynolds, QC, Law Clerk/ Director of Interparliamentary Relations	Philip Massolin, Manager of Research Services	Chris Caughell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Shannon Dean, Senior Parliamentary Counsel/Director of House Services	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Gordon H. Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

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Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

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

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Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

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

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hunter
Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
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**Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee**

Chair: Mrs. Littlewood  
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Anderson, W.	Nielsen
Clark	Nixon
Connolly	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Starke
Cyr	Sucha
Drever	Swann
Jansen	van Dijken
Loyola	

**Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

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Horne	Shepherd
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Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
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Fraser	Strankman
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Kazim	

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Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Malkinson
Dang	Nielsen
Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, March 16, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** I recognize the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly three grade 6 classes from High Prairie elementary school. There are the students; their principal, Mitch Hammond; their teachers Andrea Pollock, Nicole Pratt, Joanne Murphy, Ashley Savoie; and a few of their parents as well. There's Mr. Josh Killoran, Ms Teters – I apologize if I butcher your names a little bit – Mrs. Thompson, Mrs. Lorraine Cunningham, Mrs. Candace Barber, Mrs. Kristylynn Barton, Mrs. Karen Lauck, Mrs. Teresa Glanville, Mrs. Jennifer Anderson, Mrs. Abbie Zelman, Mrs. Marion Peacock, and Mr. Michael Strebchuk. I ask the students, principal, teachers, and parents of the grade 6 classes to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

**Ms Larivee:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to apologize. I also have some other introductions. Would you like me to do those now as well?

**The Speaker:** Please proceed.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As well, I'm pleased to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly a few of my friends and family members who are here today in anticipation of me doing my maiden speech. We have Christopher W. Brown, who was my campaign manager during my campaign; Shaun and Sandra Woodard, long-time family friends and supporters; my parents, Marilyn and Gerry Larivee; and my partner, Marcel Desjarlais, is here as well.

Chris Brown came to a sign-building party I had at my home several days already after the writ was dropped. He'd never met me before. After a few moments' conversation he drove his life into the next few weeks. I will forever be grateful for him doing that. Of course, Shaun Woodard, despite living in Leduc, chose to drive to Slave Lake to drive me around my massive constituency, including making the trip twice in a 24-hour period. Last but not least, my parents, who are my greatest fans. They've supported me in all my endeavours to date and continue to support me and express their pride in me. Love you, Mom and Dad. I ask these friends and family members to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you another class from Muriel Martin school. Today we have Ms Danielle Jean's class, and they're joined by Jodi McKay, Lauri Morrison, and Nicole Toshack. I would be honoured if they could rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Member for Calgary-Currie.

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this House

members of Bow Cliff Seniors. This amazing organization plays a key role in the lives of the many people it serves, and I'm excited to have a number of board members here today. I would ask that my guests remain standing as I call their names: Mrs. Doreen Dyer, Mrs. Jean Langdon, Mrs. Gail Martin, Mr. John Yannitsos, Mr. Wayne Naylor, Mrs. Janet Lymer. Let us welcome them to this House with the traditional greeting.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to introduce to you and all members of the Assembly the vice-president of corporate services for FortisAlberta, Mr. Karl Bomhof, based out of Calgary. Before becoming vice-president, Karl served as general counsel and secretary as part of the legal team at Fortis. For many Albertans FortisAlberta is the distributor of electricity to their homes and businesses from Lac La Biche to Hinton to Waterton to Medicine Hat to Battle River and in my constituency of Strathmore-Brooks. I ask that he rise and receive the traditional warm greeting of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two special guests from the world-renowned Banff Centre in my riding. The Banff Centre president, Janice Price, and the associate director of external and community relations, Jung-Suk Ryu, are generously hosting a reception for invited guests this evening to showcase the unique role that the Banff Centre plays in Alberta. Performing at tonight's reception will be Banff Centre alumni Don McIntyre and the T. Buckley Trio. I'm looking forward to enjoying the reception this evening and the opportunity for my colleagues to learn more about the unique role the Banff Centre plays in Alberta's postsecondary world. I'd now like to ask my guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

**Mr. Cooper:** Why, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my absolute pleasure today to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a very faithful community servant in the form of Her Worship Mayor Vanessa Van der Meer, the illustrious mayor of the industrial manufacturing capital of Alberta, Linden, which is obviously in the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. I invite her to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other guests or visitors today? The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two guests from the outstanding constituency of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. The first is Mr. Patrick Alexander, who is the reeve of Clearwater county, and Mr. Fred Nash, who is the mayor of Rocky Mountain House. Both these gentlemen have the great privilege of representing one of the greatest and most beautiful areas in all of this province and also an area that has some of the most exceptional people in this province, and it is my pleasure to work with them every day to do that. I'd ask that they stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

## Members' Statements

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

### Energy Policies

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A few weeks ago the Canadian Association of Oilwell Drilling Contractors launched Oil Respect, a campaign to provide regular Canadians an opportunity to stand up and demand respect for Canada's oil and gas industry. Alberta's energy sector has been unfairly targeted and pushed around for years. The message from Oil Respect is simple: stop smearing an industry that is unmatched in providing good jobs and economic prosperity to all of Canada.

The campaign's website, oilrespect.ca, highlights the personal stories of so many families who are hurting during these difficult times. People are losing their jobs, Mr. Speaker, by the thousands, businesses are going bankrupt, and families are losing their homes and savings. The Canadian oil and gas industry meets the toughest environmental standards in the world, employs 500,000 Canadians, is the largest private-sector investor in Canada, and contributes \$17 billion per year to government revenues. The fact is that Alberta can't just rely on oil prices bouncing back for our industry to thrive. The U.S. is now our number one competitor and consumer. Eastern Canadian politicians seem more intent on blocking Canadian oil in order to accept tankers from unenvironmental and unethical regimes like Saudi Arabia and Nigeria.

**1:40**

Oil workers are rightly demanding all levels of government defend and promote their industry and champion pipelines and stop treating them as second-class workers in Canada's most important and profitable industry. They demand that their government demonstrate that they value oil and gas, oil and gas jobs, and expect them to fight as tenaciously for pipelines as they fight for carbon taxes. They expect their leaders to stop working against them with more royalty reviews and higher taxes. They expect all political leaders to speak out against unnecessary delays in approving new pipelines, including Ottawa's challenges to the National Energy Board, that bring further uncertainty to an industry that is already suffering. If any government cares at all about Canadian jobs and the Canadian economy, it should fight for this industry and show it the respect it deserves.

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

### Bow Cliff Seniors

**Mr. Malkinson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to have a wonderful community of seniors in my riding of Calgary-Currie. Let me tell you about Bow Cliff Seniors. Bow Cliff Seniors is celebrating their 40th anniversary. Founded in 1975, Bow Cliff Seniors has been an anchor in the community where seniors socialize, support one another, and learn new things. Bow Cliff cleverly uses their resources in partnerships with other nearby groups such as the Hellenic society, which hosts Greek fest; the Calgary lawn bowlers, which also teaches the young among us; and Spruce Cliff community centre, which hosts community events for local immigrant youth. All of these events are must-attend social events for both young and old. When not hosting large events, Bow Cliff members participate in arts and craft classes, music, games, and weekly luncheons. The renowned band the Rhythm Katz practises here and performs all across southern Alberta.

On May 27 Bow Cliff will celebrate the grand opening of their new building along with the new seniors-friendly parking lot and

other grounds revitalizations. I look forward to attending this exciting event with local city councillors and with a few of my colleagues from the ministries.

We know there is a need to help seniors remain in their homes as long as they are able, and Bow Cliff has helped seniors navigate the many layers of services offered in the community. I am happy to have members of Bow Cliff with us here today in the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. Through Bow Cliff Seniors members form lasting friendships that provide support for one another through various stages of aging. I couldn't be more proud of having such a vibrant organization in my constituency.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Rural Issues

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, or AAMD and C, is meeting here in Edmonton. It's been a pleasure to reconnect with these hard-working mayors, reeves, and councillors, that truly have the pulse of the people.

But I must say that I've never seen this group of otherwise optimistic and hopeful people so discouraged, anxious, and angry. Why? It's because they feel that this government isn't listening to them or simply doesn't care. They see a government that has forged ahead with farm safety legislation without consulting farmers. They see a government that promised a robust consultation process to develop workable safety regulations and then scheduled the meetings during calving, seeding, and harvest. They see a government that rejected a plan to improve local input into health care in their communities. They see a government that has rejected a strategic plan to promote rural economic development. They see a government that won't give them a straight answer on linear assessment. They see a government that refuses to acknowledge that a carbon tax disproportionately penalizes rural Albertans. And to make matters worse, they know that electoral boundary redistribution is coming and that this government will in all likelihood reduce the number of rural constituencies.

Now, last year the AAMD and C adopted the motto Where It All Starts: Rural Alberta. This government would do well to remember that motto. It would do well to remember that rural Alberta is the source of much of Alberta's prosperity. Farming, ranching, mining, oil and gas production, forestry, and tourism all occur in rural Alberta. It would do well to remember that rural Albertans deserve fair treatment and respect from this government and that they don't appreciate being treated like second-class citizens. And it would do well to remember that it was the election of 12 rural MLAs that gave them their majority.

Rural Alberta is truly where it all starts. The AAMD and C municipal leaders will continue to put the needs of rural Alberta in front of this government. It's high time that you paid them some respect and paid them some attention.

### Delaney Veterinary Services

**Cortes-Vargas:** Mr. Speaker, I recently toured an outstanding veterinary facility in my constituency. It was my pleasure to recognize Delaney Veterinary Services. The passion that their staff has for equine care is evident from the moment you walk in. I was greeted by a caring staff, who shared with me how it all started.

Dr. Lana Delaney grew up on a farm outside of Grande Prairie, Alberta. She grew up around horses. Her family has always been active in thoroughbred horse racing, and in 2008 Dr. Delaney

opened up Delaney Veterinary Services, which works exclusively with horses, donkeys, and mules. It started by offering ambulatory services to the equine community but now has become a state-of-the-art, full-service medical, reproductive, and surgical referral centre of western Canada. Delaney specializes in acupuncture, performance, dentistry, and reproduction and is the only hospital providing multiple-board-certified specialists 24 hours a day. They provide extensive emergency care for all types of conditions, including wounds, fractures, eye injuries, and acute lameness and infection.

I'm very proud to have Delaney Veterinary Services, central and north Alberta's premier equine veterinary facility, in my constituency, and I look forward to continuing to support their work.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

#### Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour and a privilege to rise today to highlight the important work that the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton is doing in my constituency of Edmonton-Meadowlark and across this province. As representatives for our community we have an opportunity to learn about the important initiatives that nonprofits do to support the vulnerable people in our communities. SACE is a feminist-based charitable organization that supports children, adolescents, and adults who have experienced sexual abuse, assault, and violence.

On February 10 many of my colleagues and I had the opportunity to join SACE for their We Believe fundraiser. It was an incredibly well-attended event. Survivors such as the inspirational Sheldon Kennedy shared their stories while raising money to support this important cause. We Believe is SACE's most recent campaign to support and celebrate survivors for their strength and resiliency. The campaign was hugely successful. It raised awareness across the province while demonstrating our commitment to standing up against sexual violence, which affects people in all of our communities.

Nonprofits such as SACE are an incredible asset for our communities as they work with some of the most vulnerable people in our society. Recently they have come out in support of gender inclusivity within our schools by denying the harmful myth that the creation of trans-inclusive washrooms will lead to an increase in sexual violence. These harmful stereotypes are counterproductive. They often lead to violence and abuse against the trans individuals that we are trying to support.

I'm proud that our government is standing up for their rights. SACE's dream is to have a world without sexual violence, a vision our government fully supports. I would like to thank the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton for their ongoing commitment to creating a more caring and inclusive province.

Thank you.

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

#### Waste-water Treatment in Taber

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to speak about an issue that is affecting the town of Taber, in my constituency. The town's industrial sewage lagoon system is long past the end of its life. There was a waste-water overflow on January 14, another waste-water overflow on February 11, each of which was properly reported, thankfully.

Luckily, these weren't the worst of it. If the system fails, it puts the community of Taber at risk, and to make a bad situation worse, the town could be penalized and fined by Environment up to \$500,000 if it is not remedied. Their funding application under the Alberta municipal waste-water and water partnership was declined by Alberta Transportation. In fact, there are no present programs that will effectively and specifically help to rectify this problem. The town alone simply cannot afford to pay for this massive upgrade. If this government is looking for a shovel-ready project, this would be it.

My staff have been asking the minister of environment to meet with Taber's mayor for close to a month so that this problem can be addressed head on. Residents of Taber need and deserve at least a response. If the government has an internal assessment of this situation which is different from Taber's, we hope that they will share it. It is my sincere hope that this government can commit to working with Taber for an actual solution. Actions speak louder than words, but we would take at least a response on this issue.

Thanks.

1:50

#### Oral Question Period

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

#### Job Creation

**Mr. Jean:** The double impact of the NDP's risky economic agenda and low oil prices is being felt all over Alberta. According to Edmonton's chief economist over 1 in 10 jobs have been lost in Red Deer just over the last 12 months. In Calgary the unemployment rate is now higher than Windsor's and Halifax's, and for the first time in three decades unemployment is higher in Alberta than in Quebec. These aren't just statistics; these are people, Albertans, in need of hope. This Premier has done nothing for these Albertans in the last 10 months. Why?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I completely and entirely reject the premise of the Official Opposition leader's question. The fact of the matter is that while we have lost a number of jobs – and we understand that Albertans are suffering and worried and concerned, and we share that with them – that is the result of the price of oil dropping, and Albertans know that.

Secondly, it is not the case that we've done nothing. We are working very hard. We've already moved forward on several elements of our plan, which I am happy to talk about in answer to the next question, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Jean:** Here's what this Premier has accomplished in the last 10 months: put our energy sector on pins and needles with a six-month royalty review; raised business taxes, raised personal taxes, and raised gas taxes as oil was plummeting; introduced a \$3 billion carbon tax that every Albertan will pay; and as the job situation became worse, the NDP sat on their hands. Wildrose wants to give people hope. Our 12-point action plan for jobs delivers for Albertans. Will the Premier accept more than just one of our proposals?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, our government is focused on diversifying the economy and creating jobs, which I know is something that the member opposite is not a fan of. He doesn't think diversification is something that we should focus on. Nonetheless, you know, there's one element of his plan that really raises a lot of

questions, this issue of getting rid of red tape. I'm curious: is the member opposite seeking to get rid of red tape in order to help his candidate in Calgary-Greenway, who apparently is not a fan of ensuring that minors are not sold alcohol?

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

**Mr. Jean:** Shameful.

The Premier knows that red tape cost businesses in Alberta, just in the last 10 years, a billion dollars. Now, if we could reduce red tape alone in this province, we could do wonderful things for the people of Alberta. We could get rid of every single regulation when we introduce a new one, for instance. That would be a very simple thing. We could have a single business licensing system right across Alberta in the municipalities. We could actually help Albertans with red tape, not fearmonger and make up stories as the Premier is doing. Frankly, it's unbecoming.

