



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday morning, April 5, 2016

Day 9

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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Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel and Legal Research Officer	Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms	Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

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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
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Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
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Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
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Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha
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Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
Coolahan	Piquette
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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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Luff	

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Kazim	

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Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
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Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

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Aheer	Kleinsteuber
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Clark	Malkinson
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Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

10 a.m.

Tuesday, April 5, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: If you would bow your heads, hon. members.

Time is precious. Let us use our time as public servants to dedicate ourselves to achieving our common goals and working towards the betterment of our great province, which is in our care. Let us remember that strength and success are accomplished by working together. Listening, understanding, and respecting one another's views can open up new possibilities and new opportunities.

Please be seated.

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 17: Mr. Nixon]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: I'm done.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.
The Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I don't think I've changed districts, but that's fine.

The Speaker: Well, you're shorter than I'd thought.

Mr. Carlier: Yeah. Thank you for this opportunity as well to, you know, give a response to the Speech from the Throne as it will relate to my maiden speech. On May 5, 2015, like many Albertans, I watched the results of the provincial election on television. Surrounded by family and friends in the home I share with my beautiful wife, Michèle, I came to realize that I would be successful and would become the third Member of the Legislative Assembly for Whitecourt-St. Anne since its creation in 1993.

I couldn't be more honoured to serve the wonderful people of this district. This amazing constituency is rich in diversity in not only its people and communities but also its natural wonders. The hard-working people of Whitecourt-St. Anne are farmers, ranchers, foresters, machinists, plumbers, electricians, welders, truckers. They serve meals, clean hotel rooms, work in stores, provide financial and legal advice, teach and guide our young. We can't forget the many men and women who serve the public good as nurses, peace officers, and firefighters. Some work in or near their town while others commute to Whitecourt or Edmonton, but all contribute to the prosperity of Alberta.

Much has been said about the need to diversify our economy, especially in light of the current downturn in the price of oil and gas. Whitecourt-St. Anne, with its abundant resources, is well positioned to take advantage of that diversification. Oil and gas, for sure, will become more diversified, but so will the other two major industries in Alberta, agriculture and forestry. As the largest of our renewable sectors both have a lot to contribute by way of value-added products. Research in forestry and agriculture will allow us to continue being world leaders in new wood and agriculture products.

Our climate change leadership plan will allow for increased innovation in the use of biofuels and green electricity generation. There are already some exciting things happening in the district to demonstrate to the world that we take climate change seriously and will do something about it. Whitecourt-St. Anne will have a large role to play in the new green economy. As we continue to invest in the future of this great province, we will strive to diversify our economy so as to ensure that those in Whitecourt-St. Anne who find the current economic times tough will be able to look forward to a brighter future.

That future is in large part possible because of the good people of Whitecourt-St. Anne who spend some of their free time helping others. The single greatest asset to the social well-being of our communities is its volunteers. You might be a member of a service club or a leader with a youth group such as Scouts Canada or coach a hockey team. You might help out with the community lunch box program in Whitecourt or perhaps the Legion in Evansburg or other towns. Perhaps you spend some of your free time at the agricultural societies or the 4-H club and not only contribute to the prosperity of our rural district but also play a huge part in maintaining that rural lifestyle we all love and cherish. Whatever you volunteer for, I am grateful for your contribution. Your efforts are what make Whitecourt-St. Anne the great place to live and raise a family that it is.

From the vistas of the Pembina River to the amazing trails of Carson-Pegasus provincial park the constituency of Whitecourt-St. Anne is one of the most beautiful areas of the province. Many of us enjoy spending time near the many small lakes that dot the landscape. We are blessed with wonderful farmland and an abundance of forested areas. Tourists come to Whitecourt-St. Anne to hunt and fish, ski, snowmobile, camp, and hike. The district is large, with over 70 villages, hamlets, towns, and summer villages. It spans from Onoway, Alberta Beach, and Alexis First Nation in the east to Whitecourt, Blue Ridge, and Mayerthorpe in the northwest to Peers and Wildwood in the southwest.

Michèle and I moved to Lac Ste. Anne over six years ago. It was one of the best decisions we ever made. We got married on our property and celebrated in the Darwell hall. We have met so many wonderful people, especially over the past year or so. It seems everyone has a passion for their hometown or their family farm.

Like many Albertans, I grew up on the family farm, a farm that my brother now runs as a fourth-generation farmer. He's 10 years older than I am, so I knew early on that he was most likely to continue the family tradition. I, instead, found work as a geotechnical technician with Agriculture Canada. That job saw me working on many different irrigation projects across the country, mostly in Alberta. Little did I know that those 20 years as a public servant with Agriculture Canada would serve me so well in my future job as a public servant for the province of Alberta. As the Member of the Legislative Assembly for Whitecourt-St. Anne I am a public servant. As a public servant I feel that my role is to represent the citizens of the district the best I can. It does not matter whether you supported me in the election or not. I am here to represent all.

After so many years with only one party ruling, we all had to learn to transition. That transition has had its bumps, but I'm proud of what we've been able to accomplish in 10 short months. We have shown that we put people first. Whether it is maintaining funding for education or health care or implementing a stimulus plan that will put many Albertans back to work, we continue to show that people are our greatest resource and our first priority.

A few days after we all realized that after 43 years there would finally be a change in the government of Alberta, the Premier asked me to meet with her. I was not sure what I could have possibly done wrong in so short a time. We had not even been sworn in yet. To my great relief I was not in trouble. Instead, the Premier asked me if I would like to be the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry. I was absolutely overjoyed and immediately said yes. I also told her that if I'd had the choice of ministry, it would have been agriculture as I know how important farming is in my district.

I have to admit that I did not know a lot about forestry at first, but I always knew that forestry is also an important industry in Whitecourt-Ste. Anne. People in the industry have been fantastic in bringing me up to speed with respect to the challenges and opportunities in forestry. In fact, only three days after the election I was asked by Alberta Newsprint Company and Millar Western to tour their facilities in Whitecourt. I eagerly accepted their invitation and proceeded to visit as many mills across the province as I possibly could.

The people of Whitecourt-Ste. Anne, like the rest of Alberta, face some challenges, but I believe the opportunities outweigh those challenges. I have vowed that I will work with all Albertans to do what I can to face those challenges and to explore those opportunities. The good people of Whitecourt-Ste. Anne should expect no less.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Questions and comments to the member? The Member for Edmonton-McClung.

10:10

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was really quite happy to hear from the minister about his Whitecourt-Ste. Anne riding. I spent many, many summers in the Alberta Beach-Lac Ste. Anne area, and I know the riding reasonably well. It has a number of interesting issues that are ongoing there, and one of them happens to be the water supply to some of the smaller towns within the riding. I'm wondering if he might comment on what might be happening with respect to consideration about the water supply, particularly for Alberta Beach and some of the other surrounding communities which might get together to share costs in providing a better water supply.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the follow-up statements. There are, you know, some water supply issues with many of the small communities right across Alberta. It is, as a matter of fact, probably a phenomenon that's felt right across Canada. A lot of the small communities in the district of Whitecourt-Ste. Anne, including Alexis First Nation, are in the process of developing projects and plans that include pipelines and include other forms of improving their water quality.

While we're on the subject of small villages, the summer villages in Whitecourt-Ste. Anne are abundant. I do believe that there are more summer villages in Whitecourt-Ste. Anne than any other district in the province. As a matter of fact, there are 14 summer villages just in my own county of Lac Ste. Anne. These are a vibrant part of a very unique municipal designation in Alberta. They have

been around since about 1910 or so. The hon. member had mentioned Alberta Beach, which until recently had been a summer village but actually now is considered a village, but it's surrounded by many summer villages just the same.

If you haven't had the opportunity to visit any of the summer villages, I would encourage anyone in this House to do so. They are vibrant and wonderful little communities. Here's a bit of a plug. There's recently a new mobile phone application for farmers' markets. If you want to find out where your farmers' markets might be, there are currently about 168 or so Agriculture and Forestry designated farmers' markets across the province, many of those in those summer villages. I encourage you, if you haven't done so already, to find that application, load it onto your mobile phone, and have a great opportunity to visit summer villages and communities right across this province, looking at the many wonderful farmers' markets and what rural Alberta has to offer.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. I frequently hear plugs for each community as I sit in the House here. Good for you.

The Member for Drumheller-Stettler, 29(2)(a).

Mr. Strankman: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, would like to rise and congratulate the Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne on his maiden speech because I've come to the realization that it's not even been a year since he's been elected to the role, and I believe he's exhibited himself reasonably professionally. I have had the honour to work with and confer with him in private and in public, and it's been an honour.

I just would like to question the member on his acumen as an agriculturalist and his acumen in irrigation, an irrigation-involved specialist, possibly, if I could use that word, and what he feels the way forward for the province could be in these trying times of economics and job creation.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the hon. member was speaking, I was trying to think: how can I weave that question about irrigation into the district of Whitecourt-Ste. Anne? That's going to be a challenge. There are no large-size irrigation projects in Whitecourt-Ste. Anne, but as a matter of fact, Alberta has close to 50 per cent of the irrigated land in Canada. We have about 1.4 million acres under irrigation in Alberta. It's been a success story not just for Alberta but for Canada. We have a wide range of diversification of crops in our irrigated areas, everything from forage crops to speciality crops of potatoes, and currently about 20,000 acres of hemp also in the province.

