



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, April 14, 2016

Day 15

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

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Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)	MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)	Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)	Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND), Government House Leader
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND), Deputy Government House Leader	McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret, Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (ND)
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND), Deputy Government House Leader	McIver, Ric, Calgary-Hays (PC), Leader of the Progressive Conservative Opposition
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)	McKittrick, Annie, Sherwood Park (ND)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)	McLean, Hon. Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (ND)
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)	McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (ND)
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (ND)	Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)	Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W), Official Opposition House Leader	Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)
Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (ND), Government Whip	Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W), Official Opposition Whip
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W), Official Opposition Deputy Whip	Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND), Premier
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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)	Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)	Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC), Progressive Conservative Opposition Whip	Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND)
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (ND)	Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)	Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)	Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)
Filtebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)	Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)	Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)	Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)	Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)
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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)
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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)
Kleinsteuber, 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)

Party standings:

New Democrat: 54 Wildrose: 22 Progressive Conservative: 9 Alberta Liberal: 1 Alberta Party: 1

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, April 14, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us reflect. Today as we come together in this Chamber in this province of Alberta on Treaty 7 land, let us affirm our common commitment to enhance the lives of Albertans and to continue the pursuit of the common good. Let us embrace a culture of compassion and sharing, a culture that allows people to be true to themselves and to everyone else. Individuals who allow their inner authenticity to grow become sources of wisdom and agents of justice in our families and our communities. A compassionate society produces wise, creative citizens and leaders. A sharing society produces strength. Our strength is each other. Thank you.

Please be seated.

Statement by the Speaker

Press Gallery Centennial

The Speaker: Hon. members, I would like to take a moment to briefly acknowledge that today is the 100th anniversary of the press gallery of the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. I'm sure that many of the gallery's current and former members will be watching the proceedings keenly today. At another appropriate time soon, most probably next Monday, I will be making a further statement on this occasion.

Introduction of Visitors

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

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House a man who has contributed greatly to Alberta. Mr. George VanderBurg was elected as the MLA for Whitecourt-St. Anne for three terms. He also served as minister of seniors and community supports, and Mr. VanderBurg was a highly respected whip for our PC caucus and a legislative mentor to me. My guest is seated in the Speaker's gallery, and I'd ask him to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Introduction of Guests

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

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I am very pleased to introduce a class of students from St. Augustine school in the town of Ponoka, in my constituency. I was pleased to take a photo with this group a little while ago. St. Augustine school provides a faith-based learning environment for Ponoka students and the area. I'm proud of Alberta for giving parents a choice in education. A choice in education is something that adds to the incredible richness and diversity of education in our province and something that I hope we will all continue to uphold. And I'm proud of my community for providing these kids with this great opportunity to learn under their awesome teachers.

I'd like them to stand as I read the names of the teachers and the parents that have come to help, and I'd like the school to stand after and receive a welcome. The teachers are Mr. Ken Hackett and Mrs. Sharon Hackett. The parent helpers are Mr. Romeo Mandanas, Mr. Brandon Bishop, Mrs. Leanne Dillon, Mrs. Crystal Fleck, Mr. and Mrs. Tagupa, Ms Julie Evans, Ms Nicola Hoag, Mrs. Trista Lougheed, Mrs. Nancy Giles, Ms Loanna Gulka, and Mr. Ken Kustiak. Students and teachers, please rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Are there any other hon. members with school groups here today? Hearing none, I would recognize the Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On your behalf I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two guests from St. Mary's University, Dr. Michael Duggan and Ms Debbie Osiowy. Dr. Duggan is an old friend of yours, Mr. Speaker, and a professor of religious studies and theology at St. Mary's University, located in the wonderful constituency of Calgary-Shaw. Debbie is a vice-president of business and finance at St. Mary's. They are seated in your gallery. I'd ask that they both rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Kim Unrau and Karen Popal from the Learning Disabilities Association of Alberta – Edmonton Chapter, also known as LD Edmonton. Their vision is that individuals with learning disabilities and/or attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, commonly known as ADHD, are empowered to develop their potential, thereby enabling them to make positive contributions to citizens in their community. Karen Popal is the program co-ordinator at LD Edmonton, and she is the parent of two children with ADHD. Kim Unrau is the president of LD Edmonton and a registered psychologist in Alberta. Kim has been a volunteer with LD Edmonton for seven years and is an advocate for special-needs children. Many Albertans have learning disabilities. My youngest son, Wade, is among them, and I'm sincerely grateful to the association for their support in making a real difference in the lives of people like my son. They are seated in the members' gallery this afternoon, and I'd ask that they please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pleasure that I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a couple of individuals that I've had the honour to be able to call close friends for over 30 years, which, as the Member for Calgary-Elbow mentioned yesterday, produced some interesting stories from the past that, I'll suggest, should stay in the past. They are long-time successful entrepreneurs here in the city of Edmonton and provide superior home automation products with second-to-none customer service, all delivered by their highly qualified and amazing staff at Shore 2 Shore Automation. I would now like to ask my closest friend, Darryl Shore, and his brother Jay Shore to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

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

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two leaders from my constituency. The first is Mrs. Pam Hansen, who hails from Bentley, in my constituency, but is also a trustee for the Wolf Creek public school board, taking care of schools both in Bentley and within Eckville, in my constituency. As I said, she's from Bentley. I don't know if you've had the pleasure of being there, but they call it the model town for a reason. With her today is Her Worship Rachele Peters, who has the honour of being the mayor of the village of Caroline. While not only being the home of Kurt Browning, it's also the gateway to some of the most spectacular country that this province has to offer. I would ask that both rise in this Assembly and receive the traditional warm welcome of my colleagues.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my distinct pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly my friend Connor and his dad, Don Staus. Connor helped me get elected, and he was a former constituency assistant for the Rt. Hon. Stephen Harper back when pipelines were recognized as the lifelines for Albertans. Now, as someone who worked for the government, Connor took the advice of the minister seriously, and he's moving, not to B.C. to find work but to South Korea to teach English and experience a new culture. Don Staus, Connor's father, is the president and CEO of Carrick Petroleum, located in Calgary. Prior to that he built Culane Energy from scratch. I'm thankful to Don for creating jobs and wealth for this province. Don and oil workers like him are very proud of the contribution their companies make to Alberta's economy. Don, myself, and the rest of Alberta except those who voted for the Leap Manifesto hope that this government supports and approves pipelines so that Albertans can continue to reinvest back.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I'm waiting to see the individuals.

Mr. Panda: Sure.

I would like to ask Don and Connor Staus to please stand and receive the warm welcome of the House.

1:40

The Speaker: Thank you.

The Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my distinct pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two good friends and distinguished guests, Lacombe Mayor Steve Christie and Ponoka Mayor Rick Bonnett.

Mayor Steve is a 21-year resident of Lacombe, a diehard community builder and volunteer. Steve is married to Cheryl, who is also my constituency assistant, and together they have two grown daughters and three granddaughters. Mayor Steve continues to strive for solutions that create a healthy, balanced Lacombe. Accountability and progress are key components in his eyes, but, most importantly, people are always the key element. Steve served for four years on the AUMA board and concluded his tenure as vice-president of cities up to 500,000. In this capacity he served on many provincial committees, notably the Premier's working group on the MGA review. Steve was first elected to council in 2004 and as mayor in 2010 and is currently serving his second term as mayor of Lacombe.

Mayor Rick was first elected to Ponoka town council in 2010. After serving a term as councillor, he ran for mayor in 2013. Get

this: he won the mayoralty in Ponoka by one vote. For those of you who believe that your vote doesn't matter, in Ponoka it does. Mayor Rick is an advocate for regional communities, full of ideas about collaboration for municipalities.

I would like to ask Mayor Rick Bonnett and Mayor Steve Christie, two excellent mayors, to rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I say again: time is a valuable commodity in this place. We would urge you to have brevity in your introductions.

The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed my honour to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly some guests from the diverse constituency of Drumheller-Stettler. First off, I'd like to introduce the mayor of Hanna, Chris Warwick, and his wonderful wife and local school trustee, Angela. Secondly, I'd like to introduce a fine young man from my area also, Stettler, Cody Borek, and his lovely wife, Eva, who were instrumental in putting together our recent AGM and social event. It was a great success thanks in no small part to their efforts. I ask that they all please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two distinguished guests. We have with us the hon. mayor of Grande Prairie, Bill Given. I always considered Grande Prairie my home city even though my hometown is Valleyview. It's a beautiful place to be, and I enjoy my time in Grande Prairie. Also with us today is the mayor of the town of Sexsmith, Claude Lagace. Sexsmith is located about 20 minutes north of Grande Prairie and is the home of Chautauqua Days, which is a great event that everyone should have a chance to enjoy. I ask that they both please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two of the most important municipal leaders in my constituency. I would ask that they please rise as I call their names. They are Bud Massey, reeve of Westlock county; and Bill Lee, reeve of the county of Barrhead. Together Bud and Bill represent over 14,000 residents. They are most concerned about municipal grant funding, particularly water, waste-water, and strategic transportation infrastructure programs. Bud and Bill will be sticking around to take in the Budget Address later today. I ask that they please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is truly my pleasure to rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a man from my constituency who helped me extensively throughout my election period last year, Kelly Innocent. Kelly owns and runs a small welding company, Keltan Consulting Ltd., and employs hard-working Albertans. He works closely with the oil

field and construction industries and is here today because he has a passion for his children's future and is looking forward to seeing what is contained in today's budget. He is seated in the members' gallery. Kelly, would you please rise and accept the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two sets of introductions. My pleasure today to introduce to you and to the members of the Assembly prominent members of the Edmonton Sikh community in the gallery. This week, as we know, we celebrated Vaisakhi in the Legislature rotunda, the 300-year anniversary of Khalsa. Guru Gobind Singh established Khalsa over 300 years ago, and the faith has grown throughout the years. The Liberal caucus congratulates the Sikh community on this holy celebration and encourages everyone to attend the Vaisakhi celebrations coming up in the Jubilee Auditorium on May 8 and the parade on May 22. I'll ask the members of the community to stand as I mention their names: Harjinder Singh Gill, Harpreet Singh Gill, Maghar Singh Ubhi, Gurcharan Singh Sangha, Baldev Singh Dhaliwal, Mehar Singh Gill, Sital Singh Nanuan, Karnail Singh Deol, Harjeet Sandhu, Last Bhinder, Jas Longowal, Charanjit Singh Dakha, and Amarjit Singh Grewal. Let us give them the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce Dave Truscott. He is a resident of Fort Saskatchewan.