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that red tape is the right-wing version of regulations. Here are a couple of examples of regulations. When one runs a liquor store, one ought not to sell alcohol to someone they suspect might be a minor, so one should question whether someone is or isn't. Also, one should take a program in order to make sure that they don't sell alcohol to someone who is clearly inebriated. Yet these folks are supporting somebody who thinks that not following those rules is, apparently, a way to create jobs.

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

#### Oil Tanker Transportation on the West Coast

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday I asked the Premier about building a common front with the Premier of B.C. on lifting the federal tanker ban on B.C.'s north coast. The Premier didn't really answer the question. The tanker ban ends all hopes of ever getting a pipeline to Kitimat or Prince Rupert. I know that the Premier campaigned against the Northern Gateway pipeline, but surely she agrees that a sweeping tanker ban is a very bad idea for Alberta. Does the Premier agree that the Prime Minister's ban on tankers is harmful to Alberta, harmful to Canada, and that the ban needs to be lifted immediately?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, I'm glad that the Leader of the Official Opposition is so concerned about B.C.'s LNG industry. However, the fact of the matter is that our government is focused on developing and establishing consensus across the country through reasonable negotiations for a pipeline either east or west, and that involves evaluating the options that are realistic in both cases and having respectful conversations with people, not tweeting at them, not calling them names, but having respectful conversations, which is what we will continue to do.

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you for the non answer. Mr. Speaker, this issue is important, very important. B.C. will very soon need federal approval for tankers for its planned liquid natural gas terminals and export strategy. Alberta will also need the same tanker approval to get our oil products to market. Will the Premier write to the Prime Minister and make the official request that the tanker ban can be lifted so both Alberta and British Columbia can get our products to market?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, what I will do and what I have been doing and what I will continue to do is to work with the federal government to promote the need for them to ensure that there is a

process in place that is reasonable and meaningful, with a beginning, a middle, and an end, to ensure that the necessary pipelines that we require are put in place. That is what we will continue to do. I've had conversations about this issue with the Prime Minister as well. He knows where we stand on it. But the key is that we need to work with them collaboratively, not grandstand, not position, to find a solution.

**Mr. Jean:** Like I said yesterday, the Premier has an opportunity to get British Columbia onside with pipelines. Media reports say that the Pacific NorthWest LNG project is now before the federal cabinet for approval. For it to be approved by the Prime Minister, we need to lift the tanker ban and not let federal GHG policies kill this project. Alberta is in the same boat with our pipelines projects as British Columbia. Now is the time for this Premier to take advantage of this important opportunity to make common cause with British Columbia on these issues that matter to both of our provinces. Why does she refuse to do so?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I've answered this question several times now. I don't refuse to do so. I've been speaking with our colleagues in B.C., speaking with our colleagues to the east, speaking with the Prime Minister, speaking with their officials, doing everything we can to look at all the options that are available to get our product to tidewater, and I'll continue to do that.

#### Emergency Medical Dispatch Services in Calgary

**Mr. Barnes:** The mayor of Calgary has publicly stated that centralizing ambulance services in Calgary will increase response times, lower patient outcomes, and cost more money, and Wildrose has the data to prove it. Last year Calgary experienced 39 red alerts. In Edmonton, where the dispatch system is operated by AHS, they had nearly a thousand. That's over 27 hours when Alberta's capital was left without a single available ambulance. Why is the Health minister making centralization a priority for Calgary when they clearly don't want or need it?

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much for the question. Mr. Speaker, certainly, red alerts were something that we were concerned about during the election, and we knew that it would only get worse if we went forward with the proposed plan from the last government, which was to cut \$800 million from public health care. That's why we restored that funding. I wish members opposite would have voted in support of it.

Obviously, we want to make sure that we have access to timely response times, and that's why we're continuing to work with both municipalities. Good news: in the city of Edmonton the red alert instances have gone down by half this year, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Barnes:** While Calgarians expect quality services and their local decision-makers need clarity, the minister dithers. The minister's indecision is costing more than \$60,000 per month to run an unnecessary AHS dispatch centre. AHS has sunk \$10 million and growing into an experiment that Calgary does not want, with the mayor asking: why are we even having this discussion? The current holding pattern is expensive and unfair to Calgarians. Will the minister focus her efforts and resources on real problems with EMS instead of looking for fixes in all the wrong places?

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



**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. When somebody calls 911, the closest ambulance needs to be sent to provide medical care, and we want to make sure that we do provide a timely response to everyone, obviously. In rare cases – we have about 500,000 calls every year. Decades of mismanagement by the previous government undermined the hard work of dedicated staff. The Official Opposition plan to cut billions of dollars from public health care would only lead to longer wait times. In terms of getting it right for Calgary, I'm going to take the time to make the right decision; I'm not going to rush to make the wrong one.

2:00

**Mr. Barnes:** There are very real and significant problems with AHS's bungling of centralization, and once upon a time the NDP used to acknowledge this, too. With an EMS system in crisis and communities struggling to keep adequate ambulance coverage, it is inexcusable that AHS continues to obsess over ways to centralize Calgary's dispatch. This government has enough problems with Alberta Health Services to solve as it is. Will the minister listen to Calgarians and cancel what the mayor of Calgary has called, quote, a plan that is just not credible?

**Ms Hoffman:** I'll tell you what's not credible, Mr. Speaker: making allegations that you're somehow going to improve health care when you're proposing to cut billions of dollars from the provincial treasury. That's ludicrous. [interjections]

In terms of moving forward, we're certainly working with Alberta Health Services, the Health Quality Council of Alberta, with regions throughout the province, and with local leaders. That's why I'm taking the time to meet with the mayor, go through the data. I want to make sure that we get this right for the people of Alberta. [interjections] We owe it to them to make sure that when they call 911, no matter what, the fastest response time is available. So we're working on that, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Will you keep down the volume, please?  
The leader of the third party.

### Government Policies

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today at the AAMD and C ministerial forum I heard a few interesting answers that I think Albertans will want to know more about. Let's talk about paying back borrowed money. Today the Minister of Transportation said – and I thank him for that – that borrowed money must be repaid. Well, I could not agree more. To the Premier: with an upcoming \$10.4 billion deficit and no balanced budget on the government's schedule, other than selling pot in liquor stores, as the Finance minister suggested, when and how does your NDP government plan to pay back all the money that you are going to borrow on the backs of Albertans?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. There is no question that the fiscal challenges that we find ourselves in are huge right now. We've lost roughly \$8 billion of revenue. So there are different choices that we can make, and indeed this was something that the people of Alberta were asked to weigh in on last May. They did weigh in, and they said that they did not want dramatic slashing and burning in order to balance the budget over the interests of long-term recovery or community supports, which support all of

Albertans. So we chose to follow that line, and that's what we will continue to do.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, that's billions borrowed and no plan.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs, in front of hundreds of municipal leaders, today announced that the big-city charter is, quote, only a pilot project. I can't help but wonder if the mayors of Edmonton and Calgary have been told that. If they have been told that, that their big-city charter is only a pilot project, I wonder how long they are expecting the pilot to last and under what conditions. If the minister has not told them, will the minister now do so, or is it time to reconsider this morning's remarks?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Absolutely, we're going to develop substantial regulations, and we are tremendously committed to the city charter process, to build a new, enhanced relationship with Alberta's two largest cities. Our largest cities have both unique challenges and unique capacities that we look to deal with and address and harness as we move forward. In terms of those discussions we're having amazing conversations with the leadership of those two cities from right across the government, and we look forward to having very substantial things to bring forward that will make . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. McIver:** After laying this morning's egg . . .

**The Speaker:** One moment, please. I heard someone whistling in the House just now. I'm not sure where that came from. Would you please desist from it in the future.

Second supplemental.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you. After laying this morning's egg, I'm sure the conversations will be very interesting.

Mr. Speaker, the Seniors and Housing minister, when asked about affordable housing, spoke not of funding but rather of changes to the Municipal Government Act. I could not help but wonder and will now ask if the minister was hinting broadly to the introduction of inclusionary zoning, and if not, what mechanism in the MGA will the government use to encourage affordable housing across Alberta, and how will it work?

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

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The process of developing the MGA, as the member knows, involved extensive communication and consultation from right across the whole province, and there were many, many individuals who brought forward concerns that affordable housing could possibly be addressed through that. There were a variety of concerns that came from a number of stakeholders, and moving forward, we will find the right balance between all of them to support Albertans and move forward with the best options for a sustainable province and municipalities.

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

### Flood Recovery and Mitigation

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today marks exactly 1,000 days since the 2013 flood, and 1,000 days later there's still no certainty on flood mitigation. The DRP system is still broken, and the misguided floodway buyout program has created

gaps in our neighbourhoods. Nearly 100,000 people live or make a living in downtown Calgary. Those people, the businesses they work for, and the residents in river communities are waiting for confirmation of the timeline for meaningful upstream flood mitigation. A simple question to the Premier: will the Springbank dry dam be completed as planned in time for the 2019 flood season?

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, hon. member, for the question. We're committed to keeping this project on time and on track, and I can assure the hon. member – I know many of his constituents are concerned about this – that we are moving forward with our negotiations with landowners, and we do believe that we will be able to get our environmental impact assessment completed this year. That will keep the project on time and on track.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I sincerely hope that's the case.

Moving on to the disaster recovery program, the DRP continues to let Albertans down, and the very same people who made the mess are being asked to fix it. Now, several reports have been written by outside experts and by end-users of the system, most notably a report written by the High River DRP action committee. The problems are clear, and now it's time for real change. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: will you make fundamental changes in your department and put new people in charge of the DRP to make sure the system works for Albertans, not for bureaucrats?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to stand in tremendous support of the staff who work on my DRP program for the incredible advances they have made recently. We have heard from the people of High River what changes needed to happen, and we have moved forward with them very aggressively to make the changes that they suggested, and we continue to respect and engage with them. The Auditor General questioned the previous government's decision in terms of advancing this program but very much supported and had confidence in the actions we're taking now, that will make a real difference for Albertans. We're already on the way there.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect, Minister, I've spoken and worked with many constituents who still wrestle with DRP, and I can assure you that some of the leadership within the DRP system has not met their expectations.

Another big issue still outstanding from the flood is the properties purchased in that ill-advised floodway relocation program. I'll again ask the Minister of Municipal Affairs: will you commit here and now to reselling those properties once flood mitigation is in place to recover at least some of the money wasted on that program and make our communities whole again?

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I agree 100 per cent that that buyout program completed by the previous government was a disaster in many ways, that came after a disaster that they already had to deal with. However, we made the best of it and are dealing with the situation. I have very clearly in the past committed that as soon as we have mitigation in place, we will seek to resettle that community as has been advised, and I look forward to being able to

do that in the moment, once mitigation is in place, to make that community full of houses once again.

### Coal-fired Electric Power Plant Retirement

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Mr. Speaker, my constituents of West Yellowhead are concerned about the government's decision to phase out coal-fired generation facilities. They're worried about this and what this is going to mean for them. Can the Minister of Economic Development and Trade tell the House why the government decided to phase out coal?

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. Pollution from coal-burning power plants is bad for our health, bad for the environment, and quite frankly it's economically unsustainable. People who are most at risk are children, seniors, and people who are playing sports outside. The fact of the matter is that 12 of the 18 remaining coal-fired plants were already slated for closure under federal legislation, with the remaining plants to be phased out under provincial regulation by 2030. Transitioning from coal to cleaner sources of energy is going to protect our health, our economy, and our environment.

2:10

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Thank you for the answer.

Mr. Speaker, given that my constituents have been asking me for clarity on the process, again to the same minister: can the minister explain the role of the coal facilitator and why it is that he has been engaged to deal only with the companies?

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member for the question. Earlier today I announced that Mr. Boston will be responsible for working with coal-fired electricity companies, again, particularly with a focus on those that were scheduled to be online post 2030. Mr. Boston is tasked with providing recommendations to government to ensure, firstly, that transition to cleaner sources of power is as seamless as possible; secondly, that we maintain a reliable electricity system and stability and stable prices for Albertans; and, thirdly, that this process doesn't unnecessarily strand capital.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many constituents currently rely on the coal industry for their jobs, back to the minister of economic development: what support will this government provide for the affected communities, workers, and companies during this transition?

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for this very important question. Our plan is based on three key principles: supporting communities and workers, protecting Alberta consumers and taxpayers, and fairness to companies and investors. I've already met with community leaders and labour groups who represent the workers in the affected community and will continue to do so. Our transition plan is going to work with all affected workers and communities to ensure their economic success and sustainability throughout this transition.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

### Red Deer Regional Hospital

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is to the Minister of Health on behalf of all central Albertans. At the beginning of March the Red Deer hospital was flooded. Today five of nine operating rooms are still closed, and the hospital is only able to operate at 37 per cent capacity. Critical surgeries are being cancelled. The chief of orthopaedic surgery has called the resulting delayed closure a disaster, chaos, just unbelievable misfortune for the patients of central Alberta. Now the wait time for repairs to these operating rooms is getting longer. Don't Albertans deserve better?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Certainly, the flood at the Red Deer hospital has impacted a number of individuals. It was on March 1 as a result of a sprinkler system being activated during construction work. We're investing in that hospital. The flood affected five operating rooms. Unfortunately, a number of elective surgeries have been delayed, but people who need important, essential, life-saving surgeries still are going to be expedited to the top of the list. We don't want anyone to wait, but it's elective surgeries, to correct the record.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you to the minister for the answer.

Given that we have heard that while AHS said on March 2 that the five destroyed operating rooms will be torn apart and rebuilt starting this week, in fact there were delays not to the cleanup but to the start of rebuilding due to arguments over insurance coverage and who's going to pay for the damage. Can the minister not put the full force of her ministry behind getting the hospital functioning and expedite construction while insurance issues are sorted out?

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. There certainly is repair work going on literally around the clock, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to get these surgeries rescheduled as soon as possible and the space back online. We're hopeful that three of the ORs will be back up in the second week of April, with the remaining two in the following week. The 12 in-patient beds will be available around the same time. We're working to make sure that we bring the space back online. This certainly was an unfortunate incident that happened at the hospital, but we're doing everything we can to get the space back up and available to meet patient needs.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you for the timeline. That helps because AHS had stated that two of the ORs would be up and running probably within a week, and of course they're not. They were expecting to have full function again within four to six weeks, and now possibly because of mould they'd be required to completely gut the spaces and increase the repair time to many months while the medical equipment actually is in Sea-Can. How is the minister going to provide OR services in one of Alberta's essential OR centres for almost 500,000 Albertans?

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. The operating rooms have increased hours, including 4

p.m. to midnight operations as well, which allows for 20 to 25 additional cases per week, so that's certainly helping us move through some of the backlog. Two operating rooms remain open for emergencies that are happening right now in the evenings as well because we want to make sure that emergencies have opportunities to be life saving. We, of course, want to make sure that the ORs are absolutely safe and clean, which is why the timeline is taking slightly longer, because there's nothing worse than acquiring an additional illness or an infection because you weren't in a safe operating space.