Some good news as of late: the sugar beet crop this year will expand by about 6,000 acres. That's great news. That's an industry that has over the past few decades found, you know, some challenges, so to be able to this year expand their acreages is very good news. I'm hoping in some large part, if all the stars align, to be able to take advantage of the implementation of the trans-Pacific partnership.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Now the Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. Like you watching out for everyone here in the House today and every day, my parents watch me from above and bless me every day.

Today I have the honour to rise and respond to the throne speech on behalf of the entire Wildrose Calgary caucus. After three

attempts at running for this office, I finally can rise and give my maiden speech. I would like to first thank my constituents who voted me, as the 904th MLA, to this 29th Legislature. I thank you for your confidence in me to represent your interests in the best possible way I can. I would like to thank the members of the Wildrose who nominated me as their candidate. I'd also like to thank all my volunteers, donors, and friends for their continued help and encouragement, without which I wouldn't have run three times.

I would like to thank the previous MLAs of my riding for their service to the people. One of the MLAs I have to extend special thanks to is MLA 830. If it were not for his abrupt service to the people through his departure, I would not have arrived here as soon.

Last but not least, thank you to my wife, Santhi, and our son, Himanish, for their unwavering support to me. I love them both so very much, till my last breath.

Since being elected, I have had the opportunity to attend many different community events such as a multicultural event called One World, several Chinese New Year festivals, and a couple of family skating parties organized by the community associations in my riding. I also attended Holi, the festival of colours, and a Muslim-Christian interfaith family gathering. I look forward to celebrating the greatest outdoor show on Earth, the Calgary Stampede, for the first time as an MLA.

I'm also proud to now represent the schools that my son went to as a child. Those schools gave him a world-class education, and I am beyond thankful for the time and effort teachers put into helping our future generations. My son was the reason we moved to Canada. My wife and I wanted him to have the best education possible in Calgary, the best city in the world. Ironically, he cheers for the Oilers. Well, I'm trying to make up by wearing the Calgary tartan today. Actually, tomorrow is the celebration, but I'm wearing it today to make up for my son cheering for the Oilers.

Calgary-Foothills is a very diverse riding. It's filled with old and new Canadians such as myself. It's filled with people of many different faiths, backgrounds, and many different cultures. I want to know more about everyone in my riding through meeting every single one of my constituents. My goal is to knock on every door in the riding several times before the next election, and in the process maybe I can lose some of the weight I gained as an MLA. I cannot do my job as a representative of the people unless I meet and listen to them on a regular basis.

I have some big shoes to fill when comparing myself to past MLAs of Calgary-Foothills. Constituents from my riding have had the benefit of being represented in the past by former Premiers Ernest Manning, William Aberhart, and Jim Prentice. Although I cannot promise I'll live up to their fame, or infamy, depending on your opinions, I can promise I will represent the people of Calgary-Foothills in the best possible way.

10:20

Of course, I'm not the first MLA here to rise and give their maiden speech in the House, but reading my predecessors' speeches has taught me valuable information about the area I represent. In 1975, before this area was the city of Calgary, MLA Kidd talked about the vast lands filled with trees, creeks, and agricultural land. The riding used to stretch all the way to the B.C. border, but since Calgary has grown by leaps and bounds in the last 40 years, the riding has shrunk to a small portion of the size it used to be.

Today I have the opportunity to interact with my constituents on a much more regular basis. Living in such close proximity to those I represent allows me to understand their needs and issues better since I am their neighbour, issues that plague my riding and my neighbours such as the half-built interchange, that poses a safety risk to children travelling to school every day. Most importantly,

people in my riding are very concerned about the economy and jobs. They know that when we have a thriving economy, we can afford the best health care, education, and seniors' care. These issues and any other issues that my neighbours have will be addressed by myself in the most effective way possible. Whether this means sending letter after letter to the ministers in order to address issues or volunteering at local associations to help people on the ground, I will help my neighbours any way I can. I will work with all levels of government to find solutions.

Helping my neighbours was something I learned from my father. He was always very helpful to the neighbours. He went out of his way. His elder brother used to manage their joint family finances and the family business, which went through some difficult economic times to the point of almost poverty. Then my father took control of the family responsibilities, and he worked hard to repay every single debt and followed through by stabilizing the family finances of four of his siblings. They had a giant family.

My father did not have higher education since there was no high school in his area. He thought education was very important to enable the next generations to find well-paid jobs. He collaborated with the neighbouring villages to raise funds and built a high school in the middle of all the villages. Due to my father's generosity and hard work, today we have 11 doctors and 12 engineers who are his direct descendants, his bloodline.

His generosity extended beyond the family. He would pay for priests to travel to bless the land for the whole community along with supplying all the materials for the celebrations. He even built a temple in his community as a way to give back to the community. He was a farmer, a small-business man, and a fiscal conservative. From his own experience he learned that debt is expensive, and he realized that interest paid to the lenders could be used to pay for education and health care. He said that one's hand should always be like this, not like this. That's how he lived his entire life. Now you all should understand why I ran for a party which wants to balance the budget.

I was born late in my parents' lives. Perhaps I was an afterthought. But that meant my mom brought me up like a rare species, a cute panda. I think the term is "helicopter parent" today. I'm sure I caused her more trouble than I was worth. Even so, she loved me regardless. I learned persuasiveness and gentle bargaining from my mother, which helped me to succeed in my professional career in oil and gas.

My parents taught me and my older siblings to share with others and to care for those who are in need and to love everyone, even your enemies. Coming from the political system in India, the opposition was seen as the enemy. For the record I do not think the NDP are the enemy; my political rivals, yes, but not my enemy. I'm very glad that I do not have to fear for my safety after I point out negatives about the government such as bills that are a job description or a job creation program that creates no jobs.

Running for office here in Canada was not the first time I was involved in electoral politics. I was tired of the one-party system in India, so I campaigned for the opposition in a federal seat held by my relative. We both lived on the same street, and he was the longest serving federal minister in India. I was only 14 then, and my parents were not too happy that I campaigned against their own cousin. I heard the agriculture minister when he mentioned about one party ruling for so long, and that's the reason I am in politics here. I didn't like the one-party system either.

I was elected to students' union leadership positions that were fiercely contested. Active involvement in student politics was not only fun but also shaped me into a fearless fighter. I ran my own brother's unsuccessful campaign for public office. In India to win a seat is not easy or open as it is here in Alberta. You need a lot of

muscle and money to win an election there. Since then my resolve to ensure that people get representation from more than one side has stayed with me. That's why I chose to run for the Official Opposition. I knew that for democracy to work, we need more than one opinion. We need an effective opposition to keep the government in check. So despite the last two by-elections, I hope the members opposite remember that your jobs will be important in 2019.

Alberta has always had a cyclical economy. We have our ups and downs, but we have always come out stronger in the end. During these tough times Albertans are looking for hope and strong leadership. We are down, but we are not out. We are in these tough times together, but we should not be attempting risky, ideological economic policies that add to the problem. I don't blame the NDP for the price of oil, but I do blame them for the decrease in business confidence due to increased taxes, royalty reviews, carbon tax, and the unpredictability of what policies they'll implement next. Luckily there are Albertans who support our economy, who support our oil sands and promote Alberta instead of calling us embarrassing cousins.

This government should be looking toward patriotic groups like Canada Action and Oil Respect for how to properly represent Alberta. Instead, this government proposes bills that do not help Albertans to get back to work. In fact, the government's very first bill refers to those who already have work instead of those who do not work now. It's a shame. I'm part of APEGA, and its membership is about 80,000, Mr. Speaker, many of whom are looking for work now.

My constituents are telling me that their biggest concern is that their family and friends need to get back to work. I have no idea who the NDP are talking to that made them decide their first bill should not be directed at those needing work, but I'm here to tell this House that my constituents are very unhappy with how this government is operating. I hope that this government will listen to the opposition and help get Albertans back to work.

My party created the Equalization Fairness Panel and proposed a 12-point jobs action plan. Wildrose continues to be the only party that is a strong advocate for Alberta's energy sector and pipeline projects to get the product to tidewater.

Before I conclude, I would like to quote a few verses from Gita, the scripture Mahatma Gandhi used to refer to to derive fresh joy and new meanings from it every day. When you refer to chapter 3, Karma Yoga, and relate it to our contemporary politics, Mr. Speaker, it says that the parents, the schoolteachers, the professionals, and the political leaders are all in general considered to be the natural leaders of the innocent people. All such natural leaders have a great responsibility to their dependants. Each one of us here in this House, Mr. Speaker, each and every MLA of every party, of every political stripe, is expected to perform our duties as servants of society.

10:30

The Speaker: Hon. member, your time as allocated is up.

Allow me to just say to all of the House that it's a privilege to listen and learn. We saw evidence this morning again of hearing and learning a lot about individuals. It's really quite a privilege.