The Speaker: My apologies, Member for Calgary-Mountain View. We'd lost time in some other earlier introductions, so I was trying to catch up. You have a second introduction.

Dr. Swann: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I'm privileged to introduce two friends and colleagues, Dr. Avalon Roberts, a retired psychiatrist in Calgary, and Dr. Judy Johnson, a retired psychologist who taught for many years at Mount Royal University. Both are shrinks, basically. Avalon and Judy have distinguished careers, but I'll simply note here that they served for 15 years consecutively on Friends of Medicare. Dr. Johnson also happens to co-chair my board of directors, Calgary-Mountain View constituency. Please welcome my two friends, colleagues and shrinks.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will start again. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce Dave Truscott. He is the owner, reporter, and editor of the *Sturgeon Creek Post* in the wonderful constituency of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville and located right in Fort Saskatchewan. It's my pleasure to introduce him. If he would please stand and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Does any other member have a guest to introduce today? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As always, I'm so honoured to introduce to you and through you Sherrie Cameron from Autism Speaks Canada. Sherrie started her working career and training in learning development management for Canada Post after receiving her certificate in adult education from the University of Alberta. For the past decade Sherrie has worked extensively and volunteered her time for the not-for-profit and charity arena, like Kids Help Phone,

Ronald McDonald House, Breakfast Clubs of Canada, and KIDS.Now, to name a few. After her son was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder three years ago, Sherrie wanted to put her career and background into charity work at Autism Speaks Canada. For the past two years Sherrie has led and managed the Alberta and Saskatchewan region for Autism Speaks Canada, an organization that focuses on awareness, advocacy, research, and family service granting for individuals and families living with autism. Sherrie currently lives in Edmonton with her husband and two children. Sherrie, would you please rise and receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

1:50

The Speaker: Hon. members, did I miss somebody? Go ahead.

Mr. MacIntyre: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's truly a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all the members of this Assembly Al and Pamela Koenig, who are close friends and supporters here today to see if perhaps this budget contains, among other things, any mention of our urgently needed urgent care centre in Sylvan Lake. Will they please rise and accept the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: My apologies, Members, for missing people.

Oral Question Period

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

Cancer Care Wait Times

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, despite having the most expensive health system in this country, this government is again showing that they cannot get resources directed to patient care. Under the NDP we lag far behind the national average for cancer surgeries. Wait times in Alberta are often the worst in the country for prostate, colon, and breast cancer surgeries, and it is happening under this Health minister's watch. What is the minister doing to correct these failures of her department to support front-line care and to help those on a waiting list and suffering for months?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, longer wait times are not something that we'd like to see continue. It's vitally important that people receive the medical procedures that they need in a timely fashion, and that's one of the reasons why the people of Alberta dismissed the previous government, which was proposing nearly a billion-dollar cut for the Health budget. Certainly, ensuring that we have stable health care funding and ways that we can continue to move forward was a priority for us in the election platform, and it will continue to be in the term of this government.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, the value this government gets for its growing health spending is dismal, but our broken system costs more than dollars and cents. On the ground it is the human cost that matters. It's the demoralized staff, frustrated communities, worried families, and ailing patients who are paying the price. The minister talks about the right professional in the right place at the right time, but for cancer sufferers the right time is apparently months from now. This is unacceptable and shameful. When will the minister stop the talk and start getting results?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Ms Hoffman: Certainly, we ran on a platform of finding efficiencies in health care that will protect front-line services and improve patients' access, and that's why the people of Alberta elected a government that actually believes in public health care, and we'll continue to move in that direction. The stats that the member opposite is referring to talk about a number of years under a previous government and 16 weeks under this government. Certainly, 16 weeks isn't enough time to address many challenges that are created, but we're certainly working to get access to the front lines and increasing screenings. I'm very proud of the results we have in those areas.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, the NDP has bragged about their commitment to health care by spending more money. They boasted that they can run our centralized, top-heavy, broken, \$20 billion system better than anyone by adding yet more layers of management. But while the minister loves to hear herself talk, the performance tells a different story. This government is proving itself incapable. Will the minister commit to real action by restoring local decision-making, enhancing accountability, peeling away the layers of top-down bureaucracy, and actually helping Albertans?

Ms Hoffman: Only the Official Opposition thinks that the solution to long wait times is to slash billions of dollars from front-line care, to slash the opportunities that we've created through a centralized system, and to create more disorder by reorganizing, disorganizing, and unorganizing. I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. It takes a lot more than just nuance and ideological spin in this House to find solutions – we're actually moving forward – and you'll hear about more of them in a few minutes.

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

School Construction

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government inherited a mess from the previous government, but the Auditor General was very clear in his report that the two current ministries of Education and Infrastructure do not have the internal capacity to work together to get the schools built. While the Minister of Education says that he's very proud of what they've done, in fact very little has been accomplished in the last 10 months. To the Minister of Education. Albertans expect to see shovels in the ground instead of signs on empty lots. How many schools will this government build this year and next year?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, as we move through our constituencies, as all members in Alberta look through our province, we see that we literally have dozens of schools being built right now. We have 48 school projects that will be ready in September. It's very important to work through a process by which you can be more efficient. The Auditor General gave us a hand with being able to find those efficiencies, which is resulting in saving tens of millions of dollars so that we can build more schools, that we need even more.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Auditor General's report was clear that project management capacity is lacking in both ministries. They don't even have common policies and procedures in place. The Auditor General even included a school-building process model in his report to help this government, yet it seems

that this government has decided to hire KPMG to gather information from school boards rather than build schools. Why is the minister spending money hiring KPMG to meet with school boards when that won't build schools?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, the hon. member in opposition might not see how you actually organize these things, but you use different mechanisms by which you can build the schools. You know, I find it quite ironic that the same people that are looking for schools in their constituencies want us to cut billions of dollars out of those same schools.

Mr. Smith: Throwing good money after bad is a practice of the previous government and one which this government appears to be following. Having more meetings was not a recommendation of the Auditor General. This government has been in power for a year now, and they need to start showing some accountability. Why is the minister wasting time and money holding meetings and hiring managers to manage managers in this oversized government when Alberta families need schools now?

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I've extended invitations for the first time, I think, in a long time where opposition can come and open some of the 48 schools that we're opening here in the fall. We have 232 school projects that we're moving ahead with even during difficult circumstances – you know why? – because we deserve the best to give to our children, and we expect that every step of the way, and that's what we're doing.

Thank you very much.

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

Job Creation

Mr. Panda: There was no doubt the government's failed job subsidy program was going to fail in the first place. It's a lesson that the NDP should listen more to the Wildrose, a party that truly has the pulse of the province. To blunt criticisms from his government's zero-jobs plan, the minister managed to find \$10 million for important business incubators like TEC Edmonton and Innovate Calgary. How did the minister manage to increase the capital while Bill 1, the government's flagship jobs program, is gathering dust and sitting on the Order Paper?

The Speaker: Hon. member, again, get to the question sooner. I was waiting for it to come out.

Please proceed.

Mr. Bilous: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: [interjections] Excuse me.

Sorry; proceed.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's interesting in the House here. You never know with the Official Opposition if it's a cut day or a spend day. It depends on what they're talking about here.

I'll tell you this much, Mr. Speaker. Our government's number one priority – and Albertans have been telling us – is jobs and the economy. That's exactly what we're doing despite what the Wildrose would do, again, slashing our public services, cutting billions of dollars from much-needed infrastructure projects,

infrastructure that is going to help give the tools that our job creators need to get their products to market and infrastructure that Albertans . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Panda: It is stunning that while jobs were being shed across the province over a year ago, the NDP government sat on its hands, and their so-called jobs creation program failed and created confusion in the business community. This type of instability and uncertainty has dramatic impacts. Today vacancies in downtown Calgary have reached a 30-year high. With extreme economic manifestos hanging a shadow over this government, how can businesses trust this government to get their next program right?

2:00

Mr. Bilous: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll remind the members of an announcement that I made a couple of days ago that we are investing \$10 million in incubators and accelerators that are going to help job creators. We're going to help start-ups, working through already successful systems in Innovate Calgary and TEC Edmonton and other regional commercialization opportunities. Our government is taking action. Our government later today will be unveiling our budget, and Albertans will see that our government has listened to the job creators, and we're doing our job partnering with them.

Mr. Panda: Here is an example of the type of economic chaos the government has caused to working families. I received an e-mail from one of the few Calgary companies able to use this program and that was about to hire, expecting the grant. Now the staff position might soon be gone, and this business has been twisted like a pretzel in confusing red tape and chaos coming from this minister. How can Albertans trust the NDP when their flip-flopping is doing real harm to working Albertans?

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

Mr. Bilous: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I'm not quite sure if the Wildrose is coming or going. One day they like the job creation incentive program; the next day they want it cut. The only people that are confused in this province are those across the way. Our government is taking meaningful action. We've listened to the business community. They've said: listen, this tool isn't going to have the outcomes that you've intended. We've retooled that. We are listening to the job creators, and I think they are going to be quite pleased with what they hear today.

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

Minister of Human Services

Dr. Starke: Mr. Speaker, Albertans were appalled this week by statements made in this Assembly by the Minister of Human Services. On Tuesday the minister called out the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills for not disclosing his interest in adoption. Now, he later offered a sincere apology. Everyone can make a mistake. But on Wednesday the minister incorrectly identified the Member for Calgary-North West as the former minister of disabilities and blamed her for an egregious practice that was in fact introduced by the current government. These incidents call the minister's competence into question. To the Premier: what are you going to do about it?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think it's really important to understand that our government is working very hard to improve the situation for people who receive services from PDD and also to ensure that while we do that, we work very carefully with those service providers to ensure that the work that is done allows those providers to continue to provide that support so that people don't ultimately find themselves without homes. Our minister has been working very carefully and very closely with those communities and with those service providers and with those clients . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Dr. Starke: Mr. Speaker, the Member for Calgary-North West raised serious questions about the new – and I stress: new – disgusting practice to have PDD clients essentially put up for bid by service providers, and all the minister can do is quote from old e-mails and blame the past. But his knowledge of that past is incomplete and inaccurate. He doesn't even recognize that my colleague's past exemplary service within his own ministry never included responsibility for PDD. It is clear that he doesn't know his ministry, either what's happening now or what happened in the past. To the Premier: what are you going to do about it?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, what I'm going to do and what the rest of this government is going to do is continue to reach out to support the Albertans who require the services. It may well be that the minister misspoke and identified the wrong minister. That happens. It is not in any way indicative of whether or not he is working very hard every day to ensure that people who receive PDD services get the care they need, and he will continue to do that.