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

### Farm and Ranch Worker Regulation Consultation

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the previous session of the Legislature we provided sound advice to the government on Bill 6. My colleagues from Grande Prairie, Vermilion, and Calgary-South East suggested numerous amendments to improve Bill 6 to make sure that the mistakes they made before weren't made again. In spite of the help offered, it appears the government wasn't actually listening. To the agriculture minister. Rural Albertans are still concerned about how Bill 6 is going to affect their families. What was the rationale behind holding the consultation meetings only in Calgary and Edmonton as opposed to, say, actual rural communities?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Initially, we're still working on the number of members and the names of the members who will be at these consultation tables, the technical working groups. Once we have that, we're going to remain somewhat flexible if it's looking like some of those tables would have a better location to meet. We're going to remain flexible. For now those initial meetings will be in Calgary and Edmonton, but we'll remain somewhat flexible to look around the province to see if there's another area that would make more sense.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Ms Jansen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the time to be flexible was when you started the consultation.

It's no wonder rural Albertans are suspicious of this government. Holding consultations in urban centres, holding consultation meetings during seeding and harvest: it seems that they're doing everything in their power to keep farmers and ranchers from showing up. To the minister of agriculture. Everyone supports making farms and ranches safer working places. Will you agree to make a more fulsome consultation process so that all the voices are heard?

**The Speaker:** The minister of agriculture.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. It was always the plan to be as flexible as possible to ensure that we have as many voices as possible. At the second stage of consultation, once we have the recommendations of the technical working groups, we'll be able to then have the government write draft regulations. Those draft regulations would be available as well, to hear from as many Albertans, farming and ranching communities, everybody interested in agriculture, all Albertans, to have their input at that time. I'm looking forward to continuing this process.

**Ms Jansen:** Well, Mr. Speaker, we've got a lot of folks here who can tell you where the rural areas are.

I recall the former jobs minister telling this House that consultations last fall highlighted democracy in action. Given that it's now clear that the government has decided that limited involvement from both rural Albertans and stakeholders is superior to actual feedback, to the Premier: will you hold back on drafting any new regulations until proper consultation is done?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There's absolutely no question that we will do that, and that is the message that we have delivered consistently throughout this. To be clear, the people who have already been talked to about participating in the working groups are rural Albertans, are farmers, are chicken producers, are canola producers. Those are the people that are being talked to, so it's absolutely ridiculous to suggest that we are not talking to rural Albertans because that's exactly who we will be talking to.

#### **Coal-fired Electric Power Plant Retirement** (continued)

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Mr. Speaker, the hon. Premier recently said that she intended to review Enmax's transfer of unprofitable power contracts back to the Balancing Pool, claiming that it's due to the low price of coal. FYI, Enmax's move was pursuant to 4.3(j), a standard clause within power purchase agreements, that says that when a change in law could reasonably be expected to render continued performance unprofitable, a buyer may terminate the arrangement and shall not be liable for any termination payment, and these rights were confirmed by the Balancing Pool. Did this government create a climate plan without analyzing its contractual liabilities with the power companies?

2:20

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To be clear, the contracts that were negotiated by the previous government with these power companies allow for them to rely on the contract when the prices are high and they get to charge consumers lots, but when the prices go low and the market would save consumers, they have a great big loophole that they can use to get out of the contract. Now, we didn't negotiate that contract. That just is what the previous government saddled us with. That being said, it's really very important to understand that we need to move forward on this issue in the interests of all Albertans.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** The reason for the return of the contract had nothing to do with the price of power in the Balancing Pool; it had to do with the change in the law under 4.3(j). After an answer like that, I wonder what else this government doesn't know.

Given that the hon. minister of environment has consistently demonstrated some ignorance of the actual economics of the federal coal phase-out and that this plan allowed Alberta investors sufficient returns and cost the taxpayer nothing and provided sufficient warning for retaining and redeployment of workers in communities like Hanna and Forestburg, can the minister explain how her plan has resulted in Sheerness, for example, facing closure in the next six months and how somehow that's better than the former 2034 timeline?

**Ms Phillips:** I'll just, Mr. Speaker, by way of response, I guess, read out the federal end-of-life dates: Battle River 3, 2019; Sundance 1, 2019; HR Milner, 2019; Sundance 2, 2019; Battle River 4, 2025; Sundance 3, 2026; and Sheerness is 2036. So that is one of the remaining six, which is why we have said that we are going to be accelerating some of those down to 2030. That one will have a short amount of time . . .

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

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In November of 2015 the industry voluntarily offered to dial down 20 per cent of our coal fleet without compensation, without job loss, without impacting power prices. Not wanting to miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity, this government flatly refused the offer. Given that this government had an opportunity to immediately reduce greenhouse gas in November at a rate of .75 megatonnes per month, how can the minister of environment stand now in this House and claim that she's some kind of saviour to our planet?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the science is clear despite what the Official Opposition may claim. The health effects of coal-fired electricity are also clear. I know that the Official Opposition would like to throw shade on the science, throw shade on the health effects, but the evidence is clear. Now, this dial down, dial up business: we didn't find that to be particularly in the public interest, which is why we accepted the recommendation from the climate leadership plan to end coal-fired electricity in 2030.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

#### **Government Policies** (continued)

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, Calgarians deserve to know that ambulances will come when they call, but the fact is that this government's plan to centralize EMS could increase the number of times ambulances won't be there for Calgarians by over 2,000 per cent. This is not fearmongering; it's fact. Not only is this plan not needed, but it's not wanted. Calgary's decision-makers know it will hurt our community. The minister knows the facts. How can Calgarians trust a government that robs them of locally managed, reliable emergency services?

**Ms Hoffman:** I beg to differ with the reference to facts because, of course, you need to have apples and apples to be able to draw an inference. I think it's important that we actually do look at the science, we actually do talk to the chief paramedic and all the other paramedics who are working throughout the province to make sure we get the right model moving forward, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely, we're going to make sure that that model is in place and that I have an opportunity to meet with the mayor on an ongoing basis. I've been working with him already for the last 10 months and will continue to work with him as we move forward.

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Minister.

Seeing as Calgary is already hurting enough without this needless bureaucratic plan and given that Calgary now has a higher unemployment rate than Atlantic cities like Halifax and St. John's and given that the Wildrose has introduced a common-sense 12-point jobs action plan to get Calgarians working again, will the government commit to implementing the low-cost, high-reward Wildrose plan?

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's good to see that there are a couple of points in the plan where the Wildrose has been listening to our Speech from the Throne and the many speeches that I've given as far as a real plan to work with industry, with businesses province-wide to look at creating jobs. What I find quite interesting is that the Wildrose is claiming that now is not the time to diversify. Well, quite frankly, part of the reason that Alberta is facing and feeling the impacts of the low price of oil more significantly than any other region is because of our overreliance on one sector.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Panda:** Well, we will not apologize that our jobs plan isn't just a job description. Considering that our plan would cost very little to get Albertans working and given that there are hours-long lineups at Calgary's Alberta Works and that hundreds of people who want to get back to work are being turned away, to the minister: besides the failed jobs subsidy and an empty jobs bill, what specifically is the government doing to help Calgarians get back to work?

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I'll tell the member what we are doing. We've made a number of announcements, including freeing up \$2 billion worth of capital through ATB, through AIMCo, through the AEC as well. The opposition and the House will be happy to hear, when we announce our budget, the number of initiatives that we'll be rolling out. What I find quite interesting is that within their plan the Wildrose talks about infrastructure investment. Yet they can't have it both ways. They would cut \$9 billion from our infrastructure budget, yet claim in their plan that they want to help build infrastructure. I don't know if they're coming or going.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

#### AIMCo Investments

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government has touted a few initiatives it claims are creating jobs. One plan, as outlined in Budget 2015, directs AIMCo to invest 3 per cent of the heritage trust fund, approximately \$540 million, in Alberta-based companies. That direction came four and a half months ago, and to date AIMCo has only invested \$46 million, less than 10 per cent, yet the economic development minister continues to boast about it. To the Finance minister: when you announced this new mandate, how many new jobs did you expect the \$540 million to create?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question, member opposite. When we worked to put together our economic stimulation plan for Budget 2015, we went to AIMCo and we talked to them about the amount of capital that they could invest in Alberta. We are not taking the approach that we're picking the winners and losers. We're letting the professionals do that. AIMCo is finding the best places to invest capital, and that's happening as we speak.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this new direction from your government needs to dovetail with AIMCo's legislative mandate and given that AIMCo has received guiding principles from Treasury Board and Finance to help fulfill the direction of Budget 2015 and given that on March 2 at the Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund meeting I asked for a copy of the guiding principles, which we have yet to receive, again to the Finance minister: will you immediately make these principles public to all Albertans?

**Mr. Ceci:** If the guiding principles are there and they are not subject to protection in some way, I will make them public.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Act requires AIMCo to maximize long-term financial returns when investing the fund's assets and given that the government's new investment direction may conflict with the fund's legislative mandate to ensure that its investment always achieves the best possible returns for Albertans, again to the Finance minister: is this government inadvertently restricting AIMCo's latitude to invest globally, or is it considering creating amendments to legislation to give your ministry more ability to direct AIMCo's investments?

2:30

**Mr. Ceci:** Nothing could be further from the truth, I guess – well, I know nothing could be further from the truth. What we are doing is working with AIMCo. They are the people who assisted us and Finance officials to say that the investment would work. Only 3 per cent of the heritage trust fund is being invested in this fashion. We are still getting the best return for the investments AIMCo is making on behalf of the heritage trust fund. There has not been a change in that regard.

#### School Construction Schedule

**Ms Drever:** Mr. Speaker, last October my constituents, like many Albertans, were shocked to learn that schools being built in their communities would be open later than expected. In Calgary-Bow we're still waiting for the modernization of Bowness high school. It's clear these delays came as a result of poor planning and electioneering by the previous government. Well, thankfully, there's a new government in place. To the Minister of Education: what is being done to ensure schools are being built in a timely manner?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for the question. Yes. We are in the midst of the very largest infrastructure school building project in the history of this province. Bowness is back on track, and so is Cougar Ridge middle school. We're working very hard through some new systems to make sure we track these projects, which affect not just, of course, your constituency but right across the entire province. The next time someone talks about borrowing money and being so far in debt, just remember that you're getting a school in your area, that your kids need and your community needs, too.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Drever:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that these schools have already been delayed and given that the schools are needed now, to

the same minister: is the funding required for these schools being advanced in a timely manner to keep projects on track?

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

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we've done an analysis of tracking each of the projects, and it's already paid quite a few dividends. We've introduced a pay-as-you-go sort of model that moves the money when they need it for the next contractual development of the project. We believe that on an annualized basis this new system is going to save more than \$15 million for this calendar year. It's important that we build these schools efficiently and we get the job done and that every dollar is being used properly.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Drever:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that schools can provide valuable supports to our communities outside of education, back to the same minister: can you detail for Albertans some of the vulnerable student groups that will benefit from these new and modernized schools?

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, for example, in Calgary we've got a modernization of the aboriginal community school to support First Nations, Métis, and Inuit students. We have a replacement for Christine Meikle school to benefit students with severe special needs. We have, as I said before, 232 projects across the province during this economic downturn. This is a great time to make sure that we are getting these projects done. It helps with employment, and it helps to put kids in classrooms that have been modernized and built brand new.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

### School Fees

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This House has seen minister after minister make and break campaign promises, and the members opposite are no exception. Many Albertans are still waiting for action on some key campaign promises that they made during the last election. After listening to the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow deliver a puffball question, I thought: let's start today off with an NDP-style puffball question. Will the Minister of Education please remind this House what the NDP campaign promise was regarding school fees? Hopefully he can answer that.

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we can see that our collaborative and close work with school boards across the province is starting to pay some dividends. We had Calgary Catholic last night say that they are going to reduce instructional fees. We have Lethbridge, I believe, debating to reduce instructional fees and St. Albert as well. We're working very closely during these tough economic times to make sure that we fund enrolment, make sacrifices in other areas to put money into our schools to make sure the kids have the learning that they need and that we can make reductions where we can possibly manage.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental question.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess the minister has forgotten his own campaign promises.

Since the Wildrose policy regarding school fees was to find efficiencies in education, which would actually allow us to

eliminate school fees across the province without raising taxes, and given that in the fall the minister had province-wide discussions with school boards to come up with a provincial guideline regarding fees, will the minister tell the House not only what his new policy on school fees will be but actually when it will be in place?

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, you can't have it both ways. You want to make massive cuts in public services with education and so forth and then eliminate school fees as well. I mean, it's living in a fantasy world. We live in the real world here. We're making sure that we're making plans with school boards every step of the way. We're working to find ways to reduce school fees. We will do so, and we will do it under these difficult circumstances because – you know what? – we make it a priority for education in this province within our caucus. I'm very proud of my caucus and my cabinet.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Edmonton Catholic school board informed parents in a letter yesterday that they would step out in faith and in support of their families who were struggling through the downturn in our economy, that they would eliminate school fees this year, and since that sounds very much like the Wildrose policy, on which we campaigned, to eliminate school fees without raising taxes, is this minister prepared to implement the Wildrose policy on school fees province-wide?

**Mr. Eggen:** Well, certainly, what I am committed to doing is to make sure that we fund public education based on enrolment. During tough economic times, Mr. Speaker, that is an extraordinary achievement that I'm very, very proud of. We know that there's a whole different fee structure around there. It's been a bit like the Wild West over the last dozen years or so. We're rounding up those school fees to make sure that we make rational decisions and make sure that we have an equitable system in place and that we're funding every student according to enrolment and according to their needs.

Thank you.

### Pipeline Construction

**Mr. Fraser:** Mr. Speaker, last week the Premier advised this House that the United States is now our biggest competitor in exporting oil. This isn't news to the Progressive Conservatives. We were well aware that in 2013 the United States produced more oil than Saudi Arabia. Last week the Premier said – I'm quoting from *Hansard* – that her position was that “the Keystone pipeline was simply going to be another mechanism to sell to the very market which is now our competitor, so [this] wasn't necessarily in our best interest.” That couldn't be further from the truth. To the Energy minister: isn't it even more important to make sure that we get as many pipelines to tidewater so that we can make sure that the United States doesn't take up our market share?

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. It's absolutely imperative that we get pipelines both east and west to get our products to market, and we also need to go beyond our competitor, who is the U.S., and develop markets in all parts of the world and continue to move our product to anywhere that will buy it.

**Mr. Fraser:** Given that the previous government laid the foundation for pipelines to tidewater in all directions and given that this government is now expressing a desire to have a pipeline or two, which is, by the way, in contradiction to your election platform, to the same minister: is your department actively exploring the proposal to build a pipeline through northern Canada to access the Trans-Alaska pipeline to reach port on the Pacific?

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, the premise of that question is absurd. The previous government for decades was unable to get a pipeline built in any direction. Quite frankly, where our government has already made much progress is primarily, first and foremost, through the climate leadership plan, where I can tell you that Alberta is taking real action on the climate, as opposed to the opposition parties, that would prefer that we just talk about doing things yet fail to implement any meaningful steps. Our climate leadership plan is giving us the social licence to get pipelines built in all directions.

**Mr. Fraser:** Interesting, since your counterparts all over the country, NDP, blocked everything we tried to put forward.