Under 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Nixon: I was just wondering if the hon. member would like to expand a little bit on what he was trying to say at the end there. I was quite interested in his closing comments.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Panda: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Opposition Whip. I was saying that each one of us, every MLA here in this House, being natural leaders – I was quoting the Gita, and in the scripture it describes teachers and political leaders, all of us, as natural leaders. So we have the natural responsibility to our dependants. I mean, they all expect us to perform our duties as servants of society, as learned and mature professionals. Selflessly, with purity and perfection, we are expected to serve the public. As the MLA for Calgary-Foothills I promise to do my part to help Albertans and to represent my constituency to the best of my ability.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler under 29(2)(a).

Mr. Strankman: Yes, sir. I'd also like to comment to the Member for Calgary-Foothills. I've found it very intriguing in the brief time that I've come to know the member about his agricultural background, and I find it honourable that the member would come from a farming background in a foreign country with a foreign language and achieve the political prowess that he has in this country. I was wondering if the member could just expound upon that perspective a little bit, coming from another country to this country and from that to this Chamber.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Member, for the question. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a dream for many immigrants like me to come to a country like Canada to fulfill our dreams. You know, it's the people here inviting everybody and the opportunities that are provided here. I'm not a career politician. I'm an engineer by training. I'm a professional engineer. But the opportunities we have here in Alberta – the reason I chose Alberta was that we had lower taxes and great job opportunities and world-class education and, I mean, top-class health facilities and all that. That's why we moved here.

There were some challenges initially, you know. It's adjusting to the climate and adjusting to the new country. It was a little bit tough for my family and me, but it's the people, the Albertans and Canadians, that made it so easy for us. They're so welcoming, and they helped us succeed in this country. Based on my upbringing in a conservative family, that's the way to give back to society, and that's why I chose to run for politics.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Member for Calgary-Foothills: it's been an incredible journey for you. This was your third time running, and you were successful. Not only that, but you used to work up in my neck of the woods, up in Fort McMurray. You worked for one of our biggest employers up there, Suncor. Not only were you an engineer, but I believe you were also on the management side. From what I know of the oil sands, that's quite the pay drop to take on this position in public office. You chose to run for the opposition, when you could have perhaps applied to run for the governing side. You chose to give a balanced representation to the people of Alberta, to ensure a strong opposition. What was the driving factor behind all of these decisions that you made?

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Panda: Thank you. Thanks for the question. I chose to run for the best party because the best people, like you, are also involved

in the best party. You know, you're doing a great job as MLA for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. I mean, that's the place we should be celebrating, actually. That's the best resource we have in the world, and very few countries are blessed to have that kind of resource. We should be leveraging that and taking full benefit of that. I mean, the reason I left my career in oil and gas is that, like I said before, that's what my parents taught me, to give back to society. My family condition is that my son is grown up, and I've fulfilled that responsibility as a family man, so today I'm available to serve the public.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today in the House to respond to the Speech from the Throne and to deliver my maiden speech. I was elected on May 5 to represent the constituency of Calgary-Buffalo, right in the heart of downtown Calgary. Calgary-Buffalo is a beautiful riding. It's filled with life, culture, and community. It's bound by the Bow and Elbow rivers and is probably the smallest geographical riding in the province. What makes the riding so unique is its diversity. Calgary-Buffalo contains some of the oldest and newest buildings in the province. It includes affordable housing only blocks from some of the most expensive square footage in the province. It contains thousands of small businesses that speak to the ingenuity and spirit of the province, including all manner of restaurants, retail stores, and health care practitioners. The riding is also home to many corporate headquarters that help to drive the economy.

Calgary-Buffalo also has many innovative social service agencies and a thriving cultural scene. The riding is full of life. Residents can walk to shops, parks, restaurants, galleries, music and theatre venues. Also integral to the riding are many agencies dedicated to helping newcomers join the Canadian community, helping those who fall into homelessness, who struggle with mental health or addictions, who are fleeing domestic violence. Calgary-Buffalo is a riding with people from all walks of life, a riding where people are joined together by common values, common culture, common struggles, or common interests and can come together to celebrate those things and where all are welcome.

Mr. Speaker, the diversity and complexity of this province is truly represented by my riding. In Calgary-Buffalo people from all backgrounds come together. Residents interact with people from a variety of circumstances. It's these different cultural backgrounds, diverse experiences, and varied perspectives that make the riding and our province so strong. Fundamentally, it is in this coming together that we create the space for Albertans to see from a broader perspective than their own. It allows each person to understand and share the lived experiences and perspectives of another. This sense of community allows people to come together to help their neighbours through tough times or to work to create ingenious new businesses and technologies to grow our economy while protecting our environment for future generations. I'm deeply grateful for the opportunity to represent this diverse, progressive, and constantly evolving riding.

In preparing to speak today, I reviewed many of the speeches delivered by members of this House that preceded me in the riding of Calgary-Buffalo. I was struck by many similarities between the challenges and opportunities facing governments of the past and people of the past and the challenges and opportunities that face the government and people today. One of my predecessors spoke of the optimism of a new government replacing one that had been in power for decades, another of the trepidation that accompanied the

significant economic and fiscal challenges in the '80s brought on by the drop in the global price of oil.

It was very moving to think that those who have gone before have wrestled with similar challenges and felt a similar sense of obligation to those that sent them to this place, and it reminded me that at the end of the day most people want the same thing. They want to work hard and to make a contribution to their community. They want their families to be safe, prosperous, and happy. Times change in many ways, but those fundamental values remain, and they bind us together as members of the Alberta community.

10:40

When I chose to run for election, it was in part out a sense of duty to that community. Alberta has given me so much, and I felt that I should give back. I was lucky enough to be born and raised here in Alberta. In this province, Mr. Speaker, we are blessed with amazing opportunities. We are surrounded by hard-working, decent people who want to contribute to the strength we have in this province. We receive a world-class education in a public system available for all and never have to fear that our families will be bankrupted by an unexpected illness because of our public medical system. We are blessed with natural resources that provide wealth and opportunity to so many. We live in a safe and democratic country, and our rights are protected by the rule of law. I have lived here all my life, so I might be biased, but I believe it is the best place in the world to grow up.

These amazing gifts that we have in this province and in this country, in my view at least, come with obligations, and I feel that one of those obligations is to give back to the democracy that has given us those gifts. So when I was given the opportunity to participate, to go out and suggest a certain vision of the future of this fine province to the residents of Calgary-Buffalo, a vision that aligned with my values, I took it. I expected that it would be both challenging and rewarding, and it was, though ultimately it worked out rather better than I ever could have dreamed.

Mr. Speaker, I don't believe that words can truly express what a genuine privilege it is for me to stand here in this place. I was given the opportunity to stand with a group of my peers, people I didn't know at the time but whom I have grown to respect immensely, and to offer the people of my riding and of this province a vision of the future. It's a vision based on shared values like ensuring that every Albertan regardless of origin or circumstance has access to the same high-quality education and has the right to feel safe and respected in pursuing that education, values like the belief that no person should be left behind simply because they have had an unlucky turn of fate such as struggling with mental health problems, addictions, or any number of things that are not their fault but have left them in need of the compassion and assistance of their fellow Albertans; a vision of a province where decisions are based on evidence, not outdated rhetoric, where everyone has the right to equal treatment before the law and those who struggle deserve a second chance; a vision of a province where the decision-makers recognize that putting more money in the hands of middle-class Albertans benefits all of us and that criminalizing poverty serves no one and harms everyone; a vision of a province where leaders communicate honestly with the electorate about hard times and the hard decisions that face us so that we can work together to make decisions based on the evidence instead of selling fairy tales or hiding the truth.

That vision of Alberta was chosen by the people on May 5, 2015, and it was that choice that sent me here today. I now have the opportunity to stand amongst some of the smartest, hardest working, most caring, and dedicated people I have ever met. Every day I am amazed by the opportunity I have to work with this amazing group of people to try and make this province better for all

Albertans, to make sure that the wealth and opportunity of this great province benefit us all, not just a privileged few.

Many steps have been taken to implement this vision. I had the great privilege of introducing a bill to prohibit donations by corporations and unions less than a month and a half after I was elected, and on my birthday. We put campaign funding back into the hands of the electorate and reduced the impact that wealthy corporations can have on the outcome of elections. I worked with my colleagues to ensure that enrolment growth in education is funded, to increase protections for women fleeing from domestic violence, and to ensure that LGBTQ youth and their allies have a right to come together.

I also had the opportunity to follow through on a promise I made during the campaign to protect the rights of transgender and gender-variant Albertans. In consulting about this bill, I was deeply moved to hear the stories of many transgender people. Many of these stories contained struggles that most of us are lucky enough never to have had to overcome, but many also contained amazing acts of strength and kindness by friends and strangers alike. It was such an honour to meet so many brave Albertans who fought for so long not just for their rights but for the rights of transgender people to come after them in the hopes that those youth will never face the same barriers that they've had to overcome. Many of them said that this was the first time they've ever felt welcome to share their lived experience here in this building. Mr. Speaker, I've had an opportunity that few people will ever have, to stand as an ally alongside so many who have worked so hard simply to be accepted for who they are.