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, let's try another place that he misspoke. During the Calgary-Greenway by-election the NDP sent out a fundraising e-mail, which I will table, signed by the Human Services minister. That e-mail said, and I quote: people of Calgary-Greenway are fed up with broken promises and empty platitudes; they want an MLA who can actually get things done for them. Really? He says these shameful and disrespectful things about a man loved and respected in our province and beyond, a man that five months ago both the minister and the Premier stood in this Assembly and honoured. To the Premier: what do you have to say about that?

Ms Notley: What I have to say, Mr. Speaker, is that the member opposite is engaging in a great deal of exaggeration and creative thought to suggest that what was said means what he is suggesting. [interjection] No. He was talking forward, and I think that that is quite reasonable. That's what we did in the election, and that's what we did in the by-elections, and that's what we will do going forward. You know what? Many, many Albertans did not have their needs met under the former government, and that's why there is now a new one. [interjection]

Mr. Mason: You pretend that it is so you can make an issue.

The Speaker: Hon. member. [interjection] Hon. member.
The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Small-business Tax

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My questions are for the Premier. Small businesses, over 85 per cent of all Alberta businesses, are struggling in the current downturn. They don't need a handout, but they could use a level playing field and in these times a clear message that this government is not just about taxes. Other

companies in other provinces have enjoyed investment tax credits, which allow new dollars invested in new enterprise to benefit and reduce taxes and later provide increased income to government through more successful businesses. To the Premier: why is your government opposed to significantly reducing small-business tax?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to begin by thanking the member opposite for that question and, of course, acknowledging that it is quite true that small businesses and small-business owners contribute to the greatest number of jobs in Alberta, and it's important for us to be able to reach out to them and to work closely with them. So we're very excited about the details that will be forthcoming in the budget in just a short period of time, and I am hopeful that members of the small-business community will agree with us.

Thank you.

Dr. Swann: Mr. Speaker, small business in other provinces over many years has received investment tax credits. Why not Alberta?

Ms Notley: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, I think it's really important, just generally speaking, to remember that in Alberta we don't have a sales tax, and as a result of that, all members, all Albertans, including small-business owners, benefit from the fact that overall we continue to have the lowest tax regime in the country. That being said, on the specific issue raised by the member, I would suggest that he stay tuned.

Dr. Swann: Mr. Speaker, I am eager to stay tuned.

Given that the government's incoming carbon tax will have a significant impact on small business, what plans does the government have to compensate small business?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, again, as I said, even when the levy is introduced, Alberta will still enjoy the lowest overall tax regime in the country. That won't change. But that being said, there are a number of ways in which we are going to work with small-business owners. We, of course, just reintroduced the STEP program, which the previous government had cut, and then expanded it to small-business owners. We will be moving forward on a number of other supports for small-business owners. Again, as I say, stay tuned.

Pipeline Construction

Ms McPherson: Mr. Speaker, many of the organizations and constituents in Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill rely on the oil and gas sector for work and for business, and in meeting with private citizens and companies who are stakeholders in the energy industry, I've heard how it's imperative that our government succeeds in getting new pipelines built. Our province's reliance on a single price and a single market for our energy products is having a negative impact, and my riding is feeling the brunt of the drop in oil prices. Can the Minister of Energy update the House on the work she's doing to get pipelines built?

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for this important question. I am very, very proud of the work we are doing as a government along with our Premier to get to yes to pipelines. We know that access to international markets

is critically important, not just for Alberta but for Canada. We are now in a state where the United States was our biggest market; now they're our biggest competitor. We have to continue with the drama-free dialogues and get a pipeline case that is judged on its merit, not on politics. We also need everyone to work with us.

2:10

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms McPherson: Thank you. Thank you to the minister. Mr. Speaker, given the inability of previous governments to get pipelines built, again to the Minister of Energy: how is the minister working with her counterparts across the country to get pipelines approved?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. We are doing a new approach. Past approaches of bullying people and being dramatic about it have not worked. We are taking a conscious approach to work with people, work with industry, work with constituents in a concerted effort to get to yes. This isn't just about Alberta; this is about Canada. This is about our economy and the Canadian economy.

The Speaker: Second supplemental question.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that pipelines will not only help my constituents and other Albertans get through this economic downturn but all Canadians as well, again to the same minister: how will a pipeline benefit our economy as a whole?

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you for the question. We know that pipelines are the safest mode of transporting our product to market. We know that we lose a lot of money in Alberta, which stays in Alberta and that we could be using, because of the prices people have to pay, that companies have to pay for rail and other ways to get our product to market. We know there are benefits in pipelines. We know there are benefits to jobs here in Alberta and in Canada with the steelmakers, with our workers, and this is why we all need to work together to get to yes.

Human Trafficking

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, recently the Action Coalition on Human Trafficking, also known as ACT, identified that there has been a massive increase in the number of human trafficking cases reported in our province. In fact, the executive director for this coalition stated yesterday that she is seeing the average number of trafficked victims doubling every year. Can the Minister of Human Services explain his strategy to ensure Alberta's men, women, and children are not trafficked for the purposes of labour exploitation, sexual exploitation, or the removal of organs?

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Of course, human trafficking is a serious issue that hits home for us all. Our government is committed to moving forward, working with our police partners, to ensure that the right information can flow from one organization to the other. ALERT is an organization that helps to bring all that policing information together so we can do intelligence-led policing. We will continue to move forward to fight this sort of crime.

Thank you.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this issue has received little attention in recent years, even as more and more Albertans are at risk, and considering that even one Albertan left to the heartbreaking fate of being a victim of human trafficking is one too many, will the minister tell this Assembly if his government is taking a strong stand for Albertans who may be vulnerable to human trafficking?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Of course, this government is committed to protecting vulnerable Albertans, and I think it's a tragedy when any Albertan falls into human trafficking or into the clutches of any other groups that are trying to do these inappropriate things. You know, our government will continue to work with front-line services to ensure that these people have the protection that they need, and we will also continue to invest in front-line services to ensure that people don't become vulnerable to these sorts of groups.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the CBC article that came out yesterday could only cite conviction data from 2008 and that an up-to-date understanding of the situation is vital to our ability to tackle the problem of human trafficking in Alberta, does the minister have any current studies that she could share that would help organizations such as ACT and the members of this Assembly reach solutions to protect those who are at risk for human trafficking?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. With respect to the data that we keep, I'll obviously have to look into it and get back to the member, and I can report back on that issue. You know, in terms of this issue I think that the critical piece moving forward is to keep in mind that in addition to having the correct law enforcement measures in place, we need to continue to invest in front-line services, in human services, in health care and mental health care to ensure that people aren't vulnerable to these sorts of things.

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

PDD Service Delivery

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many people with disabilities don't have families to advocate for them. This means that their legal representation is crucial to ensuring that they get the quality and meaningful supports they need. When the Human Services ministry recently asked any PDD legal counsel who had worked with the previous government to recuse themselves, it sent service providers scrambling at the last minute for substitutes ahead of a much-needed meeting with the minister. To the Minister of Human Services. Forcing service providers to find alternate legal counsel before one of the few meetings you agreed to is more than a little mean-spirited. What were you . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member.

The Minister of Human Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. It's an important issue, and today my ministry legal

team will be meeting with ACDS, which is the representative umbrella organization for 139 service providers, and they will work to deal with all issues relating to the procurement and the new contract.

Thank you.

Ms Jansen: Mr. Speaker, given that according to one family member of a person with disabilities what they've seen from the Human Services ministry isn't collaboration – it's petty bullying – and that if not for the resourcefulness of this community they would have had to cancel one of the very few meetings they had with you, can the Minister of Human Services tell us whether this shameful behaviour is what service providers and stakeholders can expect in the future?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member refers to one particular incident. I would invite the member to send my office the details, and I will look into that issue.

The second thing. We took a collaborative approach. One example is PDD standard 8, that was slammed by the previous government onto service providers. We consulted with them, and we repealed those standards. We are working with them to make sure that we get this right.

Ms Jansen: And my last question . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, do you have a preamble? We're after question five. You were awfully lengthy before you got to the question, so when you use this one, please be more conscious of that.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My last question is to the Premier. Given that you stood with the disabled community on the steps of this Legislature in solidarity, how can you defend the devastating changes to PDD that your government made and that left countless Albertans feeling helpless and hopeless?

The Speaker: The Minister of Human Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. The allegations levelled against our government are not true. We are working with the community to resolve all issues. That includes PDD safety standards that were imposed on the community, that includes procurement, and that includes all issues that matter to that community. We will work in collaboration with them. We will not bully that community. We will work with them, and we want to work with them. I assure all Albertans that's our approach going forward, and we will stick with that.

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

Transportation Infrastructure Priorities

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituents and those of neighbouring constituencies are grumbling about their increased commute time on highway 2 through St. Albert. Former Premier Stelmach did a deal to cover some of the costs and designated Ray Gibbon Drive on the west side of St. Albert as the future highway 2 freeway that will serve as the St. Albert bypass from south of Morinville to the Anthony Henday ring road. Can the minister tell the House where this entire project is on the secretive prioritized transportation sunshine list?

2:20

Mr. Mason: No, Mr. Speaker. I can't do that.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have many construction companies that are looking for work yet, and we can get going on this construction.