Given that in opposition the NDP vilified Alberta corporations as corporate welfare recipients not paying their fair share and not diversifying the economy and given that the PC government had strong partnerships with companies such as NOVA, Agrium, North West upgrader, and more, today's announcement on the Resource Diversification Council is fantastic news, and it shows the quality of these corporations. To the Minister of Energy: how can these companies trust that you'll have their back when that hasn't always been politically convenient for you?

2:40

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you for the question, and thank you for acknowledging that important group that made their announcement today. I am spending lots of time developing relationships and working with industry, as we've committed, to see how we can work with them to best create policy, best create messaging that will work together to create all that important business and keep some of the resources in Alberta and diversify our economy here rather than always shipping raw product out.

### Tabling Returns and Reports

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

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I advise that I hold the requisite number of copies of a report prepared by the High River Disaster Recovery Program Advocacy Committee called *Finish the Job; Fix the System*.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, there was a point of order, but it was withdrawn by the hon. member.

### Orders of the Day

#### Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

Mrs. Littlewood moved, seconded by Mr. Westhead, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows.

To Her Honour the Honourable Lois Mitchell, CM, AOE, LLD, the Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Alberta:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your

Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

[Adjourned debate March 16: Mr. Schmidt]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am tremendously honoured to be standing here with you today. With great respect to the indigenous people of this province I especially want to recognize the people of Treaty 8, on whose traditional territory my riding of Lesser Slave Lake exists. [Remarks in Cree] Hello; it is a fine day. Our Father, the Creator, I am thankful for all. [As submitted]

To the people of Lesser Slave Lake I give my deepest and most heartfelt thanks for choosing me to represent them in this honourable Assembly. It is my greatest honour to work hard for them every day to ensure that their best interests and the best interests of all Albertans are reflected in the decisions this government makes.

I would like to take a moment to share with you a little bit about where I come from and how I came to be brought here to this great place. From the time I was a young child growing up in Slave Lake, my parents, who are here in the gallery, made it very clear to me that not everyone was as blessed as we were. I have loving parents who made sure I had food to eat. I had a safe home to sleep in. I had clean and, quite frankly, nice clothes to wear. They had faith in me. They supported me. They encouraged me to pursue my education and to become whatever I wanted to be.

Let it be clear that I always knew that that was special and that not everybody had that and that that was an opportunity which I could never take for granted. I was raised to know that not everyone was as lucky as we were and that it was our obligation to take care of those in need. I was also taught that if you see something that needs doing, you just do it yourself, not expecting others to take care of it for you. I watched my parents live this and then followed suit myself as they quietly provided support to those in poverty, to the homeless in our community, to the elderly who lived in our community and in our neighbourhood as well.

Not only did my family personally help those vulnerable people locally and beyond, but never did I fail to recognize the role our government had to take care of them as well. We understood it to be a shared responsibility, and, Madam Speaker, in my home paying taxes was a privilege and not a four-letter word.

In my later years of high school and throughout my time in university I had several other great influences as well. I participated in the TUXIS youth parliament, which the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster did as well. I fell in love with the parliamentary process while there, and I revelled in the chance to discuss key social issues – and I have to say that I even had one year as Premier in which I got to sit in this great room as well – and spend time with young Albertans from across the province with varied perspectives. Many are amazing friends to this day, and they helped me to grow as an individual.

My career as a nurse furthered my vision and understanding of what caring for our vulnerable means. My understanding of population health made it clear to me that factors such as education, income, discrimination, housing, and the environment often have a much greater impact on health than our health care system actually does. I began to see the systemic issues that needed to be challenged.

One organization that I saw strongly advocating for improvement of our health care system and improved health outcomes for

Albertans was the United Nurses of Alberta. I then became president of UNA local 315 and became actively engaged in the work within the labour movement to improve the equality of all Albertans. Being a part of UNA was very empowering and eye-opening, and I am still very proud to call those men and women sisters and brothers.

Over my first 17 years as a nurse I became more and more disturbed by the systemic issues I saw, especially by the failure of our society to take care of our elders, for whom I have been given great respect. The straw that pushed me over and led me to this place here was listening to my colleagues who worked as nurses cry in moral distress over their inability to work in the system to take care of the needs of the people they were responsible for. Madam Speaker, that is why I chose to run for Alberta's NDP in the 2015 election.

I owe a huge thanks to those who helped me get here today. Several are here with us. Again, I mentioned in my introductions Chris Brown, who worked so hard as my campaign manager, tirelessly pulling it all together so I could focus on being a candidate; Shaun Woodard, who, again, travelled many times to help me around and has always been a great friend, along with his wife, Sandra. There were so many that helped out. I cannot name them all, but a quick shout-out to Nicola, Len, Gail, and Phil and others and, of course, always my greatest fans, my parents. Then, of course, there are the more passive supporters, who are my children, aged 16, 13, and 6, who always and forevermore deserve my thanks for their patience as they share their mother's time with the people of this great province.

Now, on that note, I want to take some time to talk about the amazing constituency of Lesser Slave Lake. I have to say that Lesser Slave Lake was an amazing place to grow up, as I'm sure the hon. Minister of Health can agree, and continues to be an amazing place to live, work, and raise my children. Covering a vast portion of central northern Alberta, it is incredibly diverse in its landscape, in its industry, and in its people. I am proud to share the territory with 12 different Treaty 8 First Nations and three Métis settlements, communities that are rich with culture, face significant challenges, many due, of course, to the legacy of residential schools, but that are filled with strong, resilient, welcoming people. I have been humbled by their faith in our government to form a new relationship and to deal with the substantial concerns that exist, and I look forward to making continuous progress on this as a government.

Lesser Slave Lake's communities are home to so many strong and resilient people, from Banana Belt to Smith, from Faust to Red Earth Creek, and the generous, caring people that I serve successfully deal with the challenges that living in northern Alberta presents for isolated communities and, of course, deal with fires and floods and droughts. They have tirelessly worked to make our northern area grow and prosper. They took on the challenge to settle in the north and have developed thriving agriculture, forestry, and oil and gas industries. Never afraid to take on new challenges, the amazing people in my riding continue to innovate and develop new and better ways of doing things. For example, we are home to the Friends of Historical Northern Alberta Society, the innovative not-for-profit group that is creating an online, self-guided tour of northern Alberta to preserve history and to promote tourism.

2:50

The forestry industry, that has such a strong presence in my riding, is focused on always doing things in new and better ways. For example, Slave Lake Pulp is in the final stages of their biomethanization project, a unique project in the world which converts pulp mill effluent into electrical power through anaerobic

digestion. This on-budget project uses Canadian technology and is only one small piece of the renewable energy projects happening throughout the forestry industry in our province.

We also are home to Northern Lakes College – it's centred in my riding – which has taken on the challenge of offering innovative postsecondary education programs to meet the needs of the northern community it serves. A model very different from other colleges, it addresses the isolation of many northern communities for whom leaving the community is not an option and has taken distance education to a new level in many ways. I'm very proud of that organization, and I'm happy to support the Minister of Advanced Education with ongoing support.

I'm also proud of the innovative health care solutions being developed for rural Alberta and piloted in Lesser Slave Lake. Our primary care centre in Slave Lake offers truly collaborative care with physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses, social workers, chronic disease management specialists, physiotherapists, and a whole host of other health practitioners co-located to offer comprehensive care, truly modelling the right provider in the right place at the right time. This model has not only allowed for same-day access to primary care but has also greatly facilitated staff recruitment, such a huge issue in rural Alberta to which we are tremendously responsive, and has resulted in cost savings for Albertans.

Then oil and gas, you know, absolutely, is such a core part of our riding. Obviously, we've been impacted by that, but they are ready to take on the challenges. For example, CNRL's Pelican Lake field hosts a leading-edge polymer flood, one of the largest in the world. This advanced, enhanced oil recovery technique has garnered them international attention as it dramatically increased the life of the field so that it will continue to generate both jobs and revenue for Albertans for the long term. I'm so proud of the Albertans that live in my riding for bringing this amazing project forward.

Lesser Slave Lake obviously is threaded through with many beautiful lakes and rivers, fishing, camping, and glorious beaches close to home. While residents and guests can take advantage of the modern conveniences of our communities, they are always only about five minutes away from the rivers and trails that are amazing. Rich in culture, we have live music, powwows, rodeos, theatre productions, round dances, and a rich history that we share in our museums.

Madam Speaker, there is so much to offer in Lesser Slave Lake. It is my greatest wish that all of you come to discover at some point this unexplored diamond in northern Alberta, and I look forward to hosting all of you there at some point. Thanks again for allowing me this opportunity to share about the amazing riches that Lesser Slave Lake has to offer. Hai, hai.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?  
The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Dr. Turner:** The most beautiful riding in the province, another unexplored diamond.

I really enjoyed the presentation by the minister. I have actually begged her on several occasions to be invited up to Slave Lake, so she knows that I'm looking forward to the big tour. I wonder if the minister could expand on her discussion of the family care clinic in Slave Lake. I know it was created at a time of crisis. You were responding to what was probably one of this province's worst disasters. I personally have been very impressed with the way that that community pulled together, both in dealing with the crisis but also in helping to facilitate the creation of that family care clinic.

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



**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I definitely see that clinic as a model for where we need to go in the future with primary care. It certainly was a response to the fire. After the fire of 2011 in Slave Lake we actually lost a number of physicians, which left us tremendously stretched, and the ability to move forward with this clinic was an amazing thing for the community. Within it the nurse practitioners in combination with the physicians work as partners, which has now enabled same-day service and access to primary care.

I would say that a number of you here in this Assembly understand how tremendous that is, that you can get in the same day. If you are sick and you need to see somebody because you have a cold or because you need a prescription renewal, you can see someone that very same day. I find that a wonderful thing, and it's certainly been responsive to the community's needs. I look forward to talking to you more about it in the future, but it certainly is an example of where we can go. I look forward to seeing that model roll out even in High Prairie, which has a new hospital coming shortly.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** I, too, enjoyed the minister's maiden speech. I know that when I was a union member, I got to have a much deeper insight into the problems that occurred. Could you just expound a little on your position with the union and how you could see a little differently the problems that were going on in health care?

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

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have to say that when I was in university, I didn't necessarily understand what unions were about. I bought into the idea, you know, that they were, I guess, selfish per se. There's this idea out there that's completely a myth. Once I became involved with the union, it became very clear to me that for every single nurse in that room their highest priority was the very best care for the people that they took care of. We fought way harder on issues such as ensuring appropriate ratios of care and ensuring the right provider be there at the right time and the appropriate decision-making than we did on any issue that affected us directly. I'm very proud to be involved with that. I'm very proud to have listened to the stories of so many of those women and men in that room for years, and I look forward to using that information to help move forward and support the Minister of Health in improving our health care system here in Alberta.

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

**Mr. Strankman:** Yes. Madam Speaker, I too would like to ask the member a question under 29(2)(a). She mentioned in her statement regarding biomethane or bioenergy, I believe, that was developed in her area. I've been fortunate enough to travel to that constituency and am impressed about the idea of job creation. I'm also going to extend a reverse invitation to the member to come to the diverse constituency of Drumheller-Stettler and actually visit the town of Hanna, which is the headquarters of her government agency known as the Special Areas Board. I wanted to ask the member if she could expound on exactly how many jobs are created by that type of diversification.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. minister, you have 15 seconds.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think during the construction phase there were over 200 jobs and there are actually an additional, I believe, approximately 25 . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** I'll recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

**Ms Drever:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to acknowledge that I am on Treaty 6 territory and that my riding of Calgary-Bow is on Treaty 7 territory.

I'm honoured today to rise and give my maiden speech. I cannot adequately express the privilege and delight I feel standing in this Assembly amongst my colleagues. I would also like to express my gratitude to the constituents of Calgary-Bow for putting their trust in me, and I promise every day to continue listening, learning, and working hard on their behalf. They are, after all, the reason I am here, Madam Speaker.

I was elected on a platform that promised change. When I went door to door to speak with the residents of my riding, I heard their concerns around health care, education, jobs, and the care of seniors. As I campaigned, I told them that I would hold true to my strong progressive values and the values of my party, and I promise to not let them down.

3:00

I thank you for the opportunity to respond to the throne speech and would like to first take note of the celebration of International Women's Day and the struggle for personhood. The government's recognition of the struggle for human rights for all genders is something I'm very proud of.

The throne speech addressed key priorities that will benefit Albertan families in a real way. The new Alberta child benefit plan will invest \$340 million, and that investment will directly help 380,000 Albertan children.

Another important priority laid out in the throne speech was the act to end predatory lending. This industry hurts vulnerable Albertans, and I'm glad this government is standing up to end predatory lending.

I am also proud of the investment of \$34 billion to build roads, transit, schools, and other facilities in our province that we need to support the economy and create jobs. I hear about the need for these infrastructure projects in my riding, and I look forward to seeing the West Springs/Cougar Ridge school open in early 2017.

I would also take this opportunity to thank my family for the support they have given in all of my endeavours. Many members of my family worked tirelessly throughout my campaign. The support I receive from my family is what keeps me strong, and I can always count on my immediate family of strong, stubborn women to let me know when I am wrong. I hope my nieces Gwen and Mara will inherit that strength.

Outside of family supports, my campaign was also organized by an amazing group of volunteers. People from all over the riding came to help, and it was the hard work of these dedicated folks that made sure the signs were ordered and the phones were answered. My campaign manager worked day and night to support me and the NDP, and I am so grateful for all he has done.

The campaign was an interesting experience, and balancing my university classes, part-time work, and an active door-knocking schedule in April and May was challenging. I knocked on doors, put up signs, met face to face with as many people as possible. I wanted to hear their concerns directly and began to understand the issues that faced the residents of my riding. However, it was something I would do all over again, and I will, Madam Speaker, in 2019.

Of course, the months that followed my election on May 5 were more difficult than I can express. My first few days after being elected as part of the NDP government were a quick and painful learning curve of what it meant to be a young woman in politics.

This is a story you might have likely heard, perhaps in the *Sun* or any other current print publication. Through it all, my family and supporters stood strong with me. I experienced online harassment, yes, but more accurately I experienced gender-based violence. Unfortunately, my situation isn't unique, and I recognize my privilege as I know that for many other women it would have been a lot worse. Gender-based harassment has become normalized within our society. Online or offline, it shouldn't be acceptable. Madam Speaker, I am dedicated to speaking out and standing up against harassment, and I expect my colleagues to do the same. We must set an example, and we must work together to end the culture around gender-based violence.

After I was elected, there was no shortage of discussion in the news and no lack of speculation on who I am and what I believe in. My work in Calgary-Bow and my work with social justice legislation are clear examples of some of what I stand for. Before being elected, I was a student at Mount Royal University working towards my degree in sociology. For a number of years I've been a committed activist on women's rights. Through that work I have met with many strong and inspiring women whom I call role models, role models like Ruth Ellen Brosseau, Niki Ashton, and my sister Jenn. They kept me focused on the work that I was elected to do and the importance of my role. Elected leaders are the voice of their constituents, and that responsibility is the most important part of my job.