I'd also like to take this opportunity to thank the many people that assisted me along this journey: my family, who stood with me and supported me despite their differing political views; the friends that came out on a really tiny campaign run out of the back of a car to work so hard to bring me to this place; and, most of all, my husband, who stood by me through this incredible ride and has continued to support me as I grow and learn in my new position.

Mr. Speaker, I'm humbled by the optimism, ingenuity, hard work, and genuine care and concern for their neighbours demonstrated by the residents of Calgary-Buffalo, whom I serve. I've had the opportunity to meet with many of my constituents, and many of them are excited to see a more diverse economy. Oil and gas will remain a cornerstone of our economy. That industry has given us so much, and we can and must support it, but it's also time for us to ensure that other sectors have a chance to grow as well. There are so many great ideas in Calgary-Buffalo, including green businesses and entrepreneurs with new technology to offer. I'm excited to watch these businesses develop.

Mr. Speaker, as I speak today, the province is facing tough times, maybe the toughest that we've seen in a while. We can and will pull together and weather the circumstances we find ourselves in as a result of the drop in the price of oil. This province has a history of pulling together and working hard to make it through tough times, and we will again. I am inspired by the residents of my riding: their hard work, their dedication to a better future, and their fundamental desire to help their neighbours even through difficult economic times. I am strengthened by the incredible dedication and compassion of my colleagues, by their fundamental desire to leave this province a little bit better than they found it and to ensure that all people have the tools to share in the many opportunities in this province.

I'm so grateful to the citizens of Calgary-Buffalo, who voted for the vision of Alberta that we offered them, of an Alberta where everyone has an opportunity to participate and we pick our neighbours up when they fall on hard times. I am thankful to stand

here in this place and work every day to act on those values and to strive to make the lives of everyday Albertans just a little bit better.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler on 29(2)(a).

Mr. Strankman: Yes, sir. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to reflect to the Member for Calgary-Buffalo as well that it's also been not quite a year since her election, and I think it'll be interesting to hear her further responses to this. As an Albertan that grew up in a period of time when the Premier and the government of the day amassed a vast sum of money in what was known as the heritage trust fund, that created a savings account, I'd like to understand what the member's feelings are now, when we're in a difficult economic time, on what level of debt the member would accept as a personal level. If she could expound upon that and possibly on a level that might be an acceptable level for a government to accept: is there a feeling of a level of acceptance of debt that she personally espouses or that the constituency relates to her in that regard?

10:50

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. I did grow up in this province, and I'm familiar, I think, with the ups and downs of the oil market. My father was a geophysicist, and he worked in that area, so I have recollections of what it has been like in the past. I think that with respect to what the member said about the heritage trust fund, I mean, I certainly find myself somewhat frustrated that given that this cycle was a little bit predictable, governments of the past didn't do a better job of saving to ensure that in these lean times, when we know that revenues are going to drop significantly, as they have done, there were funds available for the government to draw on to ensure that it can protect all Albertans in these times when they have such greater need.

With respect to the member's comments on acceptable levels of debt, I think that the sort of critical first piece to recognize is that there are more debts than simply financial ones. One of the frustrating things that I have experienced coming into this position is that there's sort of a significant infrastructure lag in this province. So that's one debt. The result of that is that people don't have access to hospitals and schools that they need. That's deeply frustrating, that that sort of debt has been handed down to us.

Other forms of debt include what I would call a sort of educational debt. If we fail to invest in education now for our children, we will be investing very heavily in the future in my ministry, actually, in justice services for those people. I think that, you know, when we're looking at what we're willing to pass down to the next generation, we have to consider whether we're leaving them with clean water to drink, whether we're leaving them with a well-educated population who will be able to take the economy and take this democracy and rule of law forward where it needs to go, whether we're leaving them with the necessary infrastructure, the roads to support the economy, the hospitals, and the schools to support the people of this province as we move forward.

In terms of acceptable levels of debt it's my view that a government should always be fiscally prudent. We should always struggle to do our best job to make sure that we are not passing down money that needs to be repaid, but we also need to struggle to ensure that we're not passing down other things, that we're not passing down buildings that haven't been repaired in so long that they become useless, that we're not passing down a situation in which our people don't have access to schools and hospitals

because they haven't been built, and that we're not passing down a population who doesn't have the fundamental education to carry forward the things that we have built here, to carry on with the rule of law, and to carry on with the vibrant economy we have, that has the skills to transition – as we know, we need to broaden and diversify the economy, and I think that education and the ability to think critically and respond to circumstances are really critical in that way.

The Speaker: Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to say thank you to the hon. minister for her passionate speech on behalf of her constituents and her own journey to arrive where she is today. Of course, congratulations on her election and the position that she holds. I think myself and the minister have . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to rise today and speak to the 29th Legislative Assembly of Alberta. Since May, when I was first elected, it has been a profound privilege to stand here on behalf of the men and women of my constituency.

Cardston-Taber-Warner is an incredible place to live, and I'm honoured to live there. It's the most southwestern part of Alberta, right up against the U.S. border. Many of the towns and municipalities trace their heritage to the end of the 19th century. It is a place where a man or a woman could come with a dream. All they needed was \$10 and a willingness to work the land and make something of it. It's the same entrepreneurial spirit and can-do attitude that has made our province so great for so long.

It is also home to the largest First Nations reserve in Canada, the Blood reserve, which was established under Treaty 7. I am thankful for their rich culture and their contributions to our communities and for the opportunity to work with them and to learn from them.

Cardston is home to the Cardston Alberta temple, one of Canada's designated national historic sites. On the east end of my riding one can taste the world's best corn. The Taber area, which has a phenomenal irrigation system, boasts the highest heat units in Alberta, which makes it an ideal place to grow world-class produce. On the west side of the riding sits one of the forgotten gems of Alberta, Waterton Lakes national park. With its beautiful mountain trails and cascading waterfalls, Waterton is one of the most beautiful places on earth. My constituency is a remarkable place, and it's an honour to represent it.

I chose to run for election, Mr. Speaker, because I honestly believe that Alberta is the best place to live. I attended university down in the United States, but when that period of my life was over, there was little question in my mind about where I wanted to settle down, about where I wanted to start a business, and about where I wanted to raise my family.

Next month my first grandson will be celebrating his first birthday. When he grows up, I hope that he sees Alberta as the same land of promise and opportunity that so many of us have seen for so long. I would hope that he chooses to settle in our province not because it is where he is from and where his roots are from but because it is Alberta, a land strong and free.

In my career I built and ran numerous businesses, from start-ups to large enterprises to the residential and commercial construction company that my dad, Roy, and I operated over the past decade. Over the years I saw first-hand what policies gave Alberta that advantage, and I saw first-hand the impact of policies that took it away. Throughout the last decade a slow and growing cobweb of thick red tape and increased government size began building up.

Any sense of responsibility has fallen under the long shadow of a shameless descent into debt and deficits. If we are to pursue an irresponsible high-tax regime, one filled with debts and deficits, it may take more than a generation to undo this mess. There are jurisdictions here in Canada that can reveal what that looks like. Ontario now spends \$1 billion on interest payments to service their debts each and every month. That's one of the largest line items in their budget. They spend more on servicing their debt than they do on postsecondary education. It is my sincere hope that we halt our descent towards that path. If Albertans managed their finances like this government does, they would soon be bankrupt and homeless.

I am thankful to have a place here among my fellow conservatives in the Wildrose caucus. I'm a conservative because I believe in the worth and dignity of every person, that no matter who you are, where you came from, what you were, or where you were born, every individual has worth and value. That's the compassion at the heart of conservatism, that every individual should be free – free to pursue opportunities, free to pursue their own goals and to raise their own family, free of overbearing governments, and free to save or invest their own earnings as they best see fit – the freedom that no matter where anyone started, every individual can pursue their own livelihood and their own destiny.

But we cannot truly be Alberta, strong and free, if there is a segment of the population for whom all of these freedoms and opportunities are out of reach. When we talk about jobs and the economy, we're talking about how to prevent serious social problems like poverty and homelessness, the myriad personal and family problems that come from bankruptcy and depression, and other illnesses that can result from not having a job or from losing a business. One of the greatest fallacies of the last century has been that such problems can be solved through heavy-handed government spending. Look at the United States, for example, which has spent between \$15 trillion and \$20 trillion over 50 years on a war on poverty, yet the poverty rate has barely changed.

This fallacy of government spending is a recurring one, especially in the circles that many members of the current government seem to find themselves. I note that the Premier and others on the government benches are no strangers to the Broadbent Institute events. A few days ago I was surprised to see a media report that former federal NDP leader Ed Broadbent had claimed in a speech that much of the inequality we see today is a direct result of austerity budgets in the mid-1990s, when the federal government of the day sought to balance the budget and pay off the debt. It's a peculiar claim, Mr. Speaker. The time when average wages barely grew, family incomes fell, and poverty was in double digits was actually in the period preceding the 1990s.

11:00

The share of the national population below the low-income cut-off line has been generally declining over the past 20 years. In fact, when Statistics Canada brought out their income of Canadians report a few years ago, it showed that fewer Canadians were below the poverty line, the low-income cut-off, than ever before. The trend was generally mirrored in Alberta, where the low-income number was in double digits during the early 1990s but then steadily declined downward, dropping even below 6 per cent at one point.