Given that the current two-lane alignment of Ray Gibbon Drive from the Anthony Henday ring road to Villeneuve Road has already reached and exceeds the traffic counts required for twinning and whereas the minister has the power to break up giant projects into smaller pieces, can the minister advise the House of when this section of the future highway 2 will be twinned to accommodate the current and future volume of traffic?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We have many competing priorities for transportation dollars in our capital plan. The capital plan will be presented to the House and to the public in just a very short time, and I would ask the hon. member to stay tuned. But I do want to indicate there are very many priorities and far less money than is needed to meet them all. That doesn't mean they're bad projects. It just means that there are other projects that are a higher priority.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Albertans fear losing construction seasons from bad planning and delayed tenders and given that the construction industry is trying to get some sense of when the work is coming so they can better plan their labour and equipment and given that this government has promised billions in infrastructure spending on projects not unlike the twinning of Ray Gibbon Drive, can the minister account for the absence of a prioritized infrastructure sunshine list?

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, the sunshine list will be made available as part of the capital plan and will be released as part of the budget later this afternoon, so I can't make any further comment with respect to the member's question.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Urgent Health Care in Sylvan Lake

Mr. MacIntyre: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Twenty thousand people live in the Sylvan Lake area, and over 900,000 tourists visit annually. A committee of health care professionals and area mayors proposed a Sylvan Lake urgent care facility to the minister. With an operating expense of only \$2 million, it would have saved AHS well over that figure by diverting non life-threatening care away from Red Deer regional hospital. Those facts are clear. This business plan reduces patient trauma, reduces wait times, and saves money. What excuse does the minister have to give the mothers and fathers of Sylvan Lake for saying no to this common-sense proposal?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I haven't said no. I actually had a very productive meeting with the community last December. We continue to exchange materials and have follow-up conversations. Certainly, there is a desire to make sure that everyone gets the right care in the right place, and clearly Sylvan Lake is a very busy community and even busier during the

summer months. We'll continue to look at the data that we have on the central zone, including communities like Sylvan Lake, and find the best way to meet the needs of the community.

Mr. MacIntyre: Well, Mr. Speaker, that might be welcome news, but given the fact that this government has a proclivity for grand statements and words about review and the right things in the right place at the right time, which is a lot of rhetoric, the fine people of Sylvan Lake would like to ask the minister: when can they expect this desperately needed urgent care facility to open? These families deserve a firm timeline.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to answer yet another spend question. I imagine in about an hour we'll be hearing comments around deep cuts that should be seen in the budget.

Certainly, in terms of electing a government that's going to move forward in a reasonable, responsible, and sustainable way, that's what the people of Alberta elected, and that's what we're pleased to give them. That includes making sure that we have the right access. Certainly, the physicians that I've met with in the community as well as the mayor and other local advocates are looking at ways that we can use the existing infrastructure as well to increase capacity. I appreciate that everyone is turning their heads to that, and as I've said in the past, when I . . .

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

Mr. MacIntyre: Well, Mr. Speaker, just to correct the hon. minister, that plan . . .

The Speaker: Ask the question, hon. member.

Mr. MacIntyre: If I may ask the question, that plan, Mr. Speaker, was a cost-savings plan. Why didn't the minister just approve it? This minister has become very . . .

The Speaker: Is that your question, hon. member? Is that your question?

Mr. MacIntyre: Yes. It's been nearly a year. When will this minister . . .

The Speaker: I'm sorry, hon. member. You asked two questions, or I thought you did, at least, but you got it confused.
I'm going to the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Ms Hoffman: Don't I get to answer?

The Speaker: The hon. minister would like to reply?

Ms Hoffman: If you'd like me to. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The question that was asked around a cost-savings initiative: I know that the community worked very hard when the past government made an announcement about building a number of family care clinics that certainly didn't follow with the money. It created great confusion not just in Sylvan Lake but in many places across Alberta. Certainly, we're looking at ways that we can work with the community. I understand that there's a desire to increase expenditure in one area that may be offset in another. We're going to continue to consider their proposals and work in partnership as we move forward.

Services for Indigenous Peoples

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, the identity of potential foster parents is often considered an important factor in the placement of indigenous children. According to a StatsCan report released just yesterday, in western provinces Alberta had the lowest proportion, at just 29 per cent, of these children living with at least one indigenous foster parent. To the Minister of Indigenous Relations: what current initiatives are you undertaking in this government to increase the number of these children placed with at least one indigenous foster parent?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. This ministry believes very fundamentally in the philosophy of indigenous children residing with indigenous foster parents, and as a result we've had many meetings with chiefs and councils from across the province to talk about the process of bringing foster parents up to speed so that they can take in children from their own communities.

Thank you.

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, a lot of improvement to go from 29 per cent.

Given that today's Supreme Court ruling in Daniels versus Canada, that Métis and nonstatus Indians are indeed Indians, affirms federal responsibility for indigenous peoples and given that in the past Alberta filled the breach in providing requisite services with little or no help from the federal government, again to the minister: what will you do to ensure that Alberta receives its fair share of support from the federal government for continued provision of necessary programs and services for all indigenous people in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much to the member for the question. Alberta is very proud to have been ahead of the curve on the issues that have been brought forward under the Daniels decision. We are the only province in the country who has settlement lands assigned for Métis people. We have signed recently the consultation agreement with the settlement people, and we are also looking at a consultation agreement with the nonsettlement people. We are ahead of this, we are working very hard, and we are going to be working with the federal government for tripartite arrangements.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, according to the most recent Human Services child intervention data there were over 72,000 people who received child intervention services in Alberta. Given that 34 per cent were indigenous, despite making up only 6.2 per cent of Alberta's population, what is the Human Services minister currently doing to decrease this number, and how will he ensure that he addresses the needs of indigenous peoples across Alberta?

The Speaker: The Minister of Human Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the very important question. Certainly, our indigenous children are overrepresented in our system, and that's a cause for concern across Canada. Even this morning I spoke to my federal counterpart exactly around this issue. We are working with our indigenous partners, indigenous communities, and federal counterpart to make

sure that we put in the right supports for the indigenous people so that we can decrease the number of people in our care.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for West Yellowhead.

Strategic Transportation Infrastructure Program

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. After years of cutbacks by the previous government communities across the province are facing massive infrastructure deficits. Ensuring that our communities have strong and modern transportation networks and infrastructure is essential to the economic well-being of these communities. I've heard from many municipal councillors and leaders throughout my constituency who have told me how vital the transportation infrastructure program, or STIP, is to the future of their communities. To the Minister of Infrastructure: what are you doing to ensure that funding for this program is maintained?

The Speaker: Hon. member, would you please contain the length of the preamble.

The minister.

2:30

Mr. Mason: Thank you. That was the first question, I think, Mr. Speaker.

I want to thank the hon. member for the question. Supporting rural communities and helping them build strong, resilient communities are key priorities of our government. The STIP program, the strategic transportation infrastructure program, will help to improve local and municipal transportation infrastructure that Albertans use every day. I announced in last year's budget that \$100 million will be made available between 2017 and 2019 for this program. I ask the hon. member to stay tuned this afternoon.

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Speaker, given that we need to ensure that programs like STIP, which are designed to help municipalities continue to meet the specific needs of these municipalities, again to the Minister of Infrastructure: have municipalities and counties had the opportunity to provide input on how this program is working?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, as I promised last fall, we've been gathering input from stakeholders, rural and smaller municipalities that STIP is designed to serve. In March, at the start of the AAMD and C we launched our STIP engagement process, and over the last month my ministry has held four workshop sessions, including one at AAMD and C, where 69 members were represented. I've personally been meeting with mayors and reeves with respect to this, and we're getting excellent feedback on how this program can meet the needs of rural municipalities.

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Minister.

Mr. Speaker, given that municipalities across the province are all facing similar challenges when it comes to the backlog of infrastructure projects, again to the same minister: what are you doing to ensure that municipalities' specific infrastructure priorities are taken into account?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I think that one of the key things about the STIP program is that it does provide

capital funding to municipalities, who work on the priorities that they have for their community, for their citizens within the scope of the program. So we're glad to partner with those communities to invest in local priorities like roads, bridges, and small airports, and we've engaged with them, as I mentioned, to find ways to improve the program and to tailor it to the actual needs of rural municipalities.

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

Infrastructure Project Prioritization

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Way back in 2014 the previous government promised a value scoping for Father Lacombe school for a much-needed modernization, but the school is still waiting. We heard from the Auditor General that ministers made promises without having adequate systems in place to deliver. Will this government do any better? So far, no. STAR Catholic's board was promised value scoping, but appointments have been cancelled multiple times by the current government. What will the minister do to correct the government's practice of leaping to promises without the leadership to deliver?

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the hon. member for his question. Well, I think the best example is the Auditor General's report with respect to school construction, which was something that was initiated by this government because we were concerned that we needed to strengthen our processes within our own departments, but we were also concerned that so many schools had been promised without adequate planning, without even land being in place in many cases. I think the Auditor General has shown that there were very serious deficiencies.

In answer to his question – are we going to continue to do that? – the answer is no, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Orr: Glad to hear the answer. That's the right one.

Mr. Speaker, also given that Alberta Education confirmed this project in September, well after the current government took control of the helm, and given that it's just one example of failed initiatives, which include the failure to deliver that promised infrastructure sunshine list, the question again, from another person, I guess: when will the Minister of Infrastructure be able to finally produce that sunshine list to give clarity to infrastructure projects, both for STAR Catholic and communities across the province?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, you know, I think the answer is on the face of my watch with respect to that, but the member knows that I can't disclose what's in the budget. He's trying to get me into trouble.

Mr. Orr: Mr. Speaker, as long as the answer is actually in the documents that get presented.

Given that Father Lacombe school is 60 years old and that modernization has been a top priority for the board but they can't even get to the first step of assessment and given that it's been forced to create its annual capital plan while still uncertain of when modernization might be coming and as a result is struggling to provide properly for its students, will the minister commit to resolving this particular issue and establish a firm date for the value scoping of Father Lacombe school?

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, thank you for the question. As part of the mechanism that we put in place with the Auditor General and better communication – what better communication is is to have individual MLAs give us some information about their schools and what they need. So I'd be glad to work with that to look for a mechanism by which we can scope that out. We let the school boards make those decisions about prioritizing where their money needs to go because they have the best eyes on the ground to see what their children need for the best education possible.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I was about to say that the Government House Leader does not need any help in terms of getting into trouble, but what is abundantly evident to the House today is that I, too, can do it alone.

The Member for Calgary-Greenway.