Madam Speaker, I am proud of my roots in the riding of Calgary-Bow. I was born in 1988 in Calgary, where I was raised. That year we hosted the Olympic Winter Games, and people around the world were glued to their televisions watching hockey stars, figure skaters, bobsled teams, and other athletes compete. I'm proud to say that Canada Olympic Park is in my riding of Calgary-Bow, and I am proud to be an Olympic baby.

Calgary-Bow is located in the northwest and southwest quadrants of the city. It includes the communities of Crestmont, Coach Hill, Patterson Heights, Greenwood Village, Cougar Ridge, West Springs, Valley Ridge, and in the heart of Calgary-Bow is Bowness.

The 2013 flood greatly impacted my riding, causing serious damage, particularly in the community of Bowness. Many of my constituents were evacuated and returned home to damaged property. I have spoken to so many of those who were affected, and flood mitigation remains a major concern. I am proud that this government has taken serious action on this. The Alberta community resilience program is a necessary fund from the province that will build flood barriers and manage infrastructure. It is important that we do not forget the devastation that occurred in 2013 and that we continue to look at why the flood had the impact it did so that we are not faced with the same problems in the future.

Today there are so many active organizations within my constituency. The following are a few of the organizations that I have had the pleasure of visiting with: Pathways CSA, where I had the honour to participate in their 10th annual round dance, and, may I add, the first-ever MLA to attend that round dance; Simon House recovery centre, where I celebrated their paths to sobriety at the end of every month; Bowness Seniors' Centre, where I recently celebrated their 50th anniversary; Bowwest Community Resource Centre, that links individuals or families with appropriate services that will support them in their daily lives; the Boys & Girls Club, that works to provide a safe, supportive place where children and youth can experience new opportunities, overcome barriers, build positive relationships, and develop confidence and skills for life; the Irish cultural centre, where I had the pleasure of attending their 30th anniversary this month. As a child I took Irish dancing at this

centre, and going back as an adult gave me an opportunity to reflect on where I came from.

One of the things I love doing the most is visiting schools and talking to students about my role as an MLA. I'm very proud of the educational opportunities in my riding. Education is a priority for our government. In Calgary-Bow the government has recently funded a modernization project of Bowness high school. Construction is already under way as well as construction of the West Springs/Cougar Ridge middle school. By reversing funding cuts to education, the government is prioritizing the needs of students in our province.

I am so proud that alongside my work in my riding I have also had the opportunity to pass both my private member's bill and my private member's motion. Bill 204, the Residential Tenancies (Safer Spaces for Victims of Domestic Violence) Amendment Act, 2015, was a step forward in ending domestic violence here in Alberta. I'm so proud every single member in this Legislature voted for this bill. It's because of you that survivors of domestic violence can escape from their perpetrators by breaking their lease without financial penalty. It was a truly historic moment in this province.

Housing insecurity is one of the major barriers for women attempting to leave violence. Without safe houses, women and their children often end up living on the streets or returning to dangerous situations, where the cycle of violence can continue indefinitely. My motion to increase community capacity to deliver transitional, low-barrier housing for vulnerable Albertans suffering with complex mental and physical health needs is a step forward to end homelessness here in the province. This motion speaks to the need to provide wraparound services for vulnerable people living in poverty. This is an important commitment for our Legislature, and I'm proud of the unanimous support it received.

### 3:10

Before I conclude, I would like to say that I am proud to be part of a government that is prioritizing the hard-working people of Alberta and is focused on improving labour conditions. It is important that workers, who are the backbone of our economy, are protected. It is important that we do everything we can to help them return safely and uninjured to their families after a long day of work. As a member of this Legislature I take the responsibility seriously. My job is to fight for the rights of my constituents, many of whom sometimes work in dangerous conditions. I'm pleased to see that labour legislation will be reviewed and amended.

In conclusion, Madam Speaker, I would like to return to the personal. I would like to recognize the important role of my grandmother Dale in my life. She raised me, and like so many women, she has raised generations of Albertan women. Her active volunteerism and community involvement are reflected in the strong work ethic I hold today. My great-grandmother Frances was also a strong role model for me. She and her family came to Canada, leaving East Germany, seeking out a better life. I am so fortunate to have the resilience and humour passed down to me from my family matriarchs.

Finally, Madam Speaker, I would like to say that I am so grateful to the many women, young people, and progressive activists that supported me in my campaign and throughout my term thus far. I am here because of their beliefs and our shared values. Thank you so much.

Madam Speaker, I would move that we adjourn debate on the Speech from the Throne now. Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**Government Bills and Orders**  
**Committee of the Whole**

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

**The Chair:** I'd like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

**Bill 2**  
**Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2016**

**The Chair:** I'll call on the hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. [some applause] I don't know if that's for you or me.

I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 2 with members of this Assembly, to say a few words about the nature of interim supply, and then to recap some of its contents here. This bill is consistent with previous interim supply bills that have come before the Legislature. It identifies the total amounts requested for each ministry for spending expenses, capital investment, and financial transactions. This legislation is required to provide the spending authority to continue government operations beyond March 31 until the Budget 2016 estimates are debated and approved.

Simply put, what these estimates do is give government the spending authority to carry on day-to-day operations for critically important items like health care in our communities, education, and social services. These are programs and services that Albertans rely on and expect their government to continue to provide. To be clear, when passed, these interim supply estimates will authorize approximate spending of \$29.6 million for the Legislative Assembly and \$7.2 billion in expense funding, \$864 million in capital investment funding, \$164 million in financial transaction funding for the government, and, finally, \$363 million for the transfer from the lottery fund to the general revenue fund.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to briefly respond to some of the discussions that occurred earlier during Committee of Supply. During that discussion there were some inferences that interim supply acts are uncommon in Alberta. For the record, Madam Chair, if you look at the past 15 years, this Legislature has debated interim supply acts in 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2015. Therefore, it should be clear that these acts are commonplace in Alberta.

More importantly, Madam Chair, I should emphasize that the estimates we are discussing today will be included and fully debated when the main budget documents are tabled next month. On that note, let me add that the budget we will introduce on April 14 will elaborate on this government's priorities, and they are putting Albertans back to work through infrastructure expansion throughout the province; being a fiscally prudent and responsible government that is focused on minimizing our deficit without making a bad situation even worse; maintaining high-quality and efficiently run education programs for our students, access to health care for our citizens, and an effective social services system when it's needed most. Our budget will also continue to elaborate on economic development initiatives designed to put Albertans back to work, and it will continue to show how our government is restraining spending in light of our significant revenue shortfall.

In summary, Madam Chair, approval of the interim supply estimates, pending the release and approval of the budget, will allow the Assembly the time it needs to review and debate those plans in detail as we move forward in the interests of all Albertans.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to speak against Bill 2, interim supply. Wildrose cannot support a blank cheque, that this government says that it needs just because they choose to delay the introduction of their budget. Reckless, unplanned, and unbudgeted spending is no way to get Alberta back on track. Without details as to how this money will be used, we cannot vote in favour of this \$8.7 billion blank cheque.

The minister is right that there is nothing unusual about interim supply, but he can do better than the previous Tory government, Madam Chair. We and Albertans expect them to do better; they said that they would do better. Now, this isn't to say that reasonable governments would not engage in the practice of interim supply, but a reasonable government would provide a budget impact statement with their interim supply. They would provide at least an estimate of what their interim supply will do to the bottom line of the government, what it will mean for the balance sheet, what it will mean for the deficit, for expenditure levels on the capital and the operational sides. So when the minister stands and says, "We're not doing anything different than the government that came before us," he's correct. I don't think that's good enough.

There was nothing in this bill to tell us where the money is actually going. I am asking what specific programs this money will finance. Can the government pinpoint any specific deliverables that they expect to see from this \$8.7 billion supply? Without these, Wildrose cannot in good conscience support this bill, Madam Chair. And what about where the money came from? We would like to see the government specify what, if any, savings it has found in last year's budget to make up for spending in this bill. This \$8.7 billion bill is almost as much as the Finance minister projects the deficit will be in his upcoming budget. Before we vote for this bill, can the government tell this Assembly how much of this money will be borrowed? I have a sneaking suspicion that the answer is all of it. Relying on massive top-ups to keep the government running without a budget is unacceptable and fiscally irresponsible.

**3:20**

It is unacceptable when Alberta has the highest per capita spending of Canada's largest provinces. In fiscal year 2013-14 Alberta was spending \$10,964 per person on government programs alone. That is \$2,002 more per capita than in fiscal year 2004-05. Had the province increased program spending after fiscal year 2004-05 within the prudent limitations of population growth plus inflation, it would have spent \$295 billion between 2005 and 2013. Instead, it spent \$345 billion on programs. That, Madam Chair, is a \$49 billion spread, a \$49 billion overreach and overspend. With that \$49 billion, we would still be debt free. We would have more than doubled the heritage fund. Besides a \$10 billion annual fiscal hole, which is now nine years running, what do we have to show for this irresponsible, rather liberal spending increase?

Now, some members that got us into this mess are trying to elect another Justin Trudeau Liberal supporter to this House, this while the Trudeau Liberals are blocking Alberta's market access by holding up pipelines and banning tanker traffic crucial to Alberta on our west coast. Alberta needs more conservatives standing up for the province and market access, not another voice for the federal Liberal government in this Chamber. More of the same spending and tax increases of the last decade will not restore the Alberta advantage, that those in the Official Opposition are determined to rebuild.

Meanwhile our government still spends \$2,000 more per capita on operations alone every year than British Columbia. Last year that meant that Alberta spent about \$8 billion more on operations than B.C. That's right. Despite the price of oil we would have virtually

no deficit in this province if our government had restrained spending to just the level of British Columbia.

Madam Chair, reckless spending and experimental policies of the NDP government are getting noticed. Alberta's businesses and job creators have asked for a moratorium on risky NDP policies, and we couldn't agree more. We want to see a moratorium on reckless spending as well. It seems that the government can't get enough money bills passed by this Assembly. Since last March we have had supplementary supply, an interim supply, a budget that was not passed, an interim supply, then another budget, and now another interim supply and a supplementary supply. Why can't this government just produce a good plan and stick to it?

The government's total lack of a plan is becoming increasingly clear, Madam Chair. Just the other day we debated the supplementary supply bill before this Assembly, and we saw a fine example of budget bungling. The NDP cut \$50 million of critical ASLI funding for seniors' homes in its October 27, 2015, budget. Then just two days later for some reason these projects were given the green light, on October 29. Now these projects are showing up again as supplementary supply. Now we're finding out that the NDP buried the money for ASLI not in the estimates but in the \$4.4 billion, five-year mystery project line in the capital plan, just when Albertans need hope the most. They want to see their government taking strong leadership in this province, but they're seeing yo-yoing like this, that shows the NDP just isn't up to the job of responsibly managing Alberta's finances. You know, it's a common problem for ND governments across Canada. Many of my colleagues will remember the B.C. NDP in 1995 and 1996 claiming to run balanced budgets and then getting caught running secret hundred million dollar deficits. It is a tried-and-true NDP playbook to keep the good times rolling while our finances crumble into a shambles. I worry that last October's budget wasn't much better than 1995 and 1996 in B.C.

At the end of the day, we just need one real budget that outlines one plan with Albertans' priorities, a budget that should have been tabled a month ago and one that reassures Albertans that this government cares more about jobs and the sound financial management of this province than their ideology, not in the form of an interim supply from a government that we cannot trust that is hurting Albertans during an economic downturn. At the very least, we need a budget impact statement from spending provisions in this bill, that will tell Albertans what effect the interim supply will have on the bottom line of the provincial government's finances.

I trust my colleagues to vote against Bill 2 and to stand up against unexamined, unexplained, *carte blanche* spending bills like this. This Assembly needs to be demanding a real budget with a real plan to implement common-sense, fiscally conservative policies, ideas like what the Wildrose put forward yesterday in our jobs action plan, ideas that will get Albertans working again and provide clear direction for our province, ideas that I hope this NDP government will take under consideration when they finally decide to give us a budget.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It is an honour today to rise before you to speak on Bill 2, the interim supply bill. I would like to address the House today and urge all of my colleagues to take a long, hard look at this government and how it has been shirking its responsibility to transparently present the state of our province's finances.

Now, I know that there may be some members of the House who like to rise and speak about how, when they were in government, passing interim supply bills was commonplace. That's all well and good, Madam Chair, but I hardly think that the past government is an appropriate standard to hold ourselves to, especially when we're talking about accountability. I know Albertans certainly don't think so. After years of government bloat and scandalous spending Albertans are looking for a government that they can trust to manage our finances responsibly. Instead, this government just keeps giving them more reasons to worry. I ask that the members of this Assembly raise the bar.

Last session we saw that the NDP government felt that it was appropriate to ignore the rules and simply avoid giving a quarterly update on the government's finances, a decision that sinks below even the previous lower standard that I spoke of. And now what do we see? We see that this same government thinks that it is both prudent and reasonable to float almost \$9 billion in spending through this Assembly just four months after passing its first budget. Its first budget. Worse, it wants to do so while providing little to no detail on how these billions of taxpayer dollars will be spent. This is inexcusable. This is what we came to expect in the past. This is not what we expect from our government.

3:30

Wildrose understands that the price of oil has not recovered to levels that we or any other Albertan would like to see. This is no one's fault. We recognize that. Albertans recognize that. No one could have predicted with a hundred per cent certainty what the price of oil was going to be, just as we can't predict what it's going to be going forward. We recognize that as well. But we must take a hard look at the commodity forecasting practices that this government used to build their last budget and ask ourselves: is this acting responsibly? Should they have used more logical numbers? Everybody had been telling them that this is not okay. Is \$8.7 billion in unbudgeted spending a reflection of inexperience or total inability to responsibly manage Alberta's finances? Is Bill 2 being used as a Band-Aid to cover miscalculations made last fall in the government's last budget?

Let me be clear. Wildrose is not blaming the NDP for low oil prices. That would be unfair. But we can expect more from them. They campaigned on change, and we're not seeing that. Now, it is fair to raise an eyebrow of scrutiny to the budgeting practices that predicted oil prices to be well above the parliamentary budget office's forecast and well above almost all private industry forecasts. Not only did this government choose to forecast lofty oil prices to mask even more serious problems and present a very misleading budget, but now it has doubled down and is hiding behind current prices, calling them a government revenue problem. A government revenue problem.

Madam Chair, this doesn't live up to the standard that Albertans expect either. For too long our province has had a spending problem, not a revenue problem. A spending problem. Our province spends \$2,000 more per capita than our neighbours to the west every year. That's \$8 billion more on operations last year. It is very troubling that this government does not show any indication of future restraint. Members of the government are happy to toe the party line and allow the Premier to keep spending her way into prosperity.

Madam Chair, I am truly in awe of this government's inability to find any – any – spending efficiencies. We hear every day in question period and in the media that the NDP is looking for efficiencies. They also tell us that they are conducting reviews for cost savings. When is the rubber going to actually hit the road and start to produce these savings? Albertans want to see results. My

constituency needs to see results. The people of Alberta are tired of waiting on empty promises that have just become another way for the government to dodge and deflect real questions about the habits of their governance.