In recent years many left-leaning groups had put out studies that income inequality was worse in Alberta than anywhere else in Canada. To this I can only quote former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who said, "So long as the gap is smaller, they would rather have the poor poorer. [You do] not create wealth and opportunity that way. [You do] not create a property-owning democracy that way."

The reality, as we know, Mr. Speaker, is that for years upon years Canadians from every province and territory came to Alberta because there were jobs and there was opportunity. When their own provinces suffered job losses and no opportunities, they chose Alberta. Why? Because we were doing something different here and something good. It's a status that we should be working to regain.

I know that many of the government's pursuits, especially as they pertain to Alberta's energy industry, are predicated upon the idea of social licence. It's a concept that has come up repeatedly through modern history in numerous iterations. I'm reminded of a certain quotation from the 19th century that underlies it.

Even a whole society, a nation, or even all simultaneously existing societies taken together, are not the owners of the globe. They are only its possessors . . . [and] they must hand it down to succeeding generations in an improved condition.

That, of course, was from Karl Marx in *The Communist Manifesto*, a text that for all its good intentions has led to immense suffering throughout the 20th century and even today. It's an extreme example, but frankly recent centuries in human history are filled with suffering as a result of brazen, blinded pursuits of ideological goals by governments. It's why we're so opposed to this government's social engineering experiment.

I'm a conservative because I believe in results-oriented solutions. No matter how well-intentioned, all government programs and initiatives need to be accountable to Albertans. We work for everyday Albertans, and we owe to them that their tax dollars are used wisely and that their elected officials are not passing initiatives that will actually harm them.

I looked forward to hearing the government's Speech from the Throne but was disappointed to find that the government was only offering more words, not practical solutions. The throne speech failed to address the NDP's failed job subsidy program, which has created zero jobs. This new legislation offers no concrete solutions and, as such, is an affront to the tens of thousands of Albertans who are out of work.

In this session the Wildrose focused on delivering positive, alternative solutions to get Albertans working again such as reducing small-business taxes, providing relief for families in need, and stability for our energy sector. One such solution was the Wildrose jobs plan, which I had an opportunity to work on, which gives specifics on how to stop the bleeding that's happening in our province's suffering labour market. It is my sincere hope that this government looks to implement these recommendations.

In a prominent place in my home, Mr. Speaker, hangs my favourite picture. In this picture one can see a man standing in the doorway of a lighthouse while a storm rages all around him. One is drawn to the picture, and at first he is awed by the size of the waves that are crashing around the lighthouse. However, as you look closer, you are drawn to the man's face. You notice that this man is calm. How could he be so calm in such a raging storm? He is calm because he knows what that lighthouse's foundation is made of. He is calm because he knows that, as in times past, his lighthouse will weather the storm well. He is calm because he knows that the sun will come out again and that the winds and the waves will subside. This picture has hung in my home for close to 15 years, and I have had many moments to think upon it. What if the lighthouse's foundation were to be undermined? I am sure that the man would not be so confident. In fact, I doubt he would even stay in the lighthouse.

These days Alberta's new canvas has me and, quite frankly, many of my fellow Albertans questioning: is the foundation of Alberta strong and secure? Is it a place that can weather the storms? We have seen the storms of low oil, and we have weathered them well,

but this new, tumultuous storm, a.k.a. the NDP government's policies: well, we will just have to see if we survive this one.

On an adjacent wall in my home hang pictures of my family: my wife, Angie, and my five children; my son-in-law; and my 11-month-old grandson. As a father it is my responsibility to try and provide my family and future generations with a bright future. The storms of life will come and go, my friends, but let us not be the creators of those storms. Let us instead create a place where all people can come and realize their dreams.

In closing, I again extend my heartfelt thank you to my constituents in Cardston-Taber-Warner for electing me to represent them here. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon on 29(2)(a).

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner for his thoughtful speech. Earlier we heard from the Member for Calgary-Buffalo that debt can be found not just in economics, but you can also have a social debt, and that social debt can be created when you choose to balance a budget. I think the implication was that compassion is found when we as legislators choose to accumulate an economic debt in order to address a social debt. Could you elaborate on this perspective from your point of view as a conservative, on how compassionate we are when we accumulate economic debts as a result of social debt?

Mr. Hunter: Thank you to the member for the question. Mr. Speaker, I do know that there's a balance that you need to strike. I do know that. We live in a very complex society. I think that a lot of people, when they're younger, grow up having dreams and hopes and aspirations, and they hope for a bright future. One of the reasons why I ran was my concern for what future we're offering our children and grandchildren. Is it going to be a future laden with debt and with loss of hope because of that debt? When you take a look at some of the jurisdictions like Greece, where young people have no hope for jobs, for opportunities to be able to advance themselves, there is a loss to that society for generations.

My concern is that in Alberta we chose something different. We chose to have no debt. We chose to be able to have low cost of living, low taxes, and because of that we offer hope and opportunity for our future generations. We've unfortunately, over the past few years and recently, deviated from that course, which was once called the Alberta advantage. That Alberta advantage was so amazing that people from all over the country, all over the world, actually, said: "Let's go to Alberta because there's opportunity there. There's hope there. There's a place where we can raise our family in dignity." Now, that's the kind of social licence we should be fighting for because there's no better social program than a job.

The Speaker: Any other questions under 29(2)(a)?

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, it's a great honour to speak in response to the Speech from the Throne this morning. I'd like to take a moment to express my gratitude to the people of Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill for the opportunity to be their voice in the Legislature. It's a privilege to represent these good people in the government, and I will do my best to listen and bring their concerns and ideas forward here.

I'd like to take this chance to tell you about myself and the riding I represent. The riding of Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill was established in 2005 and includes some of the best parts of the city. The name of the riding is derived from two namesakes. Calgary's 26th mayor, Donald Mackay, served the city from 1949 to 1959,

and he's credited with starting the tradition of presenting a white stetson to visitors, cementing a custom that continues today and has been adopted by Tourism Calgary, which annually presents their white hat awards to celebrate inspiring individuals in the tourism industry that go above and beyond to provide service to visitors to our city.

11:10

Nose Hill park is the second largest urban park in Calgary and in Canada. When you drive into Calgary from the west of the city, you can see the remnants of an ancient river when you look to the north. It was this river along with a retreat of glaciers from the last ice age which created the hill and began forming the distinctive shape that it has today. The park is home to many native plants such as the prairie crocus and has some of the last existing natural grasslands in North America. Ninety-five per cent of North American grasslands have been lost to development, pollution, and cultivation. The park covers 11.27 square kilometres and has more than 300 kilometres of trails, worn there by walkers, runners, cyclists, my dog, and almost 200 species of animals that have been recorded in the park.

Mackay-Nose Hill is comprised of five great neighbourhoods in the northwest quadrant of Calgary: Huntington Hills; Beddington Heights, where I make my home; MacEwan; Sandstone; and Calgary's fastest growing community, Evanston. I'd like to talk a little bit about Huntington Hills. It was established in the late 1960s, as was I, and has one of the most active and vibrant community associations in the city. I was happy to present the community association with a cheque for \$350,000 recently, and that was from the community facility enhancement program, which normally has a limit of \$125,000, but there was such a deficit and it is such a vibrant part of the community that an exception was made for them. This grant is going to go towards refurbishing the gymnasium, which is home to many sports and recreation programs in the community and is used by groups city-wide.

The community association is also home to child care and community programs. Parent link runs a triple-P parenting program, and this is funded through Human Services. It supports parents with a proven program to develop the skills, strategies, and confidence to handle any parenting situation. I'm sure my colleagues here that are parents will agree with me that parenting is the singularly most challenging role that any person can take on, and I'm so grateful that this program is available.

Huntington Hills Community Association also offers curling, skating, and meeting spaces for many organizations in the community and holds one of the best Stampede breakfasts in the city, where last July I skillfully caught every one of the pancakes that was thrown by our very popular mayor, and that was no easy task.

On the east side of the riding is the Calgary airport. The airport is managed and operated by the Calgary Airport Authority. This is a nonprofit organization that ensures that YYC continues its role as a vital part of the Calgary economy. The airport contributes in the neighbourhood of 7 per cent of the GDP to the city of Calgary. It's a vital gateway for both people and goods – 15.48 million passengers and 134,695 metric tonnes of cargo travelled through the airport last year – and YYC is a major hub for both WestJet and Air Canada. The airport authority owns and leases hundreds of thousands of square feet of warehouse, industrial, and office space. This space is home to a number of local and international businesses. Due to the continued growth of the airport, a number of new hotels and commercial facilities have been built around the area in the last five years and have really transformed it. YYC is opening a new international terminal later this year and will have 24 new gates to serve travellers.