Agricultural Trade with India

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just over two years ago the government signed a historic trade agreement with the state of Punjab in India. That agreement focuses on the agriculture industry, which is one of the major drivers of the Alberta economy. Growing this industry is integral to diversifying the provincial economy. To the minister of economic development: can you provide an update on the status of the agriculture working group that was formed with this trade deal as well as an update on your ministry's recent trade initiatives with the state of Punjab?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member and congratulate him on his first question in this House. I'll begin by saying that trade is very important to our government. Alberta is a resource- and trade-based economy, so we are working to strengthen our ties with all of our trading jurisdictions. India, of course, is one of our major trading partners, and our government is committed to looking for opportunities, especially within the agricultural sector, not only adding value to our product here at home but also looking for opportunities to increase trade and get our products to market.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

First supplemental.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that when the trade deal was signed, in January 2014, there was an average of \$102 million worth of products and services exported from Alberta to India each year and given that this is a key portion of economic diversity, to the minister. As I mentioned, Alberta was exporting over \$100 million worth of products and services two years ago. What is the expected export value for this year, and what is your government doing to grow that number?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know what? I want to thank the member for the question, a very good question. There are a number of initiatives that our government is undertaking. Unfortunately, the member will have to wait about another 40 minutes to get more details.

But to his previous question: I don't have it off the top here as far as the status of the working group. I'm happy to get back to the member on the status of the working group and can assure this

House that we are looking at growing our trade and our exports to markets like India.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the creation of the agriculture working group as well as the deal itself was intended to promote the sharing of ideas, skills, and the best practices and given that facilitating and maintaining this exchange are integral to the success of Alberta business on the world stage, to the minister: what current initiatives is your ministry working on today to facilitate the sharing of ideas, skills, and best practices with our partners in Punjab?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member for his second supplemental. Again, not only is trade absolutely critical; we do need to work collaboratively with our trading partners and look at opportunities to enhance that. I know that the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry has this at the top of his priorities as far as looking for opportunities to support Alberta-based businesses in agriculture, agrifoods, and forestry, looking for opportunities to increase our trade and at all corners looking to decrease any type of inhibitors that are cutting down our trade. Again to the member's question: I will get an update on the working group . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

2:40 Community Development

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this is National Volunteer Week, a time for all of us to thank all the hard-working Albertans who are fostering community capacity, reducing barriers, and promoting inclusivity in Alberta, to the Minister of Culture and Tourism: how is your ministry helping volunteer organizations and community groups in this vital work?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to the member for the question. I was happy to attend an event and bring greetings on behalf of the government at a volunteer week celebration earlier this week. We know that Albertans value volunteerism and contribute thousands of hours each year to their communities. My ministry supports their efforts by distributing funding to community groups through programs like the CFEP and CIP grants. I'll also take this opportunity to thank every volunteer in Alberta for the amazing work that they do and the contribution they make.

Thank you.

Dr. Turner: Mr. Speaker, given that community organizations rely heavily on volunteers to provide vital services in their communities, especially during these challenging economic times, to the same minister: what are you doing to ensure that Albertans continue to have accessible and comprehensive programming in their communities?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to the member for the question. I am proud of the work that my ministry does to promote keeping Albertans engaged in building their communities. We continue to provide funding to recreation facilities and programs,

which help to keep our children healthy and active. Additionally, we continue to support museums, heritage sites across the province to ensure that Albertans have access to high-quality cultural experiences.

Thank you.

Dr. Turner: Mr. Speaker, given that developing relationships with one's constituency is critical to the democratic process and given that my constituents were very pleased to have had personally delivered CFEP and CIP cheques in Edmonton-Whitemud, is this a common practice for all MLAs?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thanks to the member for the question. Along with my cabinet colleagues I'm working hard to make our government open, transparent, accessible, and this includes the grant cheque distribution. I was pleased to give all MLAs in this House, regardless of political party, the opportunity to distribute CFEP and CIP grants in recent quarters. I look forward to continuing this type of work of collaboration across parties. I have received a lot of positive feedback from members of the opposition, and I think it's a very good way to promote working collaboratively in this House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in 15 seconds we will continue with Members' Statements.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

Municipal Collaboration

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today in the House and speak about the collaborative relationship that we share with our municipal counterparts to develop our communities. As members of this Assembly we have a lot to learn from our municipal counterparts. Around the world municipalities are being recognized for their innovation and leadership on a wide variety of issues. Be it social or economic, municipalities are exploring cutting-edge solutions and developing innovative policies to help people. Most importantly, they are taking co-operative approaches in addressing socioeconomic challenges faced by families.

In my beautiful constituency of Spruce Grove-St. Albert we have many examples of co-operative spirit. All Spruce Grove-St. Albert municipalities are part of the Capital Region Board, a platform composed of 24 municipalities and representing 31 per cent of Alberta's population that tries to make the best decisions for the citizens of our communities and helps us grow our economy and standard of living together by working with Edmonton and area municipalities.

In Spruce Grove-St. Albert we also have the tri area, made up of Spruce Grove, Stony Plain, and Parkland county. Together these three communities strive to work together to address crime, build common community facilities like the tri leisure centre. This centre in particular opened in 2002 and strives to meet the recreational, social, and wellness needs of the tri-area communities and develop a sense of community spirit.

As you can see, Mr. Speaker, municipalities are adept at coming together to work toward common goals, to compromise when it is needed, and, most importantly, to grow together as a society. Those of us in this Assembly have a lot to learn from our municipalities.

We can identify common goals and then take a unified approach to make them a reality and build a stronger community.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Chestermere-Rocky View.

Autism Spectrum Disorder

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on an issue very close to my heart. Autism spectrum disorder touches the families of 1 in 94 school-aged children in Alberta, and my family is one of those families. I remember the day that my beautiful blue-eyed boy was placed into my arms. He was sweet, affectionate, fully aware, and was our gift to our older son. For nine months he developed fairly consistently with our other son and was making sounds and starting to call us by our names. Music to any parents' ears. Then one day he disappeared. His eyes, that once lit up when he saw me, suddenly would not focus on my face, and his mind was trapped somewhere deep inside.

Autism spectrum disorder is a neurological condition that is characterized by repetitive, rigid behaviours and lifelong impairments in communication and social relationships. Anyone in this House who has encountered one of the over 515,000 people living with autism spectrum disorder in Canada knows that it is these initial challenges that make a breakthrough with any one of these children beautiful and precious. Because of early intervention and because of the amazing support that we received, we pulled Sehran back from autism. He is now 17 and a half and will graduate from high school in May.

Upon graduation my son Sehran will face a new challenge, the support cliff resulting from a less-systemized and less-generous support system available for adults with neurodevelopmental disabilities. As my son struggles to find his place in a PDD program that was not designed to see him have true independence, I will continue to cherish breakthroughs and advocate for his needs.

Globally 80 per cent of those with autism are not in the workforce. These beautiful minds need to be nurtured, their potential unlocked and not squandered. I ask that the members of this House work diligently to provide my son and other members of this vulnerable group with the care, consideration, and protection of this Legislative Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Provincial Fiscal Policies

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I have an opportunity to rise and speak on an issue top of mind for most Albertans, of course, the impending budget and our children's economic future. In the last while Albertans have been bombarded with economic notions and posturing from all sides of the political spectrum. One side would have us borrow \$10.4 billion with no clear plan nor timeline for balance or repayment. The other side would have us cut 2,000 jobs from the civil service in the name of austerity while saying that this won't impact front-line services for Albertans. The PC Party would engage Albertans, hoping to listen better this time and undo the distrust over decades of financial mismanagement. Albertans deserve better than these ideological platitudes. The serious issues facing us transcend easy labels of left, right, or centre.

Our health care system is the most expensive in the country, with mediocre results, including today's report on growing cancer wait times. We know how to save millions in health care. We need leaders that will shift to prevention and make the changes needed in our primary care system.

Our power grid has been overbuilt, subsidized by oil royalties and ignorance of the different energy futures that we need. It will soon cost businesses and all of us far more in power than we've paid in decades.

Many years of promises to diversify our economy have resulted in naught. The lowest tax regime in the country didn't create the businesses that would sustain our economy through an oil crash, nor did the subsidies to some of the largest corporations in the world, whose profits went elsewhere.

Albertans don't need their government to hold their ideologies with both hands. Albertans need leadership, and they need us here in the Chamber to listen to them and debate thoughtful, evidence-based solutions that stimulate small business and advance our postsecondary education and training programs.

It's my fondest hope that today's budget will offer Albertans not another subtle reorganization of priorities based on ideology but real hope for all, including our First Nations, and a good way forward. My hope is that we in our collective will in this House will demonstrate vision of who we are becoming in our diverse and potential society, compassionate and secure, and . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Government Policies

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For months now the opposition has been fond of accusing us of engaging in risky ideological experiments. Now the *Oxford* dictionary defines ideology as "a system of ideas and ideals, especially one which forms the basis of economic or political theory and policy," or "visionary speculation, especially of an unrealistic or idealistic nature." Since we're all here to defend our political and economic ideas and ideals, I assume the opposition is referring to the latter. On that point, I dare say, they're hardly immune.

2:50

Risky ideology is believing you can instantly cut billions of dollars from public services and not affect front-line workers. Risky ideology is blindly insisting, despite clear examples like Kansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi, that slashing taxes always increases revenues and promotes growth. Risky ideology is wanting those cuts so badly that social issues aren't even on your radar. Risky ideology is questioning, in the face of 97 per cent of publishing scientists, the pressing reality of man-made climate change. Risky ideology is believing that a growing province could afford to adopt an experimental flat tax and depend on volatile royalty revenues to fund essential public services. Risky ideology is believing that you can run on deficits when oil was \$100 a barrel but must be austere when it's less than \$40. Risky ideology is saying little on LGBTQ rights because maintaining your base is more important than the safety of children in our schools. And risky ideology is insisting that anyone who doesn't embrace your own extreme views is some kind of red menace out to destroy our province.

Mr. Speaker, I was elected by the people of Edmonton-Centre to stand against these sorts of risky ideas. This afternoon we will table a budget based on compassion and common sense, a budget that will help create jobs, build and repair public infrastructure and affordable housing, and help all Albertans cope with the effects of the historic drop in the price of oil. And that is an ideology I can believe in.

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

Greater Forest Lawn 55+ Society

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's a hard act to follow.