How can this government sit in the Assembly and reasonably argue that an \$8.7 billion blank cheque is acceptable? We need to know where the money is going, and we need to know what the results are going to be. Point blank, Bill 2 is the problem. The nonbudgeted asks are hollow, and there is little to no substance in this document. There are also requests for a couple of billion dollars here and a couple of billion dollars there, yet more evidence that this government doesn't have a plan. Bill 1 is a good example. Their jobs plan is a job description. We have a bill before us that actually doesn't do anything other than tell the minister what he can already do. That's a monstrous waste of time.

The government is asking this Assembly to blindly trust them with a significant amount of taxpayers' money when they have given us absolutely no reason to trust them. I use the word "us" because it is all of us in this Assembly that are reflected by this interim budget. They're withholding detailed information on where the money will go because they are either choosing to hide the facts or because they don't know where it's going to be spent. Either is unacceptable. Or maybe the NDP is just using Bill 2 to hide something of an even greater concern, their spring budget. When we hear the Finance minister refuse to say that \$5 billion plus \$5.4 billion is equal to \$10.4 billion, that's a problem. They know it's a problem. They're deferring the problem, and they're waiting for Albertans to forget about it going into the summer.

Why would the hon. government do such a thing? It's a pretty simple fact, actually. The question is really: are they misusing their position in an attempt to give themselves an advantage in the upcoming by-election? Would the government really use stall tactics for partisan purposes, knowing the inaction of government leadership could stall or even paralyze investment in this province? The royalty review is a great example of how stalling a review for so long can impact my riding. Look no further than that private industry was forced to freeze any future spending as they waited for an ideology-driven cabinet to announce a whole lot of nothing. Promises of jobs, promises of stability, and what did we get? Bill 1, their first bill, which really does nothing for our province.

It matters very much to Albertans and to politicians who serve them that major milestones like budgets happen regularly. When Members of the Legislative Assembly are being asked to sign on \$8.7 billion in spending, they need to be given appropriate amounts of time and sufficient access to information to allow them to consider the decision. We need to see more details on the massive ask from the government.

Albertans are looking for a steady hand, one that they can depend on for reliable management of public funds. When they see large overspends, huge deficits, and a government operating in secretive and self-serving ways, it does nothing to stabilize the confidence in our marketplace. To the contrary, it adds to the anxiety, which we see with the credit downgrades.

3:40

I know that members opposite say that this is fearmongering, but that's not true. People are fearful. When I speak with my constituents, I hear their concerns and their worries. If you would take the time to listen to people who put you into office, you would hear the same thing. You would hear that people are leery about what is happening within this government.

I hear small and mid-size business owners saying that they aren't willing to take business-benefiting risks because they're worried that the other shoe will drop and that this government, which is

making things up as they go, will tax them more or price them out of the market. I try my best to calm their fears, but the truth is that I truly share their concern. When we have a government that sits with their hand out to Albertans for \$8.7 billion of unknown, unbudgeted spending, it's hard to not be worried. Where is that money going to come from? We all know the answer to that question. It's coming from Albertans' families and businesses, money that our families and businesses need to get through these hard times.

Madam Chair, when the hon. Finance minister comes to this Assembly with his pockets turned out and his hand out, saying, "Trust me; I'll spend the money wisely; just fork over the cash," we should all be highly skeptical. Even in the past when other interim supply bills came through this Assembly, at least there was a pro-rated budget that could also be released with the interim budget to be compared to. This isn't the case now. Now we have no idea how this money will tie into the greater context of the government's spending plan.

I cannot in good conscience vote in support of Bill 2 on behalf of my constituents in Bonnyville-Cold Lake. I also highly encourage all the members of the Assembly to think about their constituents, not their party affiliations or party ideology, and ask themselves if their own conscience will allow them to vote in favour of the \$8.7 billion blank cheque that our Finance minister is asking from us.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you so much, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise today and speak specifically to Bill 2, the Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act. We have heard much in this House over the past couple of days and, I guess, since early last week about this particular piece of legislation: "Don't worry. There's nothing to be concerned or worried about. It's totally normal."

While I can accept that we have certainly used this process in the past, I do find it a bit disingenuous on two counts: one, folks that used to sit on this side of the House in the NDP caucus on numerous occasions would stand, just as I am today, saying, "If the government would call the House back to session when the standing orders say, we could get the budget passed on time, we could communicate to municipalities on time, and we could provide all of the details on time, but since they've failed to do that, here we are debating interim supply."

I will accept that it's possible that someday I, too, may sit on that side of the House and understand some of the pressures that they face that prevent them from coming back to the Assembly and being accountable to Albertans or that would allow them to get to this position. In conversations that I've had with members on that side of the House – you know, you don't know what you don't know from time to time. It's quite possible that someday I may regret railing against interim supply and the "Why can't we get it done on time?"

But until I have that opportunity, I will remain steadfast in my position that there is no good reason that the House couldn't have been called back to session in early February. That would have allowed for a budget to be introduced on time, not a budget that we're going to see introduced in the Assembly on the 14th of April, the fourth-latest introduction of a budget – the fourth-latest – since the year 2000, and on three of those four occasions they were in an election year, Madam Chair. As we all know, there wasn't an election this year, and we only passed a budget a mere 108 days ago. So for us to have to come to the Assembly to ask for not just a hundred million dollars, like we see in the supplementary supply

bill, but \$8.9 billion, I believe it is, here in the interim supply bill, that is more than a little disappointing.

Now, one of the other things that we have heard not just today but over recent days from the Finance minister is that this is a process that has been used 15 times in recent years. While I fully accept that this process has been used 15 times over the last few years, on a number of occasions – I believe that that number is five or six, but I will confirm, and I'll be happy to report back to the House, likely tomorrow – interim and supplementary supply were debated in conjunction or at the exact same time that the budget had already been presented. The wonderful thing about that is that it gave the opposition the opportunity to have a much better grasp and fuller scope of knowledge when it comes to exactly what the resources were intended to do.

While I'll also be the first to say that much of the resources that the government is going to be spending through the interim supply process and the supplementary supply process will be spent on positive things, the challenge, Madam Chair, is that the Official Opposition's role is to hold the government to account, and when we're provided with such little information, it is very, very difficult for us to be effective at being a part of the process, a very important part, that represents large numbers of Albertans. In some ways, just like they are the government to all Albertans, we are the opposition for all Albertans as well, and both of us play a very important role in that process. For the government to choose to pass the interim supply legislation without any of the additional information that is so desperately needed, without doing it by presenting the budget and then having interim supply and supplementary supply being debated in conjunction with it, lots of questions are raised about the effectiveness of the process, about the effectiveness of the dollars that are spent.

3:50

Let me be clear that the Wildrose Official Opposition believes in ensuring that we have a world-class education system here in our province. We believe in funding health care and ensuring that front-line health care workers aren't laid off, that their jobs aren't cut, even though there are those on the other side of the House who would like to have you believe differently. We recognize that there are portions of these resources that the government is coming back to the Assembly for that are important, but the process of how we get to those answers is sometimes just as important as the bill.

By not providing the information, it does present a significant risk. I know that some of my colleagues have spoken about it being a blank cheque, that the accountability that is in play when we have a full line-by-line budget is different than the government's ability to move money from one area to another without very much accountability to the Albertan public. We've seen the NDP make some wrong choices in the past. We've seen the NDP say one thing and do another, and it's the exact sort of thing that, when the NDP was on this side of the House, they used to join in the chorus against when it came to the former PC government, exactly as I spoke to earlier, this chorus against using interim and supplementary supply processes, not ensuring accountability in the House. We're seeing this real narrative of wrong choices that the government is making. We've seen reckless and unplanned spending, and this isn't the path forward for Alberta.

Now, I would be remiss if I didn't just mention that we have seen in the supplementary supply process some ministers talking about a little bit of restraint and some savings in terms of moving resources around, so if that is going to happen, I look forward to the budget. The path forward, as I mentioned yesterday in the House in corresponding with constituents, isn't spending wildly. While I appreciate that we need to spend money on capital investments in

the province, just as the Wildrose plan laid out, this belief that every government dollar that's spent is spent well: nothing could be further from the truth.

We need to make sure that we are looking at ourselves. I would hesitate to make comment about looking in the mirror because these sorts of comments have gotten people in some significant challenges in the past. However, it wasn't a comment that I had made.

**Mr. McIver:** Through the chair.

**Mr. Cooper:** Through the chair, Madam Chair.

We do as legislators need to look in the mirror, not blaming others but looking at ourselves and the ways that we can ensure that the dollars that government is spending are the most effective dollars possible. When the government chooses to come to the House with virtually no information, no accountability, just asking for \$8.6 billion, we should all pause, look inside ourselves, and ask important questions like: what exactly is this blank cheque going to be used for? While I have mentioned that we believe in ensuring that the government can continue to operate, I continue to return to this constant frustration that Albertans have, that the good people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills have, Madam Chair, about the delay in the budget, because we wouldn't be in this spot if that wasn't the direction that the government had taken us down.

It seems that there are a number of challenges around this spending when it comes to the government not being able to point to specific programs that these resources will finance. It's light on pinpointing deliverables, which makes it a challenge for us to support. We want to ensure that the government can continue to operate, but the people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills believe in providing deliverables, believe in providing information so that they can be assured that the government is going to be spending their money wisely.

You know, every dollar that the government takes in is a dollar that's been hard earned, so we need to make sure that we remember whose resources we're spending. At the end of the day, we're spending Albertans' resources, whether it's in the form of personal income tax, whether it's in the form of the taxes that are paid by the job creators in this province, or whether it's in the form of the taxes that are paid by the selling of our resources. All of these resources in one way, shape, form, or another are Albertans', so we need to do our very best in ensuring that those dollars are spent wisely and that the government can point exactly, Madam Chair, to how they're going to be spent.

Albertans are worried about their finances. They're struggling just to make ends meet, but when they do that, they are looking at their own books first to tighten their belts. They want this government to do the exact same. You know, I don't run into any constituents in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills or anyone here amongst my caucus colleagues that think we don't have a role to play in taking care of the vulnerable. I don't run into constituents that think we should be abandoning the people of Alberta, but I do run into constituents who question the vast amount of overspending, of government bloat, of mismanagement that this government, being in office for 316 days, is now a part of and that former governments failed to rein in all at the same time.

We are going to see an incredibly high deficit, and in fact the Finance minister just yesterday in the House finally had the courage of his convictions, Madam Chair, to utter the words of the size of that deficit, whether it was \$5.2 billion more than what was previously mentioned, or I think that he made some other statements that may be unparliamentary about – it's a significant amount of money. Finally, yesterday we heard him talk about it

being \$10.2 billion. The challenge with interim supply and supplementary supply is that we don't know exactly how these dollars are going to affect those numbers, not just the number for next year but the number for this year, whether that's going to be \$5 billion, \$6 billion, \$7 billion of deficit for this fiscal year that we're currently in.

**4:00**

The challenge, Madam Chair, is that while Albertans are looking to tighten their personal finances because they know that it's critically important to the success of their family and their family's future, we have a government that is doing the opposite, passing a budget in the dying days of November, whether it was the 29th or 30th I can't quite recall, and a mere 108 days later coming to the Assembly asking for significant resources. I on behalf of the people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills certainly will not be supporting this particular interim supply budget, not because I believe in shutting down the government but because we don't have the information that is necessary to make a good-quality decision.

I spent some significant time at the Leg. Offices meeting not that very long ago, when members of the government were not prepared to move on a decision because they didn't feel like they had the appropriate information, and I don't begrudge them for that. But here we are, with significantly less information than was provided at that particular committee, with a significantly larger dollar number, and being asked to support a decision such as this.

So on behalf of the people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills I won't be supporting the interim supply bill. I will look forward to some continued debate around these important issues, around government accountability, around a late budget introduction. I might remind the government that it was the fourth-latest introduction of a budget since the year 2000. While this government likes to blame the last government for the predicament that they're in, they have been the government now for almost a year, exactly 316 days.

**An Hon. Member:** Who's counting?

**Mr. Cooper:** I did. It's been a long 316 days, Madam Chair.

But I can tell you that the people of Alberta expected a budget on time. They expected that a government that's been in power now for 316 days could put that together, and while I perhaps should have been more sympathetic the last time we were at this process... [Mr. Cooper's speaking time expired]

**The Chair:** I'll call on the hon. Minister of Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thanks very much, Madam Chair. I've been listening with interest to members opposite as they've been talking about this blank cheque that comes so late that it's just – my goodness. Until the actual budget comes forward, I guess they have to come up with some reason to be against this interim supply act.

But let's take a look at some of the things that they're talking about, Madam Chair. This political party over here, the Wildrose Official Opposition, complains, for example, that we are bringing forward this supplementary supply just 108 days after passing the budget in November, but at the same time they can't seem to understand why we couldn't have brought a budget about sooner. So let's go back and remind people about the history.

Just before the last election, when oil prices started to head south, the Premier of the day, Mr. Prentice, announced that he was going to be tabling a budget, which he did, which involved very significant cuts to health, education, and so on, and was clearly planning future cuts going forward, including a major tax on health care, a health care premium tax, and a number of other measures

that were unpopular. Then instead of letting the Legislature debate and vote upon that budget, he called an election, and he fought the election on that budget, which was a mistake, clearly, because he didn't win, but it also created very serious problems for the financial administration of the province because it meant that we spent the time we should have been debating the Conservative budget in an election.

Then you had a brand new government that had to come up with something that was not what Mr. Prentice had proposed because obviously it had been rejected by the people of Alberta. He wanted to fight the election on the budget, and people rejected the budget. Then a brand new government had to come up with some sort of financial plan, so we brought forward interim supply to keep the government working while we learned our portfolios, learned our jobs, investigated the situation facing the province, and looked at the uncertainty in all of the factors in a very, very complex exercise to create a new budget. Of course, the Wildrose opposition opposed having interim supply. They thought we should have been able to just whip up a budget out of nothing in no time at all in order to move forward.

So we passed the interim supply bill. Then in November we brought forward the budget. Well, that wasn't good enough for the Wildrose either. They claimed we were delaying that and that we'd been in office for six whole months and should have been able to come up with a budget sooner than that. They accused us of delaying the budget deliberately in order to wait out the federal election, which was pure speculation on their part. Political spin, frankly, is all it was because on this side ministers and, particularly, the Finance minister were working very, very hard and diligently to actually get the budget done in time. Of course, the Wildrose, having never been in government and unlikely ever to be in government, is completely unaware of the amount of work and the complexities that go into developing a budget.

Now, our friends on the PC side have some experience with government, 40-odd years of it, so they've learned a thing or two. They have to learn some other things, but they certainly know what it is to develop a budget. So their criticism was somewhat more muted than the inexperienced Wildrose opposition, who keep generating ideas. They seem to be very much focused on the timeliness of budgets without understanding what actually has to go into budgets.

So then we had the budget in November, what the Opposition House Leader called the dying days of November. You know, it was a dark and stormy night, and the government brought forward its evil and mysterious budget. But that was, actually, to be clear and to set the record straight, the first budget of this government. Because of the decision of Mr. Prentice and his government in the timing of the budget and the election, that was the first actual budget that was brought forward by this government, and it only covered the remaining five months of the year.