I recently helped one of the companies in the Skyline industrial park open their new location. CCI Wireless provides wireless Internet access to rural Alberta and is one of the kinds of companies that can benefit from the \$1.5 billion, announced in the throne speech, that is available to Alberta Treasury Branches to support lending to small and medium-sized businesses, which are the backbone of our economy. Rural Internet access allows our farmers, ranchers, and rural businesses to participate in the economy in ways they haven't been able to. A cattle rancher with wireless Internet access has the ability to stream live auctions and bid on animals that previously they would have had to spend time and money to travel just to see. Some of these farms may even be in Mackay-Nose Hill as there's a large area on the north side of the constituency that has some farms and acreages. CCI Wireless employs around a hundred Albertans with good-paying, stable jobs and has plans to expand, creating a couple of hundred more jobs.

It's this kind of diversity that will make our economy more resilient to the changes in the energy industry and the effects that we are all facing because of the protracted and unexpected drop in the price of oil. The government has also directed AIMCo to earmark half a billion dollars for Alberta companies, those with growth potential, giving our small and medium businesses the chance to grow their enterprises and position themselves for the economic recovery that Alberta will see.

The throne speech was delivered on March 8 this year, which was also International Women's Day. This day has grown to celebrate the gains that have been made in striving for the equality of women and men. Actually, Mr. Speaker, this is feminism. Feminism is simply the belief that men and women should have equal rights and opportunities. It's not a scary agenda of hatred or hurt. I'm proud to be part of a government caucus that is gender balanced, with equal numbers of men and women who are committed to serving the people of Alberta.

I'm proud of our government for leading the way in equality by establishing the Status of Women ministry. One of the outcomes I'm committed to as an MLA is that women and girls can walk alone without fear, and I'm excited that a ministry exists that is leading the effort to end violence against women in conjunction with other ministries.

Sexism is what allows violence against women to continue, the belief that women and girls are less than, that they are inadequate, that they're incapable. Women face prejudice based on our gender every day in so many ways that it is difficult to relate the experience to others. Sexism is a type of bullying that is deeply ingrained in our culture, and it hurts everyone, men and women, girls and boys, by constraining us to narrowly defined roles and ideas of what we should be. Sexism makes achieving the same wages as men very difficult for women, especially in Alberta, where women are reported to earn less than 65 per cent of the wages that men make. Companies are shown to be more successful when they have more women in management roles, yet we still see women underrepresented at boardroom tables across our province. It would take a woman working in Canada 235 years to earn the average yearly salary of a male CEO in our country.

I'm a single parent. I raised a daughter and a son – and I'm very proud of both of them and their support – in Calgary, then in a small town called Kenley in the United Kingdom, and in North Attleboro in Massachusetts. I moved my family to England to work for a manufacturing company and experienced blatant sexism on the job. My male colleagues made higher salaries than I did, they enjoyed a closer relationship with our manager through their trips to the pub and the golf course together, and they were encouraged to fly business class while travelling for work while I was given economy tickets until I insisted on equitable treatment. I look forward to

ending sexism and the damaging effects it has on our society, Mr. Speaker, and I urge all of my colleagues in the House to join in the effort.

One of the biggest challenges I faced was finding reliable child care. I had to fly my mother over from Canada to watch my children for me so I could travel for my job. Being able to afford good child care even when working in a professional capacity is a challenge for single parents. I know that single parents and their children especially will benefit a great deal from enhancements to the Alberta child benefit and the family employment tax credit, announced in the throne speech.

As any parent can tell you, health care and education are very important to families, and it's these issues that got me more involved in our political process, Mr. Speaker. In late 2014 the Premier at that time was telling Albertans to be prepared for 9 per cent cuts in health care and education. That is a lot to cut from these essential services.

I remember when Albertans had to cope with the fallout from the deep cuts to health care in the 1990s. I remember taking my kids to the store. We were driving down an alley off 14th Street in the northwest, and we saw a man eating food out of a dumpster. He was digging through the food that had been thrown out by a local restaurant. At that time I was working as an administrative assistant at an oil company, and I didn't make a lot of money, but it broke my heart that anyone in our province would be so hungry that they'd have to eat food from the garbage. So I stopped, and I gave him \$20 to get something safe and healthy to eat. The man was mentally handicapped, and he'd been discarded by a government intent on making deep cuts, with no support for him to navigate a world that he'd never had to live in alone before. It wasn't the sort of world I wanted my kids to live in then, and it isn't the sort of world I want kids to live in now.

We are all connected, and we are stronger together when we take care of one another. The prospect of more people facing homelessness, more people having to wait even longer to see a doctor, larger classrooms, longer waiting times for surgeries that make life bearable: well, this was unacceptable to me, so I decided to get involved. I joined a campaign called Better Way Alberta, and we encouraged Albertans to sign a petition against the deep cuts the government at the time was proposing.

11:20

It was through that work that I was approached to run as a candidate for the NDP in last May's election, and I met a former MLA who is deeply committed to public service, Bob Hawkesworth. Bob was the MLA for Calgary-Mountain View previously, and he served as a long-time city council member in Calgary. I'm really fortunate to have such a generous person in the riding of Mackay-Nose Hill. During the election Mr. Hawkesworth was a wealth of advice and support for me, and he was my biggest cheerleader. He was out knocking on doors with me every night. He helped me to distribute thousands of flyers – some of them even had my face on them, which was very cool – and he stood with me and other great volunteers in the early mornings when we stood and waved signs and greeted commuters on their way to work. I really would like to thank him for his support.

Mackay-Nose Hill has been hit quite hard by the economic downturn, Mr. Speaker. An estimated 2,500 people have been directly impacted in the riding through job losses, and I know that many more have faced wage cuts. I've heard from constituents about the economic and personal struggles they are facing, and I know that hope is what helps pull people through tough times. I was happy to hear that the government is committed to putting many Albertans back to work through the investment of \$34 billion in the

provincial capital plan to help build the roads, transit systems, schools, and other facilities that the province needs to support our communities and our citizens.

I've lived in Alberta most of my life. I was born in Edmonton, just in Oliver, and I grew up in Sexsmith and Grande Prairie. I've lived and worked in the U.K. and the U.S., and I chose to come back to Alberta because of the diversity and the opportunity we have here.

As you can tell, Mr. Speaker, Mackay-Nose Hill is a diverse riding and not just in the communities and the parks and the industry. Young families, senior citizens, people who weren't born in Alberta, people who recently made Calgary home after fleeing war, people who need support because of disability, people who have created companies that employ many of our neighbours, people who cook for us, take care of our roads, drive our buses, people who serve our community in a myriad of ways, all of these people make Mackay-Nose Hill home, and it has been my honour to tell you about our riding and how the throne speech will impact us.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler on 29(2)(a).

Mr. Strankman: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill: it's an interesting comment that you make there. As a former rancher I know what it's like to have Internet access out in the rural community. Also, Member, you made some comment in regard to the CFEP grants in your constituency, and you made a comment that there was an exception made to the funding there. I was wondering if you could elaborate on that, how that funding worked, because we've also received some of that funding in our ridings as well, and I'd like to know what the limits are for them.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much for the question. I'm afraid I'm not going to be very helpful in giving you more information. I do know that the limit is normally \$125,000, and I know that the community association made an appeal to have more funding granted to them through the program, and that is how they came to have the amount that they did.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for her reply to the throne speech. Our constituencies are adjacent, so I've got to know the member quite well. I know that she was in the oil and gas industry for many years, so I'd like to ask her to elaborate on her experience in that industry.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the question. I actually started off as a receptionist at an oil company a long time ago. It was through that work that I developed two different interests that I ended up parlaying into a career. One of them was business. I was working for the business development department of the oil company. We did deals, we sold properties, we bought properties, we created strategies in order to move the company forward, and one thing that I got really good at was developing applications. I developed a database to track acquisitions and divestitures. Yeah. I started working in IT. I've

worked for lots of large oil and gas companies. I've also worked for TransAlta Utilities.

My career is what took me overseas and to the U.S. as well, where I worked for manufacturing in the electronics industry. Coming back to Calgary and moving into a business analysis role definitely gave me the opportunity to understand even more in depth how oil and gas companies work, and it's been an amazing learning opportunity. Of course, being from Alberta, I've been through the economic ups and downs before, and I can really empathize with what people are facing today, regardless of what area of the industry they're working in.

Thanks.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I just urge the members – it could be my hearing; it could be the sound system – in the back corner to just raise your volume up a little bit. I'd appreciate it.

The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud to rise today and share my thoughts in response to the Speech from the Throne. I'd like to take this moment to acknowledge Alberta's Lieutenant Governor, the Hon. Lois Mitchell, who not only safeguards the constitutional traditions and principles of this House but also engages with Albertans on a continual basis. It is the examples set by strong women of our past and present that lay the groundwork for the change we expect to see in our future.

So let's look to the future, not today, not right now, to our children's and our grandchildren's future. We need an economy that is resilient to energy price swings, captures the full value of our resources, and offers a prosperous future for our children. We are working hard to improve public services, minimize the impact of the current recession on Alberta families, and mend the infrastructure deficit throughout Alberta. I'm very proud of the work that we as a government have accomplished by reinstating the STEP program as well.

I'm privileged to rise today to espouse my riding of Stony Plain, and I'm privileged and humbled to represent what is, I am sure, the most diverse, hard-working, and beautiful constituency in all of Alberta. We are farmers and ranchers, business leaders and entrepreneurs; we are coal miners and teachers. Our riding encompasses everything from Winterburn Road in Edmonton to the Pembina River, the North Saskatchewan in the south to the Yellowhead in the north, except that we scooch down around Spruce Grove.