I rise today to recognize an amazing organization serving my constituents of Calgary-East, the Greater Forest Lawn 55+ Society. Recently I had the privilege of attending the society's 40th anniversary celebration. I was resoundingly teased, being the new kid on the block, and was mostly asked to relay messages to the hon. Minister of Finance, who has worked with this exceptional organization for years in his role as city councillor. It was a wonderful event, filled with good food, friends, and lots of laughs.

It's no surprise that the Greater Forest Lawn 55+ Society has been around for 40 years. Their membership fees are only \$5 a year, which is a pretty incredible deal considering the wide range of activities they offer. Carpet bowling, square dancing, bingo, crib, bridge, Zumba, Saturday night dances, and Wednesday lunches are only a few examples. They also provide a wide range of valuable services: snow clearing, lawn maintenance, good food boxes, and the memory plus program for seniors with dementia.

I have neighbours on my street who take advantage of the lawn services, and I can say from experience that they do an amazing job. They're working hard to help keep these seniors in their homes longer.

The society was recently able to secure funding to replace their old sign with a new electronic sign, which has been an exciting addition as they can now advertise all of the amazing activities they offer without risking anyone falling off a ladder.

It's important to note that almost all of these activities and services are run by volunteers. I think that's appropriate, considering it is volunteer week here in Alberta. They do this valuable work to create a sense of community, a place where everyone feels welcome. They want seniors to be engaged in the community and to not be isolated. Their goal is to keep members young, active, and as independent as possible, and from what I saw at the 40th anniversary, they're easily meeting that goal.

I'm looking forward to joining the club when I turn 55, which is a ways off, but based on their past success, I have no doubt that they will be waiting for me when I get there.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Highwood.

Registry Service Renewal Reminders

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently this government announced it is switching to electronic reminders for registration, licence, and ID card renewals in an effort to save money. While this government certainly needs to start finding ways to save money, I'm concerned that it hasn't properly balanced savings with the priorities in this case.

Specifically, I'm concerned with the impact this change will have on the vulnerable seniors and rural Albertans that don't have access to Internet, let alone e-mail. Several constituents and their families have contacted my office with these concerns. I humbly suggest that the minister reconsider the government's position with respect to seniors and rural Albertans as Internet service is simply not reliable or readily available in all rural areas.

While the federal government's most recent budget left much to be desired – and maybe today's will, too; who knows? – it did include \$500 million for investment to further expand and enhance high-speed Internet infrastructure in rural and remote communities. I urge the provincial government to take advantage of this program

so that more Albertans can access the Internet and savings and measures like this can have a universally positive effect.

In the meantime, the NDP government should extend the grace period beyond one year for those vulnerable seniors and rural Albertans without Internet access so they're not left behind. It's only fair.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Introduction of Bills

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

Bill 10

Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 10, the Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016.

The proposed bill covers amendments in several different areas, including the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act, the Financial Administration Act, the Alberta Centennial Education Savings Plan Act, and several tax statutes. These amendments will provide flexibility to address current economic and fiscal challenges, and they will also protect the integrity of our provincial tax system and provide for greater clarity and consistency in our financial legislation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 10 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to table with you a copy of the spring 2016 main budget estimates schedule.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-North West.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of a letter from a concerned Albertan, the mother of a daughter with cerebral palsy, a caregiver as well to another individual with FASD, expressing her concern over the procurement plan – actually, concern is a mild word – with the policy and the treatment from Human Services. I have five copies here to present to you right now.

As well, my second tabling, Mr. Speaker, is five copies of a post-mortem on B.C.'s experience moving to their procurement policy. It is what I like to call a cautionary tale. It would have been nice if our government had actually read through it before they decided to go ahead with procurement, but better late than never. I'm tabling five copies.

Thank you.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Sabir, Minister of Human Services, an e-mail message dated April 6, 2016, from Ann Nicol, chief executive officer, Alberta Council of Disability Services, to hon. Mr. Sabir, Minister of Human Services, confirming a meeting regarding the new disability services contract, relating to comments made by hon. Mr. Sabir during Oral Question Period on April 13, 2016.

The Speaker: In order to allow adequate time to prepare for the Budget Address by the hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance this afternoon, this House is recessed until 3:15.

[The Assembly adjourned from 2:59 p.m. to 3:15 p.m.]

Orders of the Day

Transmittal of Estimates

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, I have received certain messages from Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, which I now transmit to you.

The Sergeant-at-Arms: Order! All rise, please.

The Speaker: The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required by the offices of the Legislative Assembly for the service of the province of Alberta for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

The Lieutenant Governor transmits estimates of certain sums required by the government for the service of the province for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017, and recommends the same to the Legislative Assembly.

Please be seated.

Government Motions

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, I wish to table the 2016-17 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates as well as the 2016-17 government estimates. In addition, I also wish to table the 2016-19 government of Alberta strategic plan and the Budget 2016 ministry business plans.

Budget Address

13. Mr. Ceci moved:
Be it resolved that the Assembly approve in general the business plans and fiscal policies of the government.

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, I now wish to table the government's Budget 2016 fiscal plan and move Government Motion 13.

I am pleased to present Budget 2016, the Alberta jobs plan. Mr. Speaker, the Alberta jobs plan supports families in a tough economy. The Alberta jobs plan protects health care, education, and the vital public services that Albertans count on. And, above all, the Alberta jobs plan diversifies Alberta's economy and creates thousands of jobs. In short, the Alberta jobs plan moves Alberta forward.

3:20

Let me begin today by expressing my thanks to the thousands upon thousands of Albertans who contributed to the plan. In telephone town halls, at public meetings, in homes, workplaces, and chance encounters on the street Albertans from every walk of life in every part of the province offered me, the Premier, and our government their views on the priorities we should set. I am extremely grateful for their thoughtful input. One thing was crystal clear in everything we heard: though the collapse in oil prices has shocked our economy, it has not shaken our spirit. Hope, optimism, and an abiding faith in a better tomorrow are in our DNA. They are how this province was built. So, too, is our deep commitment to the communities we call home.

Alberta is made up of people from every part of the globe pursuing their dreams as only we can in a province blessed by an

abundance of natural resources, talent, and entrepreneurial spirit. We share common ambitions for a future in which we all participate as full citizens and equal partners. As the throne speech said, in Alberta "we always pull together." Mr. Speaker, these are the values, the bedrock values, upon which the Alberta jobs plan is built, and these are the values that will get us through the collapse in oil prices and lay the foundation for a more resilient, more diversified, and more prosperous economy.

Mr. Speaker, we are at a critical moment in Alberta's history. In the past year and a half the price of oil has dropped by over two-thirds, from a peak of more than \$105 per barrel in the summer of 2014 to less than \$30 in January. In Alberta we're used to volatile oil markets, but this price bust is the most dramatic in generations. It is causing tremendous economic pain and anxiety. I see that every day in letters that arrive in my office and in the concerns brought to me by my constituents. Many Albertans are hurting. Unemployment has risen dramatically, peaking at 7.9 per cent this year, and revenues to government have fallen off a cliff. In 2013-14 the province booked almost \$10 billion in nonrenewable resource revenue. This year we are forecasting an almost 90 per cent drop to \$1.4 billion, less revenue than we've seen in 40 years. Dollar for dollar lower royalties mean there will be a higher deficit, and revenues from other taxes will be lower as well.

Mr. Speaker, the oil price shock has produced a deficit of \$10.4 billion in this year's budget. To account for the extreme volatility of oil prices, particularly in the last year, the deficit includes a \$700 million risk adjustment. Faced with the collapse in prices for our most valuable commodity, Albertans are confronted with a choice that will have profound consequences for generations to come. When oil prices fell in the past, Alberta governments responded by making reckless and extreme cuts to public services, firing thousands of teachers and nurses, cutting supports for seniors, and abandoning the most vulnerable. Some say that we should turn the clock back and do the same thing today, but on this side of the Legislature we fundamentally disagree. On this side of the Legislature we are standing with Albertans because Albertans told us how detrimental the slash-and-burn approach would be for our economy and our society. It would only cause more pain and economic anxiety, tearing at the fabric of our communities and making a difficult situation even worse.

Mr. Speaker, that's why our government is taking a different approach, a better approach. We are thoughtfully and carefully reducing the cost of government while protecting the public services we all count on. Let me provide you with a few examples. Instead of extreme cuts, our government is amalgamating or dissolving 26 agencies, boards, and commissions, saving approximately \$33 million over three years. Instead of slashing public services, our government is reducing budgets for salaries and supplies in government departments by nearly 2 per cent this year, saving \$121 million. Instead of taking a panicked approach, our government is deferring some of our platform commitments, slowing down the rollout, and reallocating savings to where they are needed most, and we are streamlining programs such as Alberta Innovates and community partnership grants and suspending payments to the access to the future fund.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to these careful measures to bring down the cost of government, we are also taking action to control costs in the public sector. We have frozen management salaries at government agencies, boards, and commissions, and we have commenced a review of salary rates overall in these agencies. Cabinet, MLAs, and political staff will not see a salary increase for the entire term of this Legislature. The same is true for managers in the public service for two years. Cost control measures such as these are not easy, but they are necessary.

Quite frankly, however, they are not enough to get the job done. For that, we need to tackle rising costs in our public health care system. I want to be clear. Public health care is a sacred trust shared by every Albertan, and this government is absolutely determined to protect it today and for future generations. Owing to the work of my colleague the Minister of Health and her dedicated health partners, the health care cost curve is bending down. Over the last six years the Health budget increased by an average of 6 per cent each and every year. Over the next three years the operating budget for health care will increase by an average of 2.5 per cent. We are making good progress, but to secure public health care, we need to keep at it. We have to reduce the cost of pharmaceuticals, we have to improve mental health care in the community, and we have to address the rising costs of compensating Alberta's dedicated doctors.

Mr. Speaker, our government's plan to control costs is working. Overall growth in the government's operating budget falls to an average of 2 per cent for the next three years. At the same time, Alberta maintains the lowest overall tax regime in Canada, with no provincial sales tax, no payroll tax, and no health premiums, and we have a significantly lower debt-to-GDP ratio than Canada and other provinces. That means we have the fiscal capacity to protect the health and education services Albertans count on, with thoughtful measures to control costs while maintaining certainty and stability for families.