As the Official Opposition House Leader has accurately said, that was 108 days, and now he's saying that we should have been able to come up with a new budget, a second budget, in that short period of time. But, again, he doesn't recognize the realities of governing and that you can't just generate a budget in a very short period of time. It requires work not only at the political level but at the departmental levels. All of the departments have to review their budgets. They have to look at all of their programs. They have to estimate their costs and so on.

**4:10**

Now, why might we want to bring in a budget in April? By the way, just because it's the fourth latest in the last 15 years, that's not an impressive argument in any way. It's quite within the normal

range of time for a budget. But at a time when oil prices are falling farther than anyone expected, including all of the most respected people in the oil industry who estimate and project these things, and because we're staying down much longer, there's a great deal of uncertainty that this government has to deal with in terms of dealing with the revenues. I might just say that the revenues from oil royalties have fallen about 70 per cent, and that accounts for about 20 per cent of our revenues in about a year. It's an enormous drop in the revenues of this government, and the fact that the government might want to take a few more weeks to finalize a budget is perfectly normal. In fact, it's absolutely prudent to do so.

There's also the question of the federal budget, which will have a significant impact on the province, especially in the area of infrastructure spending. Wanting to have some sense of where the federal government is going is also a very legitimate factor to take into account when we're developing a budget, but the Official Opposition doesn't recognize that. They're not adopting a responsible position with respect to the budget of this province. They just want a budget, any budget, yesterday, and they don't care whether or not that budget is actually going to be able, as accurately as possible in very difficult circumstances, to project the revenues and the expenditures of the government. But this government is prepared to do that because we're prepared and, in fact, we are committed to governing responsibly, and that's what we're going to do.

Madam Chair, I just want to indicate to members opposite that there will be some significant issues when the budget is brought forward on April 14 that are worth discussing. It's worth discussing our dependency on oil and gas royalty revenue, something that was raised repeatedly with the previous government. The previous government over the years – and I was here for some of that – had made commitments to diversify the economy and to attempt to diversify the sources of revenue for the government. They did that when the price of oil went down, as it regularly does in this province. We all know that these drops in resource prices happen. They're not predictable. They're like the weather, but we know that overall in the winter it's going to snow, and we also know that over a period of 10 years or so there are probably going to be some drops in the oil and gas prices.

What they did is that they would make those commitments at the time when oil prices were down, but as soon as they went back up again and everything was good and the money was flowing again, they kind of forgot about that commitment, so it never got done. Now we are going to have to do that to get us off the roller coaster of oil and gas royalties at a time that is much tougher, when we have much less money to deal with in this province than we did at a time when the previous government was in office and oil prices or gas prices were quite a bit higher. Those are the difficulties that we're facing. We have to diversify the economy – Albertans expect that – and we have to diversify the revenue sources of this government.

I can go back to the Emerson report under Premier Stelmach, 2007. I was there for the release of the report, and it made a key recommendation that we have to get off royalty revenues, which at that time were accounting for 30 per cent of our program expenditures. But the government didn't do it, and that is why we're in this position. Everyone knows that sooner or later the price of oil and gas will go down, but we have to prepare for it. It's a little bit about the story of the ant and the grasshopper, and unfortunately the previous government was much like the grasshopper and didn't prepare for winter. Now we are in winter, and we are going to have to find a way to do that, and it's difficult. You know, I reject the arguments of the Wildrose opposition in terms of the timing and the blank cheque. All of those arguments are false, spurious. We need to get on with this.

Madam Chair, with that, I'm going to move that we adjourn debate in Committee of the Whole on Bill 2.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

### Bill 3

#### Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you very much, hon. Government House Leader, for that wonderful soliloquy. I want to say that I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak, of course, on the supplementary supply estimates for 2016. To recap, when passed, these estimates will authorize an approximate total increase of \$106 million in expense funding for the departments of Education, Justice and Solicitor General, Labour, Municipal Affairs, Seniors and Housing, and my own, Treasury Board and Finance.

As we have discussed previously in this Chamber, these estimates will ensure, for example, that enrolment in our schools is fully funded, Madam Chair, and that the affordable supportive living initiative has the capital grants it needs to develop long-term care and affordable supportive living spaces for our seniors and others across the province. These estimates will also authorize the transfer of \$25 million of the previously approved capital investment vote to the expense vote within the department of Environment and Parks to provide funding to the town of High River for building flood mitigation berms, which they will own.

Let me add that these estimates are consistent with the fiscal plan that was presented in the 2015-16 third-quarter fiscal update, which was tabled in the Legislature towards the end of February.

During Committee of Supply members of this Legislature had the opportunity to ask detailed questions of the ministers responsible for these supplementary estimates. I'd like to thank the members opposite for their questions. I'd also like to thank my colleagues for their detailed responses. I think we had good debate, and I look forward to this Chamber's support of these supplementary estimates so that we can deliver on our commitments like fully funding school enrolment, as I mentioned earlier.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. We are here to debate Bill 3, Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016.

**Mr. Rodney:** Correct.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Very astute.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** At the last stage of Bill 3 I went through a laundry list of savings in each department in the bill that have not been found to cover the \$106 million being asked for here. While some of these initiatives are worthy, I am skeptical that the government could not find the funds in monies already allocated in the budget passed just three and a half months ago. The NDP sound a bit like *Oliver Twist* here, saying: please, sir, can I have some more? But they've already taken more. In their June interim supply, in their June tax hike bill, and then in their October budget they have taken much more from Albertans.

They've already increased taxes and spending beyond the increases proposed in the former government's budget. Alberta's GDP is shrinking; we're making less money. When Albertan



families have less coming in, they know that it's time for belt-tightening. They expect their government to tighten its belt as well, looking for cost savings during the downturn, not coming back and picking their pockets.

Now, there are some important initiatives in this bill, that we certainly do support, Madam Chair. The transfer of \$25 million of the previously approved capital investment vote to the expense vote within the Department of Environment and Parks to provide funding to the town of High River for building flood mitigation berms is very important, and it has our support. No one wants to see High River face the kind of destruction it faced ever again. This is a straight transfer of previously budgeted money from capital to expense for distribution, and it's quite reasonable, but I question why this had not been done in the 2015 budget presented at the end of October.

4:20

I'll also applaud the Department of Treasury Board and Finance – and don't get too used to it, Minister – for finding \$9 million in savings in their budget to fund their emerging contract commitment. This is an example that other departments need to follow and take note of. A pity that they need to devote \$2 million more to close the gap, though.

In my questioning of the Minister of Seniors and Housing we managed to find out something about the mystery surrounding the \$4.4 billion over five years, that was in the capital plan, set aside for new projects and programs. It turns out that \$50.5 million of the \$148 million for this year of the five-year mystery fund is for the affordable supportive living initiative, ASLI. This is important funding that will support seniors across Alberta, including in my constituency of Strathmore-Brooks, where it will support the Bassano project, which I have long been a champion of. This is a worthy project. Alberta's seniors built this province. Providing seniors with predictable, sustainable, top-quality care that allows them to be close to their families and loved ones in their communities is a priority for the Wildrose opposition. But I still cannot understand why the NDP would play games and take this money out of the estimates and the budget process and hide it as a mystery line in the capital plan.

What really frustrates me is the government's inability to get education right in the budget. Teachers are crucial to our education system, and we need to ensure that they have the proper supports in the classroom and aren't overwhelmed by ballooning class sizes. Wildrose believes that every child in Alberta should receive a world-class education. Smaller class sizes benefit learners as well as teachers. But we have a request for \$33.8 million here, on top of a budget of \$4.3 billion for the department, and the Education minister cannot find half a per cent in his department to help cover those costs.

There is much that is worth while in this bill and well intended, but it is unfortunate that we need this bill at all. Reshuffling funding for ASLI that was previously allocated, departmental increases with little to no detail as to what specific monies are actually intended for, asking for new funding because departments have exceeded their budgets: just three and a half months after they passed the budget.

Now, I know that the Government House Leader and Minister of Finance have pleaded for the mercy of this House in understanding why their revenue projections were so far off. Well, if the opposition had not raised questions about their revenue projections to begin with when they were presented to this House, then perhaps they would have a point. But we spent countless hours here debating and warning the government that their revenue projections were not anywhere close. In fact, their revenue projections didn't even

provide details beyond year 3 of their budget. Years 4 and 5 were a pure mystery. In years 1, 2, and 3 of their budget their revenue projections were positively insane. Nobody – nobody – believed that they would meet those projections. The opposition regularly told them that they were unrealistic.

Between the time that the budget was introduced and the time the budget was passed, the price of oil was already off – I'll recall it off the top of my mind here – almost \$10 from their projections. When the budget was passed, the price of oil was significantly lower than their oil projections. I remember that we stood here and said to the Finance minister: Minister, will you not at least amend your revenue projections? And he stood up and said: trust us. Well, Madam Chair, I didn't get elected because I trust politicians. We can do better.

This government has been in office nearly a year, and it's time for them to start acting like the government. They know better. They criticized the former government for these kinds of actions when they were in opposition. During interim supply, the interim supply introduced right before the previous government's last budget, I remember the Government House Leader arguing against it, using the very same arguments that the Official Opposition is using today. But now he stands and up, and he's seen the light on the road to Damascus and thinks that the process of the budget has been fine for the last decade. Well, I know that is not in keeping with the Government House Leader's long contribution to this House. Regardless of our significant philosophical differences on policy and the role of government, he's always believed that we need to improve the processes in this House, particularly around budgeting. He believed it as recently as this time last year, when he argued against the former government's interim supply because it didn't provide enough detail. Well, my; how things have changed.

Madam Chair, it is time for the government to start acting like a grown-up government. It is time for them to take responsibility for their actions, to take responsibility for their own government.

This supplementary supply does have significant differences, however, from interim supply and should be treated differently. There are good spending measures within this bill that are worthy of support. However, the government should provide us with a budget impact statement before we vote on it.

Madam Chair, Albertans expect us to do better, and you're going to hear from my colleagues in the Wildrose Official Opposition about how we can do better. Thank you.

**The Chair:** I'll call on the hon. Member for Highwood.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Earlier this session I had the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 2, Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2016. That bill was needed because this government was unable to provide a budget on time. Now, there are no penalties for that – I know – and I'm not aware of any government having penalties for that, but I'm sure if I didn't pay my taxes on time, they wouldn't be happy.

I rise to speak to Bill 3, Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016. I would like to take a moment to note that I'll be supporting this bill, not because I support the government's lack of ability to stick to a budget. That budget, I might add, is being paid for by the taxpayers of Alberta at a time when these Albertans are facing real, daily budgeting issues themselves. Many of the Albertans that this Chamber represents are facing unemployment, mounting bills, and unfortunately there's no supplementary Hail Mary for them.

The people of Alberta elected us to put their trust in us that we would responsibly manage their money, and that includes making realistic budgets that do not need to be topped up on a regular basis.

If our expectation during these trying economic times is that our constituents tighten their belts financially, cut expenses, and budget realistically, then we should be leading by example.

This bill is necessary to keep the government operating, and it does support some important issues such as ensuring the jobs of front-line workers, providing affordable long-term care for seniors. However, with issues as important as these, why weren't these budgeted for in the 2015 budget? Why are they being tacked on now as if they're an afterthought? Albertans spend \$8 billion more than British Columbia in operations per capita, yet even with all this extra money, essential projects and services are still not being covered. It is beyond my comprehension how our basic operating costs and essential spending priorities were not included in the 2015 budget and now need to be supplemented.

While I am supporting this bill, I do have a number of questions, and I hope to have them answered as I have many reservations. My questions focus specifically on the proposed change in Environment and Parks. I see in the supplementary supply estimates that Environment and Parks is asking for an approval of a proposed transfer of \$25 million to the town of High River for the construction of flood mitigation berms. According to the government's supplementary supply this request "reflects the government's decision to provide funding to the Town of High River and surrounding communities to design and build local flood mitigation projects rather than to build a government-owned diversion channel."

I would like to commend the minister for finally listening to the residents and the town council of High River, who for a long time have been calling upon the province to scrap their ill-conceived diversion channel in favour of this berm project. As a long-time resident of and now the member representing Highwood, I understand how critical this project is to the mitigation effort and how crucial these funds are to the project.

4:30

Putting all that aside for a moment, I still have a number of unanswered questions, and I'd like to read them into the record if I may, Madam Chair. The decision by the minister to forgo the channel in favour of the berms was announced in early November, literally days before the fall budget was introduced. I'm wondering how the minister didn't know that the department would be changing its mind on this flood mitigation project a couple of days before and include this funding in the fall budget. When the department announced the funding in November, they said that it included funding for two berms and one bridge, yet the supplementary supply makes no mention of the funding for the bridge. The final phase of flood mitigation in High River – and this is important – is the raising of the Centre Street Bridge, a project that this government committed to but has not yet funded. When can we expect to see these funds?

The March 2015 Auditor General report, which reviewed Environment and Parks' flood mitigation, noted that "the department does not have the capacity to do flood . . . assessments." One of the Auditor General's recommendations included the department conducting risk assessments to support flood mitigation decisions. My question: has Environment and Parks satisfied the AG's recommendation in this case? Was a risk assessment conducted?

I noticed this transfer within the department of \$25 million from capital investment to capital grants. Was this \$25 million originally budgeted for the diversion channel? How much did the department originally budget for the diversion channel? I'm hoping that the minister will provide some clarity on these questions and, moving forward, will take the time to properly budget for these sorts of

important projects so that in the future they do not need to be added after the fact and this situation can be avoided.

This situation is a perfect example of how the government is breaking the trust of its constituents. Four months ago the budget for the year was proposed, and now what has happened? Now there are significant changes being made here. They're already asking for additional funds. A government's financial role is to comprehensively budget for a full year and, after that budget has been passed, to stick to it. In a few weeks this government will drop the next budget. This next budget will not need to last four months. No, it needs to last three times that long.

Now, I understand that there's a learning curve, and that comes with being a new government and having so many initiatives that you want to push through. If this budget was off a tenth or even a quarter of this amount, I might be more understanding, but this is the second time that this government has badly miscalculated the budget. They do not seem to be learning from their past mistakes. During last year's election their platform proposed a budget. It was off by a billion dollars. It was off by so much money that they were forced to delay their balanced budget promise by a year. While the discrepancy on their initial budget and their spending has decreased, they were off from their platform.

Ideally, there should never have to be this kind of supplementary bill because the government should set out realistic, fiscally responsible expectations and follow through with their promises. At least that's how it's supposed to work. I'm not going to be holding my breath.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

**Mr. Yao:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to speak on the Seniors portion of this government's supplementary bill. This week the NDP government introduced two money bills. One is a supplementary supply bill to add money to, or supplement, the 2015 budget. The other is an interim supply bill to keep spending going after March 31 since the 2016 budget won't even be presented yet, let alone passed. As with all their bills, information is lacking. There was no consultation, no committee, just: trust them. I have questions I wish that they could answer.

Yesterday the minister stated that the \$50.5 million for Seniors wasn't actually a supplemental; it was a transfer from the Infrastructure budget, Madam Chair. I would ask if the minister could provide the line item which contains where they budgeted for these ASLI grants. What infrastructure project or projects were cancelled for this to happen, or were the efficiencies found somewhere else?