Stony Plain is one of the very few original ridings with the original name, formed in 1905. The boundaries may have changed, but the location hasn't. The town of Stony Plain, historically known as Dog Rump Creek, is the town of the painted past due to our nearly 40 murals painted in various locations throughout the town.

Another one of the great attractions in the town of Stony Plain is the Multicultural Heritage Centre, which is housed in the town's first school. One of the biggest draws at the multicultural centre is Homesteader's Kitchen, where you can get artisan breads, homemade soups, and an endless selection of homemade pies. As a new draw for the Stony Plain region Ryan Smyth, the former player for the Edmonton Oilers, is now playing for the Stony Plain Eagles triple-A senior men's team.

The Multicultural Heritage Centre is just off Main Street. On Main Street there are boutique shops of every description, from village fashions to Phina's, from Blue Diamond Jewellers to Bing's restaurant. Across from my constituency office is Pet Foods Etc., and I'm kitty-corner to the co-op.

Recent census data shows that the town of Stony Plain has 16,127 residents and Parkland county has 30,568 residents, a growing and vibrant community rich with culture and history. I'm advocating for infrastructure enhancements such as roads, vibrant businesses, local health resources, local agriculture, and our local schools.

Rural tourism is a strong industry west of Edmonton. In one day you can have a picnic at the Devonian gardens, run through the corn maze, catch a fish for dinner at Jackfish Lake, and sleep under the stars at Wabamun. It is a true destination located just around the corner.

The Stony Plain constituency is on the traditional territory of Treaty 6. There are two indigenous bands that also call Stony Plain home, the Enoch Cree First Nation and Paul First Nation, and I am proud of the ongoing work with these nations. As a result of what our government has heard from most of Alberta's indigenous governments, we will repeal Bill 22 and will engage indigenous communities on the consultation they as nations would like to see to support the capacity of First Nation and Métis peoples. This government will also consult indigenous people on a new indigenous people sacred ceremonial objects repatriation act that would facilitate the return of sacred objects to the nations to whom they belong.

11:30

These are tough economic times, especially for my constituency of Stony Plain. However, the residents in my constituency are resilient, innovative, and hard-working, and there is no doubt in my mind that we will get through this together. Taking care of the people around us while encouraging industry to grow are goals we need to work towards as a community, a government, and a province. To move forward in a careful, considered way while encouraging growth in consultation with those affected is of the highest importance. There will be a measured approach for the spring session at the Legislature. We have laid the economic framework, and now it is time to tweak some of the smaller pieces so we can continue to play the role of a shock absorber for the economy and encourage diversification and job creation while in this downturn.

We're also investing \$34 billion in infrastructure to build the roads, schools, and other vital facilities that Albertans need, which will help keep our tradespeople and our professionals at work. Investing in infrastructure, public health, and education have been priorities during this downturn. We have one of the youngest, strongest workforces in Canada, and maintaining that workforce is part of what will help get us through these rough times. Our greatest resource is our people, the way we care about and care for one another. Our government will continue to act with focus and determination to engage the citizens of Alberta in skills training, retraining, and expanding access to the workforce for people facing unemployment. We will ensure access to venture capital. Updated credit union legislation and, of course, Bill 1, Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act, will help entrepreneurs and businesses in my riding to create new jobs and growth.

The opposition members have obviously been listening to our economic development minister's speeches, and they were paying attention to our announcements in our throne speech, as proven by the approximately six points of their 12-point job action plan that our government has obviously already mentioned. I'm excited to be able to share and discuss with my constituents in Stony Plain details about our expansion of access to workforce and skills training and retraining for the unemployed. This is a commitment for the present and the future, the future of Albertans in our economy.

We are extremely proud in Stony Plain to supply 40 per cent of the energy for all of Alberta. In the region there is Keephills,

Sundance, and some work across the river at Genesee. Many more people support our energy by working at the Highvale mine in pits 03 through 09. The hard work of our men and women ensures that people's lights stay on across our province. Over 1,300 people in the riding of Stony Plain help produce that power and will continue to do so for the next 14 years. New legislation will give force and effect to key elements of Alberta's climate leadership plan such as phasing out harmful emissions from coal-powered generation by 2030 to protect our health and our environment.

A modern royalty system will promote innovation and efficiency and provide full transparency and public accountability on the calculation of our royalties. Alberta is an economic leader, buoyed by our energy sector, and we know that right now we need leadership to ensure that we get our product to tidewater. The continued engagement on pipelines is proof that our government is fighting hard for Alberta, its interests and its economy, and we will not back down.

A fair number of Stony Plain residents are employed in the oil and gas sector, the sector that has seen some of the most drastic fluctuations of all industries in this past year, and I understand the stress that puts on our communities. To that end, our government is vigorously urging the federal government to take account of the current economic shock affecting the resource industry and reconsider employment insurance rules that exclude too many Albertans from those much-needed benefits, those of us still around Edmonton.

The new child benefit plan will help 380,000 children living in low-income households. The plan to create new jobs and opportunities while building on traditional economic strengths is what our province needs right now. My constituents have told me that, as I'm sure others have around the province. There are too many low-income households in Alberta. Many of those households are single-parent families.

My beautiful children spent much of their lives in one of those households. We have lived in government-funded housing and other low-income situations. When my children and I moved to the capital region, it was so I could pursue educational opportunities. As a single parent I returned to school, and one of my greatest accomplishments was earning my licensed practical nurse diploma. Though it was difficult, I taught my daughter that pursuing an education is always worth the hard work, and I taught my son what a strong woman looks like. Since my partner, Will, has come into our lives, he has continued to encourage me to always strive for my goals, and he has supported my work as a nurse and as a legislator.

As a nurse and a caregiver the most important part of my job was service and advocacy, to serve those who couldn't always perform the activities of daily life that healthy people take for granted and to advocate for those without a voice to those who needed to hear the message. I spent a number of years working diligently with vulnerable populations. My first role was working with individuals with developmental disabilities. It is where I found my passion for health care. There were many challenges for both my clients and myself, and one of the biggest challenges was the high staff turnover. It can take an individual who lives in care a minimum of six months to come to trust a new caregiver that comes into their lives due to the high turnover in that profession. When there is no trust between caregivers and clients, it makes many situations more dangerous and more difficult for both. Everything from personal care to outings is more stressful for the individuals and the caregivers. Unfortunately, if a client doesn't have capacity to emotionally handle stress, the person may, understandably, lash out at caregivers.

Sometimes due to these stresses an individual may lose their housing supports. If a person loses their housing, the chances of

other supports falling to the wayside are very high. People in this situation often run out of money, which leads to a person with no income on our streets. When the physical health of a person on the streets is compromised and, with luck, that person ends up in a hospital, the individual must stay in an acute-care bed until supports are found for that person. This leads to many people staying in acute-care beds for much longer than is needed, and as we all know, acute-care beds are not the appropriate place for long-term care. This is why we are investing in health and housing.

As an acute-care nurse I specialized in patients with acute stroke and acute geriatric patients. This involves many aspects of care, from total care to rehabilitation, from palliative care to dementia care. All care is essential, and every situation is unique. There's an old saying in nursing: they may not remember your name, but they'll always remember how you made them feel.

There are many parallels between nursing and serving as an elected representative. Both professions are about serving people and advocating for them. When a constituent contacts my office in Stony Plain, many times that person is at the end of their rope. Whether it's an agency they are having difficulty contacting or not knowing what resources are available in our community, it is my job and the job of my staff to advocate for each and every constituent who contacts us. We advocate in many ways, from directing a constituent towards a resource to connecting the constituent to the services and supports in our community to bringing forth their concerns to the relevant ministries.

We also value the role that local government plays in supporting our interactions with local residents. I am heartened by the opportunity this government will provide by inviting the public and municipal governments to comment on a modern Municipal Government Act. The trimunicipal region, which encompasses the town of Stony Plain, the city of Spruce Grove, and Parkland county, is well known for their strong co-operative projects and initiatives. It should be a model for every municipality in Alberta. Having a strong region makes for resilient communities, which makes for sustainable living. There are many ventures in our trimunicipal region such as the trimunicipal leisure centre, the Meridian Foundation, the heritage pavilion, the EMS facility, and the soon-to-be new RCMP detachment, to which two if not all three of these partners contributed. The trimunicipal region works because a small community can do something good, but a strong region pulling together can do many great things.

I'm proud to be a voice in the Alberta Legislature for Stony Plain and Parkland county residents and families, promoting solutions that will make Albertans' lives easier and more prosperous. This agenda is large and ambitious, but I support this initiative to create a better, more prosperous, more diversified, and more caring Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there any questions under 29(2)(a)?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

11:40

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've had the privilege of being able to give my maiden speech early in the First Session, it's still both an honour and a pleasure to be able to rise on behalf of the people of Edmonton-Decore and address the Assembly in response to the Speech from the Throne. Of course, I'd first like to thank Her Honour the Honourable Lieutenant Governor of Alberta for delivering a speech filled with hope, optimism, and a path to future prosperity for all of Alberta. That path speaks of managing an energy price shock, the likes of which we haven't seen since the '80s, and how we must support the energy sector during these very

challenging times. But it also speaks of a future with a diversified economy, stable public services that Albertans rely on every single day, and an environment that also produces clean energy so that we can protect our land, our air, and our water.