3:30

But, Mr. Speaker, we have to stick to a plan that carefully brings the budget back into balance as the economy recovers, and we must take action to create jobs and diversify our economy. The Alberta jobs plan focuses on doing just that. As the Premier outlined in her televised address to Albertans, the Alberta jobs plan has four key pillars: supporting families and communities, investing in infrastructure, diversifying our energy industry and our energy markets, and supporting Alberta business.

Mr. Speaker, permit me to outline each of the Alberta jobs plan's themes in more detail. Almost every Alberta family in our province has been affected in some way by the collapse in oil prices. Many of our loved ones, friends, and neighbours have suffered a job loss or are worried they soon will. Some are having a tough time keeping up with the bills and paying the mortgage, and still more wonder how they will care for aging parents, help their kids get through school, and put something away for retirement when the future looks uncertain. That's why the first pillar of the Alberta jobs plan is to help Alberta families weather this economic storm.

As the Premier has said on many occasions, as we confront the consequences of the oil price shock, we must protect the most vulnerable Albertans, especially children, because the moral compass of any society is best judged by how it treats its most vulnerable citizens. No child in Alberta should go hungry, and no child's future should be sacrificed to the roller coaster of global energy prices. It's a fundamental commitment we owe to each other.

So starting this summer, Alberta families will receive the new Alberta child benefit and enhancements to the Alberta family employment tax credit. Mr. Speaker, this initiative is a major step forward for Alberta families: groundbreaking social policy to fight poverty, to ensure that children get a good start in life, and to help Albertans in need get back on their feet and into the workforce. Under our plan a low-income single parent with two children will receive just over \$3,000 a year in benefits. In all, 380,000 children will be better off. It's a powerful expression of that most basic of Alberta values, that in tough times we are all in this together.

Let me also take a moment to acknowledge the federal government for introducing a new national child benefit. Owing to its commitment, middle- and low-income families will receive significant new support in addition to that provided by our government.

Mr. Speaker, the oil price shock also means far too many Albertans are suffering from the anxiety that comes with not knowing where their next paycheque is coming from. Here, too, we owe it to each other to help these Albertans get the support they deserve. Year after year hard-working Albertans have paid into employment insurance, helping to finance a national system that supports all Canadians. When energy prices were high, very few Albertans qualified for benefits because unemployment here was lower than in other parts of the country and average weekly earnings were higher relative to the rest of Canada.

These rules need to change. That's why our government led the call for accelerated adjustments to EI rules to ensure unemployed Albertans were treated fairly and had more money in their pockets. The federal government responded in part, and for that it deserves credit. Some Albertans now have access to up to 20 more weeks of benefits, a step in the right direction, but still not good enough. The exclusion of Edmonton and its surrounding communities from EI improvements makes absolutely no sense. So today, once again, the Alberta government calls on Ottawa to fix this unfair situation and to fix it soon. Because it doesn't matter if you are an unemployed oil worker in Nisku or Fort McMurray, you deserve to be treated fairly.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to helping the most vulnerable through tough times, the Alberta jobs plan supports Alberta families by investing in education and skills training. It is well understood that in today's global economy our most important asset is our people, and education is the most important investment we can make in their future. Education is the key to building a strong economy and a healthy society. The last government didn't understand this. It imposed reckless and short-sighted cuts. We stopped those cuts. The Alberta jobs plan builds on our commitment to education by fully funding enrolment growth in our public schools. We are also increasing operating grants to our universities, colleges, and postsecondary institutions, and we are helping families cope with rising postsecondary education costs by extending the tuition freeze for a second year.

Today I am also pleased to announce two new initiatives aimed at helping unemployed Albertans acquire the skills they need to get back to work. First, I am announcing \$15 million to help apprentices complete their training and work experience requirements; and, second, \$10 million is provided to the training for work program. This program targets a broad range of Albertans who are underrepresented in the workforce, including women, indigenous people, and newcomers, to help them secure and maintain employment in high-demand jobs. These two initiatives, together with our government's unwavering commitment to giving our children and youth the tools they need to succeed, are strategic and prudent investments that support families today and will pay big dividends in the future.

Mr. Speaker, the second key pillar of the Alberta jobs plan is to invest in infrastructure for schools, hospitals, roads, transit, and other much-needed infrastructure. Infrastructure is the lifeblood of the modern economy; ask any of Alberta's global competitors. They know that those jurisdictions that invest now in schools, transportation, and green infrastructure will be best positioned to compete and win in a fast-paced and ever-changing global economy. With interest rates at historic lows and the economy and people in need of support, there is simply no better time to seize the initiative and invest for the future.

3:40

Acting on the advice of the former Bank of Canada governor, David Dodge, last October the province announced an ambitious \$34 billion plan to build and upgrade new roads, transit, schools, and hospitals. That plan increased investment by 15 per cent compared to the previous government, an additional \$4.5 billion in new investment over five years. Mr. Speaker, the Alberta jobs plan puts that commitment to work.

Over five years we're more than doubling investments in affordable housing, to almost \$900 million. As a result more Albertans will live in safe, affordable homes. The funding also funds housing in support of the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. We're allocating \$365 million for continuing care, consistent with our commitment to fund more than 2,000 new long-term care beds for seniors. This investment will help ensure that the Albertans who built this province get the care and support they deserve. We're also financing critical new transit and transportation projects, including the ring roads in Calgary and Edmonton, a twinned bridge in Peace River, and the Gaetz Avenue interchange in Red Deer.

We're funding upgrades and new buildings on our college and university campuses such as the University of Lethbridge destination project. We're supporting our fast-growing tourism industry with expansion funding for the Calgary Zoo and Fort Edmonton Park. We're allocating \$3.5 billion to build and modernize schools, including \$500 million for additional school projects in future capital plans. And we're helping municipalities address their infrastructure needs with \$9 billion in funding, primarily through MSI grants. In addition, nearly \$700 million is allocated for flood recovery and protection projects. Today and for generations to come, Albertans will benefit from these investments.

Patients will benefit from Calgary's new cancer hospital and major improvements to health facilities in Edmonton and throughout the province. Students will benefit from good schools and modern classrooms. Commuters will benefit from significant new investments in buses, light rail, and other transit initiatives. Rural Albertans will benefit from improved water and road projects and new monies targeted to small and rural municipalities throughout the province. And Albertans are benefitting today from the thousands of good jobs these projects create.

Yes, these investments cost money. But with the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in Canada and with community infrastructure throughout Alberta in desperate need of attention, failing to act would leave a terrible legacy of overcrowded classrooms, longer health care waitlists, and decaying infrastructure. Some argue that that's the choice we should make, that we shouldn't build new schools and hospitals, that we should let our roads and bridges fall into disrepair, and that we should leave our towns and cities behind. That would be a mistake Albertans can't afford, and that's a mistake this government won't make.

Mr. Speaker, the third pillar of the Alberta jobs plan is diversifying our energy industry and our energy markets. Achieving this goal is critically important to Alberta's future and to the economic security of every Albertan. That's why last November the Premier stood with industry, indigenous, environmental, and community leaders to set out a climate leadership strategy.

Alberta's climate leadership plan is the single most important step any Canadian government has taken to act on climate change. It's the cornerstone of our plan to build a greener and more diversified economy that creates jobs for Albertans. We are phasing out emissions for coal-powered generation to reduce pollution. We are implementing a world-leading methane reduction plan. We are investing in new, green infrastructure and helping to grow Alberta's

renewable energy industry. Mr. Speaker, the climate leadership plan erases any doubt about Alberta's environmental record.

Putting a price on carbon is at the centre of this strategy. Mr. Speaker, we are bringing in a carbon levy to do two things. First, a carbon levy sends a clear market signal to consumers and to businesses about the need to reduce their carbon emissions, and second, every penny raised will be rebated back to Albertans and reinvested in our economy. A carbon levy of \$20 per tonne will become effective on January 1, 2017. One year later the levy will increase by \$10, to \$30 per tonne. Beginning next year, single adults will receive carbon levy rebates of up to \$200 per year, depending on income. Couples will receive \$300. Parents will receive an additional \$30 per child under 18 to a maximum of four children. As the levy increases, so too will the value of the rebate.

Mr. Speaker, 6 in 10 Alberta households will receive the full rebate, and small businesses will benefit from a tax initiative that I will detail in a moment. All Albertans will benefit from investments in the green infrastructure and energy efficiency initiatives that the carbon levy will support, creating thousands of jobs, diversifying our energy economy, and driving new technologies that will add to our exports. It's a win for our environment, it's a win for our energy industry, and, above all, it's a win for Albertans, who will benefit from a stronger, more sustainable economy with good-paying jobs.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to the steps we are taking to secure the future of our energy industry and the jobs it creates, we are also working to open up new markets for our energy. Think about it. With only one market available to us, Albertans and Canadians get shortchanged on every barrel of oil we sell. Since 2010 we have sold our oil at an average discount of 20 per cent. As a result, the price bust is even worse for Albertans than it is for other energy jurisdictions around the world.

Every school, every hospital, every road, every Canada pension cheque, indeed, every program and service that Canadians rely on owes something to the success of Alberta's energy sector. Arguments about Alberta's environmental record no longer hold water. Our province now has the most progressive climate action plan in North America, and pipelines are the safest and most environmentally responsible way to transport oil. We have the technology, we have the know-how, and we have the expertise to build a modern, safe, and well-regulated pipeline to tidewater. Mr. Speaker, we need to establish a framework that gets us to a yes to a pipeline so that Albertans and all Canadians can get full value and a fair deal for Alberta's oil on world markets.

3:50

Mr. Speaker, the fourth pillar of the Alberta jobs plan is to support Alberta business. In October I announced an increase in capital to the Alberta Treasury Branches of \$1.5 billion to support lending to small and medium-sized businesses in every region of the province. So I was pleased to see ATB announce that it increased loans to small and medium-sized business by \$335 million in the fourth quarter of last year.

I also announced a two-year, \$50 million investment in the Alberta Enterprise Corporation to help ensure that Alberta entrepreneurs have the venture capital they need to launch their businesses, drive innovation, and create jobs, and I directed the Alberta Investment Management Corporation to earmark half a billion dollars for investment in Alberta companies with growth potential. In each case financial professionals are making financial decisions in the best interests of Albertans.