Another question. It seems that this funding was cut, and then it was reinstated, as we discovered last year in the estimates. Why did this happen, and what were the factors that led to this decision?

In May 2015 this government stopped services, spending, and commitments and placed many different sectors of our economy at risk. They started with the oil sector with their royalty review, eroding investor confidence and causing regulatory uncertainty. After nine months of uncertainty and pressure the NDP, thankfully, adopted restraint on royalties. Unfortunately, Madam Chair, it was too late to undo the severe damage to Alberta's economy.

Here we are in the same boat with the seniors' ASLI grants. For those folks out there, this is the affordable supportive living initiative, that was an Alberta government capital grant program that provides funding to develop long-term care and affordable supportive living spaces in the province. I had some more questions to this as well, Madam Chair, which I was hoping the minister could answer. I was hoping that they could give us more details about

these ASLI beds in particular. What is the intended use of these beds being created? We heard last night from the hon. minister that the funding commitments were reaffirmed, and only six of the 31 were deemed not to be suitable for the conditions. If the minister could ever explain to me why the funding for the six projects was not reinstated, the details would be important for us to move forward on. Going forward, under the grant process the government can contribute up to 50 per cent of the capital costs with the other monies coming from the organization.

In March 2015 the previous government committed \$180 million of funding to create some much-needed care beds for dementia patients. After the election this government cancelled these funds, cutting the ASLI grants to over 31 community organizations from the November budget. Madam Chair, this government has made it very clear that they were going to cancel the ASLI. Given that there was no new announcement of a plan going forward, I have even more questions about that. Exactly how many spaces will this create for patients with dementia?

The delay also put the AHS service contracts on hold. What is the minister doing to ensure that AHS processes their contracts promptly? Are there other interim mechanisms for seniors' facilities that require the capital to apply for? When can seniors' service providers expect to see a plan for stable funding for our seniors?

Madam Chair, seniors are going to be the hugest issue that this government will ever face in the years to come. They are going to be a quarter of our population by 2030 – it is an issue that we have to address – and with those seniors come all the health issues. It's a dire situation that we will be in. The longer the NDP delays money for these projects, the more expensive we can expect them to become and, more importantly, the longer Alberta's most vulnerable seniors go without appropriate accommodation. Reviewing oil royalties and negatively affecting jobs during an economic recession lacks understanding, but delaying dementia care spaces means delays and uncertainties for our vulnerable population, for the people who built this province. God help us all, but let them know that the Wildrose is here to stand up for them and their rights. The previous government recognizes this, and as of today it is clear now that so does this NDP government.

Going forward, this government must recognize the harm of stalling projects, especially when we are dealing with the quality of life for our seniors. Supporting our front-line workers, teachers, seniors, and those in need of supportive living as well as those affected by natural disasters and those who wish to train for work is a priority for the Wildrose despite the fearmongering by this NDP government.

The government's consistent use of supplementary and interim supply budgets highlights their reactive, ideological nature, which contains little consideration of individual dignity and no common sense. Yesterday, Madam Chair, this House learned that the government will actually be cutting front-line staff from the Sundre nursing facility. This is not the path that Alberta should be following. Alberta's gross domestic product is shrinking, and as a province we simply have to do things better.

When Alberta families are struggling, they will be looking to the government for leadership. This government needs to get past its ideologies and make some good, logical decisions. They expect the government to tighten its belt by looking for cost efficiencies in this downturn, and they also expect excellent planning by the government so that we can make the most of the limited public resources that we do have available to us. Households in Alberta cannot run a \$10 billion deficit, and the Wildrose is committed to

supporting our front-line services while finding ways to deliver those services with creativity and efficiency. These projects are critical for seniors in our province.

Consequently, I will be supporting this supplementary supply bill, but I hope the minister will take the opportunity to provide a little more clarity around some of the details and answer some of the questions that I have asked this afternoon.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

4:40

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

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 3. I was about to say "briefly," but I'm not sure how brief it will be, so I would hesitate to bring false hope to the House. I just want to expand on a couple of quick comments that I had made during the debate around interim supply as, you know, much about supplementary supply and the process that it takes to get there is similar. We've seen in the House a pretty consistent message from the Official Opposition about the disappointments around being here, and it's a disappointment that many people on this side of the House shared and do share.

I just briefly would like to refer to *Hansard* from March 18, 2015, just prior to the election last year, just prior to the introduction of the demise of the former government with the budget that was the Prentice plan. The debate in the House on that particular day, March 18, 2015, was just as it is today, around supplementary and interim supply, and the then Member for Edmonton-Centre said:

This is a mockery of this entire Assembly. It's a mockery of every financial officer that works for the public service. It's a mockery of every Albertan out there that expects there to be accountability and integrity in the way this government goes about producing a budget.

The current Government House Leader interjected and said: "Oh, I don't think there are many left." And the Member for Edmonton-Centre continued: "Well, my colleague from Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood believes there aren't many left, and nobody is meeting my eyes." They were referring to government members and the way that they had introduced interim supply and supplementary supply and the process that they were using to get there.

Earlier today we saw the Finance minister speak directly – correction, Madam Chair. It may not have been today. But we have seen earlier in debate the Finance Minister speak specifically to the amount of detail that this government provided to the Assembly when it comes to making decisions around interim and supplementary supply. They were saying that it's exactly the same detail that the former government supplied, as if that was some sort of standard that we should all achieve or reach towards.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** It's the gold standard.

**Mr. Cooper:** In fact, it is the gold standard. It was according to themselves.

The Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood on that day, March 18, 2015, spoke directly to the amount of information provided when he said: "The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre is absolutely correct. This is a very, very minuscule amount of information that is provided to the House, to the Assembly, in order to make the decision that is required." This speaks directly to the narrative that I spoke about earlier of the government saying one thing in opposition and another thing once they were in fact chosen by the people of Alberta as the government.

I think it's concerning. The people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills are concerned about it. Often members of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills would speak to me about the former leader of the NDP and member of the caucus, about what a great legislator he was. There are many things that he did and that he does that we can all aspire to, but today he and the government have provided the opposition the same very minuscule amount of information, and to say that I'm a bit disappointed is probably an understatement. It's really too bad that we have to make this sort of decision.

Now, I want to speak just very briefly to the actual Bill 3, supplementary supply, and reiterate the fact that Wildrose believes in ensuring that the people who built this province have spaces to live in in the form of seniors' care. We believe in world-class education. We would have preferred to see additional efficiencies found to offset the current hundred million that we are currently debating, but ensuring that the ASLI grants are funded is an important initiative. So for that reason, among a number of other reasons, when it comes specifically to the supplementary supply bill, I am able or willing to support this piece of legislation.

I certainly don't support the process of how we got here. I certainly don't support the fact that the government used to complain about minuscule amounts of information provided to the House and to the opposition and now they do the very same thing that they used to hate.

It's with those comments in mind that I will rest my case today and look forward to when all of the answers come in April. And while I'm disappointed that we don't have more information today, I look forward to a very full and robust debate in April.

**The Chair:** Are there any further speakers to this bill? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This is to do with the Ministry of Justice. For myself, being an accountant for a number of years, I haven't been familiar with how government does the budgeting process. So I started to look into exactly what all these supplementary and interim budgets mean to the province of Alberta. I started thinking: well, how is this different from what I did as a living? What we've got in my normal day's work would be that we would get a company that would come in – and I have to use companies. I did do municipal audits in my past, but companies are the ones that I best reflect to. Now, what we've got is: a company will do a budget, and in that budget they will have more or less funding, but overall they try to keep their budget spending within the amount that they have for a total budget. When we look at the government, what we've got is a budget up until March 31.

**4:50**

Now, you would expect that you would try to stay within the budget. But what happens is that if something comes up throughout the year that is unanticipated, you would bring in a supplementary supply estimate. It is to address things that were unforeseen, and it goes to March 31 as well. So that's the supplementary part of it. Now, what happens is that when we see supplementaries like this one go through, the question is: could we have anticipated these expenses during the year when we did the last budget? For a lot of them I would say that the answer is yes. They could have been foreseen and added to the budget.

This is where we go into the second part of all of this, the interim supply budget, and that is from April 1, so the day after the March 31 year-end, going to May 31. That is when the government says: we need time to work on our budget or to complete our budget so that we are prepared for the next year. I guess the question always

needs to be: when is the appropriate time for our Treasury Board to be working on their budget? Is it appropriate that they're working on our budget after the year-end date? I would argue that that's inappropriate. So when we're looking at the interim supply, I fully would say that that is something that needs to be addressed and needs to be stopped because in the end these budgets should be done well ahead of time. I hear the government saying: well, we need extra time to be able to prepare these budgets; we wouldn't have foreseen oil being the lowest ever. To the argument that the government makes on that: why not release next year's budget on March 31, 2017, after the whole year has been done?

In the end what we're looking back to is the supplementary one, though. I'll vote against the interim because I don't believe there's a real value, but for supplementary – things do happen in the year. That I can understand. You have a drought. You have something that comes up. It's something substantive that you can actually say: this happened; we couldn't have predicted it, and this is why we need to do it. It should be something that is out of the norm, not something that has become the norm.

Unfortunately, I am going to get a little bit more technical on the Justice side. I am going to go to the past government's budget. On March 26, 2015, the then Minister of Justice predicted that he would have \$250 million of needed spending for my department, which is corrections, that we're adjusting today.

**Mr. Rodney:** Expenditures.

**Mr. Cyr:** Expenditures. Thank you.

The government came out with – oh, sorry. I'll go back. This is an important point. The past government predicted three years of flat spending in that budget, so \$251 million in that budget. Now, the current government created a budget on October 15, 2015. Their budget was \$267 million, \$269 million, and \$269 million. So what we're looking at is a \$17 million difference for 2015-16, \$19 million for '16-17, and \$19 million for 2017-2018, and you're asking: why is this important, Scott? How could this be important? We're talking such big numbers here; \$17 million is not a lot. So let's go to this government's third quarter.

We were in the third quarter – this is nine months. The estimate was \$165 million, and the actual was – sorry. Let's go to Justice's spending; let's go to full on Justice, not just my corrections. Justice is \$1.065 billion, but the actual spent was \$1.46 billion. That means that Justice in the third quarter was \$19 million under budget – under budget – in the third quarter. Now, if we're looking at the past government's wonderful estimates that they brought forward, it shows that the government was actually spending according to what was previously budgeted for.

Now, how can we be over? Third quarter: we're at \$19 million underspent. Fourth quarter: we're expecting to be \$8 million overspent. That's \$27 million difference, not just \$8 million, that the government is asking for. This is important because in the fourth quarter we're seeing that the estimate was \$218 million, that the government had estimated, but it actually spent \$245 million. Madam Chair, \$245 million is an amazing amount of money. Now, the question is: what brought on that fourth-quarter extra spending? Is there something that happened in this last quarter that we're expecting, from January to March, to today, that brought on an extra \$27 million?

Now, we heard from the Justice minister that we brought in new float pools and scheduling software. I went back to the business plan that the minister had provided in the last set of estimates. Nowhere did the business plan say that corrections was going to be bringing in a new float pool or scheduling software or even address

that in the estimates or in the budget. What we do have in the business plan is to

formalize . . . information sharing practices between Correctional Services and other enforcement agencies so that intelligence gathered within correctional facilities is shared appropriately to prevent and detect criminal offences.

That is the only thing that is being mentioned when we talk about corrections services. So how exactly did we suddenly put forward an emergency, \$27 million worth of emergency, that says that we need to spend this money unbudgeted?

I asked the minister: were we unsafe? I understand that safety for our corrections officers needs to be a priority. These men and women work hard for Alberta, and they also protect the inmates that they have in their facilities. I asked that question, and the answer was that she didn't feel that it was an unsafe environment. So this isn't an emergency, then.

Now, I understand that things change, but in the end it appears that we've got a government that did March madness in Justice, spent more money just to spend out the wonderful rest of their budget. When we look at this, it actually is that after the third quarter we have an overspending of over 12 per cent. Twelve per cent. That's a lot of money that is being brought out now. I understand. This is dictated in here, saying: salaries and wages. Salaries and wages make up this. So if this overage was going to be there from salaries and wages, it would have been consistent throughout the four quarters, not just the final quarter, where it balloons. That's where we need to be addressing the fact that this doesn't appear to be emergency funding that the government needs.

5:00

Now, I will be supporting this bill. I will be making sure that our corrections officers have the funding they need, but it distresses me to no end that we have a float pool and scheduling software that looks like it was actually moved forward on our corrections staff without consultation. This is something that we have heard consistently, over and over, with this government. They consistently push things through without consulting the people that they're involving in the decision.

Now, I myself haven't ever been involved with a float pool. Last night I thought: "You know what? It's not a bad idea for us to look at what exactly a float pool does and the advantages and disadvantages." The fact is that float pools are positions where the government puts temporary or casual or part-time workers in place. The fact is that if there had been good consultation – and I'm not saying that there was none, because I am not in the ministry, but it does seem to be rushed through – these guards that are there would be bringing forward some of the concerns, saying: "These float pools haven't worked in some areas. Will they be working for us? How will the government work this through? How will the shift-scheduling software work? Are you spending a lot of money unnecessarily for Alberta if safety is not a concern?" The fact is that when we've seen this brought into other jurisdictions, it has created some confusion.

Now, I don't want to get stuck on float pools because in the end, if this is a concern, I'm sure the guards will bring that up, but I will reiterate that it doesn't appear that the Justice spending in the supplemental is an emergency. It doesn't appear that our government should be putting forward this \$8 million. However, I

still believe that this supplementary does have some things that we need, so I will be supporting this.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to this bill?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question on Bill 3, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016?

[The clauses of Bill 3 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? That's carried.

## Bill 2 Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2016 (continued)

**The Chair:** Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

[The clauses of Bill 2 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Chair:** Opposed? That's carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Yes. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'll move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

**Mr. Sucha:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 2 and Bill 3.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report?

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I think we've made some great progress getting the province's finances in order. I want to thank the opposition for their contribution and the government members for their support. I will move that we call it 6 o'clock and adjourn until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:07 p.m.]



## Table of Contents

Introduction of Guests .....	225
Members' Statements	
Energy Policies .....	226
Bow Cliff Seniors .....	226
Rural Issues .....	226
Delaney Veterinary Services .....	226
Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton .....	227
Waste-water Treatment in Taber .....	227
Oral Question Period	
Job Creation .....	227
Oil Tanker Transportation on the West Coast .....	228
Emergency Medical Dispatch Services in Calgary .....	228
Government Policies .....	229, 232
Flood Recovery and Mitigation .....	229
Coal-fired Electric Power Plant Retirement .....	230, 232
Red Deer Regional Hospital .....	231
Farm and Ranch Worker Regulation Consultation .....	231
AIMCo Investments .....	233
School Construction Schedule .....	233
School Fees .....	234
Pipeline Construction .....	234
Tabling Returns and Reports .....	235
Orders of the Day .....	235
Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech .....	235
Government Bills and Orders	
Committee of the Whole	
Bill 2    Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2016 .....	239, 249
Bill 3    Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016 .....	244

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