Mr. Speaker, the throne speech also addressed a concern that was growing in my riding of Edmonton-Decore, and that concern is democratic reform. Our political process cannot be for just a select few, and it cannot be administered by just a select few. It must be for all Albertans. I'm already hearing about how pleased my residents are with where this government is leading on that, and they are excited to see what will be coming in the future.

The days and weeks ahead are no doubt going to be a challenge, Mr. Speaker, as we navigate through these very volatile times, but Albertans, like the residents of Edmonton-Decore, are optimistic, they are hopeful, they are also entrepreneurial, and they are very resilient. With qualities such as these the future does indeed look very bright, and together we will build a future that will stand the test of time.

If I may quote from Her Honour's speech, "Albertans want to build a society that gives a hand up to people who need it, cares for the vulnerable, and opens doors for our children and our grandchildren." Mr. Speaker, as the Member for Edmonton-Decore I'm humbled and honoured to be their representative in this House as we work towards building this future together, a future with that diversified economy, with stable public services that future Albertans can count on, a future where the environment we live in protects the land, the air, and the water for generations to come, all of that under a democratic system that doesn't exclude any Albertan and where everyone is equal and respected equally.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, under 29(2)(a)?

Dr. Turner: Under 29(2)(a). Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the member to elaborate on a few things. I had the honour and pleasure to work with the member before the election and campaigned with him and saw him working on the front lines, actually, and the tremendous reaction that he was getting at the doors. I was also impressed with the work that he had done in the last session promoting the local band, the Emeralds. My first question to him is actually to get an update on what has happened with the application for the Walk of Fame for the Emeralds.

I had another question, though. I really do appreciate the sense of optimism, forward looking, and care and compassion that he has for all of his constituents and indeed all Albertans. I saw a notice the other day that he had been participating in a job fair in northeast Edmonton. I wonder if he could bring us up to date on what happened with that.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to be able to answer those questions. I guess that to start with the update on the Emeralds, there has been a significant letter campaign going on, with the intention of being able to show people that the Emeralds, who have been in the business for 45 years, which is remarkable, are very, very worthy of a star on Canada's Walk of Fame.

To my understanding, we have a deadline of roughly around the end of May now to get those letters in. Those letters will be filling a box at this point. Of course, with the letters that came in from the members of the Assembly, we are expecting letters very shortly from members of Edmonton city council, and all the letters that the band themselves have been able to get during their somewhat boosted career since this first came out will hopefully sway some

folks into taking a very hard look and bestowing that honour on them. We're getting prepared to send those letters off very, very shortly.

The second question, the job fair: that was put on by the Member for Edmonton-Manning. A fantastic idea, I think, to bring not only employers but also unions, different organizations together and the ability to not only network within each other but to reach out to communities and folks and let them know that there are still things happening. You know, even with this downturn in the economy, there are still a lot of great things happening. Businesses are expanding, businesses are coming online, and they have those things to offer to people.

That job fair was a great example of being able to reach out to people, and I certainly thank the Member for Edmonton-Manning for putting that on and for the chance that I had just to go and speak with some of those people who were attending that. The feedback was very, very positive, and it very, very excited people to hear that although we are experiencing those challenges in our energy sector, there are many other sectors that are growing and that are coming online now. I look forward to maybe being able to participate in something similar in the future with Edmonton-Decore's participation.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Manning.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member across the floor for talking about the job fair. It was a great event that happened in Edmonton-Manning, and we had a really great response from it.

It truly is my honour to stand and speak in this House today and be part of a historical shift in the politics of Alberta. Today I am proud to stand with the first-ever NDP government and the first gender parity caucus in Alberta. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, this is not the norm for Alberta or for Canada. Women continue to fight to become leaders within the political world. School boards, municipalities, provincial and federal politics continue to struggle with supporting women to run. Many ask: why is this; why don't women run for politics? Well, the first thing is that no one has ever asked us. That was until last year when our now Premier asked Alberta's women to run for the NDP, and I am proud that women represented more than 50 per cent of our candidates in the last election.

Mr. Speaker, a government that understands that we need to represent our constituents is something I am extremely proud of. In Alberta our population is more than 50 per cent women, so it seemed only fitting to have the throne speech delivered on International Women's Day and to recognize the work that women have done before us and to honour the work we continue to do today. I think, as Her Honour noted in the throne speech a few weeks ago, the fact that our new Ministry of Status of Women, the only stand-alone ministry in this country, is being led by a new mother is proof that further barriers are starting to come down, though we still have a long way to go.

In the work of building this province, from the stay-at-home mother to women who run the farms, work in the trades, and support our public servants, women make this province run, Mr. Speaker, and it is time that this is celebrated and recognized. Before being elected, I was one of these women. I worked as a public servant in the Ministry of Human Services as a child protection worker, a role that I still miss and cherish today. I had the privilege of not only working with a great team but also continuously being humbled by the families and children I was able to work with.

11:50

Child protection is not an easy profession, Mr. Speaker. Workers are exposed to constant conflict and crisis and at times are threatened. With a pencil and a pad of paper they go into homes that police officers will not enter without guns or backup. They see domestic violence, neglect, sexual and physical abuse, and abandonment. Yet every day workers show up over and over because they believe that they have a responsibility to keep children safe, no matter if this means that they will miss their own children's soccer games or school concerts. They put Alberta's children first, above all else, something that truly needs to be respected.

What also needs to be respected, Mr. Speaker, are the families that the workers in Human Services work with. Each family has their own story, each as unique and challenging as the next. But no matter what the challenges, Albertans are resilient. I have seen the changes that people can make when given a little support. That's why I'm so proud that our government is going to be introducing a new Alberta child benefit plan. This is a \$340 million investment in direct support that goes to Alberta's families who need this help the most.

Mr. Speaker, from my experience, this investment and the introduction of the family employment tax credit, which will help at least 380,000 children throughout our province, can't come soon enough and will have a direct impact on all Albertans' lives. From the single mother who leaves an abusive partner to the teenage parent to the street youth who goes back to school and graduates, we have many success stories within the Ministry of Human Services, and this is why I am so glad to be part of a government that values the work of all of our front-line public servants.

So many have asked me why I became a social worker. Well, Mr. Speaker, I was raised in a loving and caring family with strong women. First, I would like to tell you about my grandmother. She was a strong believer in the good of all people and dedicated her life to taking care of not only my father and his siblings but the community of Pincher Creek. She was a dedicated Baptist, attended the church in town and also at times the Mennonite church beside my uncle's farm. She was well respected and loved by many in the community of Pincher Creek and was known for her generosity towards others. After retiring from running the Home Hardware store, my grandmother volunteered at the Christian Life Outreach. She would be there every day making food bank boxes or sorting through donations from the second-hand store, and most of the time she would be having coffee or offering a listening ear. She was a true gift to have in my life, and I hope that I can be half the woman that she was to the people of Alberta.

Then there are my parents. My mother stayed home with my brother and me when we were growing up. She was a very patient woman with a kind heart and didn't speak negatively of others, qualities that I believe my brother probably picked up. As many people can say, I am definitely my father's daughter. My father was a welder who worked through the boom in Alberta. He was a labour

activist, a shop steward, and a strong believer in social justice. He is also a fiscal conservative, so many know that I am not totally like my father. However, like all of us in this House, while we may not always agree with the ways to approach different issues, we are still respectful and we are still understanding. Even with our political differences, my parents came from Vancouver Island to help me on E-day, a day that I will never forget, for even my conservative dad was calling on behalf of the NDP and was so excited to see us become government.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I will give thanks to the constituents of Edmonton-Manning for providing me the honour to represent them in this House. Thank you.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Manning for giving us that glimpse into her life, her past, and her reasons for being here in this House today. I know that the Member for Edmonton-Manning has the opportunity to represent a considerable amount of farmland in the north of Edmonton, farmland that I grew up quite close to. There's less of it there now, but there's still some. I know she's been working on behalf of protecting that and the persons that are working that land. I was wondering if she could expand a bit on her experiences with that.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Edmonton-Manning is a very diverse community. I'm quite fortunate. It's very large. It's one of the larger ones in the city of Edmonton. My constituency goes from 66th Street and 137th Ave all the way to the Fort Saskatchewan boundaries. I cozy up to Strathcona county and Sturgeon county, so I have farming communities. I have diverse ethnic communities. We basically have everything in Edmonton-Manning. The privilege of that is that we back right onto the North Saskatchewan River, which has some of the best land in the province and a very unique microclimate. We have Riverbend Gardens, and they provide a lot of the fresh vegetables and a lot of different things to many of the farmers' markets here in the city.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and would it be okay if we adjourned debate?

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Ms Ganley: Mr. Speaker, I think we've made some excellent progress today. I think it was very interesting for us all to sort of hear a little bit about our members and their values. I move that we adjourn the House until 1:30 this afternoon.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:56 a.m.]

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