We are also seizing an opportunity to diversify our economy through the petrochemicals diversification program. Up to \$500 million in royalty credits will be awarded to businesses that invest in petrochemical facilities that use methane or propane to produce

higher value products such as methanol and plastics. So instead of shipping out our raw resources and the jobs that go with them, we are adding value to them here at home, creating thousands of jobs and attracting billions of dollars in new investment.

Mr. Speaker, today I'm also pleased to announce additional measures to diversify our economy and support Alberta business, particularly small business. First, I am announcing today that the province is establishing two new tax credits. The new Alberta investor tax credit provides an incentive to invest in eligible small and medium-sized enterprises, and the capital investment tax credit provides an incentive for first-time acquisition of new or used property in value-added agriculture, tourism infrastructure, culture, manufacturing, and processing industries. These two new tax credits, valued at \$165 million, will help give Alberta's entrepreneurs access to the capital they need to drive innovation, diversify our economy, and create new jobs.

Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the business community and others for their diligent advocacy for tax credits such as these to promote early-stage capital investment and make Alberta's economy even more competitive. Their advice and collaboration were invaluable. I am grateful for their input.

Second, I am pleased to announce a package of initiatives aimed at growing and attracting new businesses and creating new jobs. For example, \$10 million in new funding is allocated to the entrepreneurship incubator program, which helps entrepreneurs bring their ideas to market; \$25 million is provided to the Alberta Enterprise Corporation to spur innovation and job growth in Alberta's knowledge economy. The new funding is in addition to the \$50 million commitment made last year and will help the AEC build on its success in leveraging new investments to cultivate homegrown innovation across the province.

Ten million dollars is earmarked to expand the Agrivalve Processing Business Incubator program. This incubator is in Leduc, and it's having tremendous success creating new companies in Alberta's food industry. With these new resources it will do even better creating new companies and new jobs. There will be \$5 million in additional funding for potential investors to help Alberta attract major new headquarters to the province. Finally, \$10 million is set aside for the regional economic development program to encourage co-operation within regions to promote a wide range of industries, from tourism through to value-added processing.

Mr. Speaker, taken together, these job-creation incentives reflect our government's central commitment to Albertans: in tough economic times we've got your back. Faced with similar circumstances in the past, Alberta governments chose to do nothing except to impose reckless and extreme cuts to public services in a race to the bottom. The impacts were severe, they were long-lasting, and they didn't succeed in creating jobs or diversifying our economy. This government won't choose that path. This government is moving Alberta forward.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to talk about small business. Owning and operating a small business takes enormous grit and determination, with long hours and many late nights. Over my years at Calgary city council and now as Minister of Finance I've spoken to thousands of job creators, innovators, and entrepreneurs. Like the Premier and everyone in this Legislature, I have tremendous admiration for the work they do and the contribution they make to this province day in and day out. When oil prices collapse, I know that small-business people are some of the first to feel its effects. I know how hard they struggle to keep their businesses open. Therefore, to help small-business people in

Alberta, today I am announcing that the small-business tax is being cut from 3 per cent to 2 per cent, amongst the lowest in the country. It's the right thing to do to help our job creators weather this storm, and it's the right thing to do for jobs and our economy.

Mr. Speaker, let me conclude by remarking on the great Alberta story. Over many generations, beginning with Alberta's indigenous peoples, we have built one of the world's great societies. From the Great War to the Great Depression, through fire and flood, in times of prosperity and peace our strength has always been our people, and we have always stuck together as one community, joined by a common destiny. Today the Alberta family is younger, more diverse, more talented, and more ambitious than ever before. We are truly blessed. We can never forget that.

But it is also true that the collapse in oil prices is a threat to our collective future. Owing to years of inaction by previous governments, we are far too dependent on the price of one commodity. In the past when oil prices fell, the cost of that inaction was downloaded onto hard-working families through short-sighted cuts. Albertans paid in longer hospital wait times, overcrowded classrooms, longer commutes, higher fees, and lost opportunity. Some say we should repeat those mistakes. We say no. Our government won't turn the clock back on Albertans.

4:00

With the Alberta jobs plan we are moving Alberta forward. Our plan creates jobs and diversifies our economy. Our plan maintains stability for the important public services that support Albertans and their communities. Our plan supports families with new child tax credits and skills training to support good jobs. Our plan invests in new schools, hospitals, and transportation infrastructure to create jobs and build our province. Our plan diversifies our energy industry as we work to open up new markets, and our plan supports Alberta business with new tax credits and a cut to small-business taxes to grow our small-business sector and support our innovators, entrepreneurs, and job creators.

Mr. Speaker, there will be more difficult days ahead. The global economy remains volatile and uncertain. But as Premier Notley said, Albertans are resilient. "We've always shown that when we're faced with challenges we come together with optimism and determination." Today we are called upon once again to meet the challenges of our time head-on. We are called upon to move Alberta forward, and we are as one province, as one people united in our determination to build a more prosperous economy and a brighter future for every Albertan onward.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. House leader for Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. We've certainly waited a long time for that, and there will definitely be a lot of debate about that.

But for today I'd like to move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I move that we adjourn the House until Monday at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:03 p.m.]

Bill Status Report for the 29th Legislature - 2nd Session (2016)

Activity to April 14, 2016

The Bill sponsor's name is in brackets following the Bill title. If it is a money Bill, (\$) will appear between the title and the sponsor's name. Numbers following each Reading refer to Hansard pages where the text of debates is found; dates for each Reading are in brackets following the page numbers. Bills numbered 1 to 200 are Government Bills. Bills numbered 201 or higher are Private Members' Public Bills. Bills numbered with a "Pr" prefix are Private Bills.

*An asterisk beside a Bill number indicates an amendment was passed to that Bill; the Committee line shows the precise date of the amendment.

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at (780) 427-2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter numbers until the conclusion of the Fall Sitings.

- 1 Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act (Bilous)**
First Reading -- 5 (Mar. 8, 2016 aft., passed)
- 2 Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**
First Reading -- 96 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 162-67 (Mar. 15, 2016 morn., passed on division)
Committee of the Whole -- 239-49 (Mar. 16, 2016 aft., passed)
Third Reading -- 251-59 (Mar. 17, 2016 morn., passed on division)
Royal Assent -- (Mar. 23, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force Mar. 23, 2016; SA 2016 c1]
- 3 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)**
First Reading -- 156 (Mar. 14, 2016 eve., passed)
Second Reading -- 201 (Mar. 15, 2016 aft., passed), 157-62 (Mar. 15, 2016 morn.)
Committee of the Whole -- 239-49 (Mar. 16, 2016 aft., passed)
Third Reading -- 259-66 (Mar. 17, 2016 morn., passed)
Royal Assent -- (Mar. 23, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force Mar. 23, 2016; SA 2016 c2]
- 4* An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services (Gray)**
First Reading -- 180 (Mar. 15, 2016 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 285-88 (Mar. 17, 2016 aft.), 349-66 (Apr. 5, 2016 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 399-409 (Apr. 6, 2016 aft.), 378-84 (Apr. 6, 2016 morn.), 415-28 (Apr. 7, 2016 morn., passed with amendments)
Third Reading -- 450-55 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed), 428-33 (Apr. 7, 2016 morn.)
- 5 Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act (Sigurdson)**
First Reading -- 398 (Apr. 6, 2016 aft.)
Second Reading -- 455-56 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft.), 532-38 (Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed), 491-505 (Apr. 12, 2016 morn.)
Committee of the Whole -- 570-77 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed), 539-56 (Apr. 13, 2016 morn.)
Third Reading -- 577-83 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed)
- 6 Securities Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**
First Reading -- 447 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed), 447 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft.)
Second Reading -- 519-27 (Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed)
Committee of the Whole -- 527-32 (Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed)
Third Reading -- 583-85 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed)
- 7 Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2016 (Ganley)**
First Reading -- 518 (Apr. 12, 2016 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 585-86 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., adjourned)
- 8 Fair Trading Amendment Act, 2016 (McLean)**
First Reading -- 568 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed)
- 9 An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences (Ganley)**
First Reading -- 568 (Apr. 13, 2016 aft., passed)

- 10 Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)**
First Reading -- 599 (Apr. 14, 2016 aft., passed)
- 201 Election Recall Act (Smith)**
First Reading -- 92 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 119-32 (Mar. 14, 2016 aft.), 303-304 (Apr. 4, 2016 aft., defeated on division)
- 202 Alberta Affordable Housing Review Committee Act (Luff)**
First Reading -- 92 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 305-16 (Apr. 4, 2016 aft.), 470-73 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft., passed)
- 203 Fair Trading (Motor Vehicle Repair Pricing Protection for Consumers) Amendment Act, 2016 (Carson)**
First Reading -- 280 (Mar. 17, 2016 aft., passed)
Second Reading -- 481-83 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft., referred to Standing Committee on Families and Communities), 473-81 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft.)
- 204 Alberta Tourism Week Act (Dang)**
First Reading -- 468 (Apr. 11, 2016 aft., passed)
- Pr1 Bow Valley Community Foundation Repeal Act (Westhead)**
First Reading -- 447 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed)

Table of Contents

Prayers	587
Statement by the Speaker	
Press Gallery Centennial	587
Introduction of Visitors	587
Introduction of Guests	587
Oral Question Period	
Cancer Care Wait Times	589
School Construction	590
Job Creation	590
Minister of Human Services	591
Small-business Tax	591
Pipeline Construction	592
Human Trafficking	592
PDD Service Delivery	593
Transportation Infrastructure Priorities	593
Urgent Health Care in Sylvan Lake	594
Services for Indigenous Peoples	595
Strategic Transportation Infrastructure Program	595
Infrastructure Project Prioritization	596
Agricultural Trade with India	596
Community Development	597
Members' Statements	
Municipal Collaboration	597
Autism Spectrum Disorder	598
Provincial Fiscal Policies	598
Government Policies	598
Greater Forest Lawn 55+ Society	599
Registry Service Renewal Reminders	599
Introduction of Bills	
Bill 10 Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016	599
Tabling Returns and Reports	599
Tablings to the Clerk	599
Orders of the Day	600
Transmittal of Estimates	600
Government Motions	
Budget Address	600

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