



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, April 20, 2016

Day 18

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

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

Second Session

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

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)  
Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)  
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)  
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)  
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)  
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)  
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)  
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (ND)  
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Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),  
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Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W),  
Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
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Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC),  
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Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)  
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)  
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)  
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)  
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)  
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)  
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)  
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)  
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)  
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Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)  
Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)  
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)  
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)  
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)  
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)  
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Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)  
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC),  
Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader  
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)  
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)  
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)  
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)  
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)  
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)  
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)  
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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Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
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Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
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**Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

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Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, April 20, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

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

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise here today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly the wonderful students, teachers, and parent helpers from the fabulous C.W. Perry school in Airdrie. This is actually the second half of the grade 6 classes; there are almost 200 students in total. I will introduce the teachers and the helpers, who will rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly: Mr. Rob Saipe, Ms Tracey Bishop, Mrs. Regina Dollimount, Mrs. Pamela Burke, Ms Donahue, Ms Annette Freeman, Mr. Kyle Kilback, Mrs. Stephanie Viner, Mr. Lance Drozda, Ms Jen Barton, and Mrs. Sandy Schuck. Please rise, students as well, and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 26 guests, some of the brightest young minds in Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, from the John D. Bracco school. They are joined today by Ms Dalyce McElhinney, Ms Julie Lawrence, and Mrs. Salam Seifeddine. I will ask our visitors to please rise, and I would ask all members of the Assembly to help welcome them to the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other school groups for introduction today?

Hearing none, the hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

**Ms McKittrick:** Mr. Speaker, it's my honour to rise today to introduce to you and through you three very distinguished guests from my constituency of Sherwood Park. Roxanne Carr is the mayor of Strathcona county. She was first elected in 2007 as a councillor and is serving her first term as mayor. I would like to add that it was a pleasure for me to be staff at Strathcona county under Mayor Carr's leadership. Mayor Carr is a community leader, a team builder, and she works every day to ensure that Strathcona county is the best place it can be for our constituents. Paul Smith is the deputy mayor of Strathcona county and the councillor for ward 5. Paul is a strong advocate for building community and diversified economic growth, passions our government shares as well. I especially appreciate his support for local agricultural projects. Pam Cholak is the stakeholder relations manager for the Industrial Heartland, which I will be speaking more to in my member's statement today. I would ask them all to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a real honour today to stand and introduce to you and through you to the House

the latest addition to our caucus, Mr. Harmon Moon. Harmon, you can stand up and let people take a good look at you. Harmon is a MacEwan University public relations program student and doing a professional practicum with us. He'll be with us for the summer months. He has a bachelor of arts in history. We're so pleased he can be part of our team. Let's give him a warm welcome.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise today, and I'd like to introduce to you and through you Rory Koopmans. Rory was recently featured by the *Stony Plain Reporter* and the *Spruce Grove Examiner* for his noble and loving efforts to have a new school named after his late mother, June Koopmans. June was a public school teacher in Edmonton and rural Alberta. I'd ask that Rory rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

### Members' Statements

#### Manitoba Provincial Election

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, yesterday Manitobans voted for jobs when they voted against the NDP and for our fellow conservatives. This is good news for Alberta. Premier Pallister is a former colleague of our leader and a great friend to our province and our party. His election bodes well for interprovincial trade, the New West Partnership, and unclogging an obstacle to pipeline expansion. He is an ethical and principled conservative who will work hard to undo the damage that the NDP has done to his province.

Indeed, the good people of Manitoba have suffered long enough. Higher taxes, higher debt, higher power bills, and year after year of relying on equalization to make ends meet: this is the familiar NDP story that we've seen play out in every other province that has experimented with the NDP and their naïve ideology. Anyone from B.C., Ontario, Nova Scotia, or Saskatchewan can tell you about life under the NDP. They can tell you about have-not economics. They can tell you about record debt and record deficit. They can tell you about Bingogate and Rae days. This is the story of a party that is unfit to govern a modern economy focused on jobs and growth and prosperity, instead choosing to champion special-interest groups like big union bosses and pampered elites.

Albertans are already itching for their turn to follow our friends to the east and the west and tell the NDP to take a leap. They've already raised taxes, increased spending, and introduced a radical \$3 billion carbon tax that they never campaigned on. The Manitoba NDP's unemployment program has already been busy hiring Greg Selinger's former staff as they scurry off the sinking ship. To quote Brian Pallister last night: the sunset was bright orange. Yesterday our friend Brian Pallister took down the second-last NDP government in Canada, and in 2019 Albertans will finish the job.

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

#### Alberta's Industrial Heartland

**Ms McKittrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to you about the importance of the successful partnership between my constituency of Sherwood Park and Alberta's Industrial Heartland. I am happy to share Alberta's Industrial Heartland with the MLA for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, the MLA for Strathcona-Sherwood Park, the MLA for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater, and the MLA for Edmonton-Manning.

Alberta's Industrial Heartland is Canada's largest hydrocarbon processing hub for value-added manufacturing. Over 40 companies provide fuels, fertilizers, power, petrochemicals, and more to provincial and global consumers. Thirty billion dollars are currently invested in Industrial Heartland projects ranging from petroleum refining and bitumen upgrading to natural gas fractionation and processing and fertilizer production. A further \$14 billion is being invested in current construction projects, including Redwater's North West refinery, which will be Canada's first bitumen refinery built in the last 30 years. Projects like this contribute to over 25,000 well-paying jobs, either directly in operations or indirectly through construction and servicing. Alberta's Industrial Heartland is critical to building a diversified energy future in our province, and it is critical to keeping my constituents working.

Mr. Speaker, the Industrial Heartland generates \$1.5 billion in local spending. The economic development fuelled in our heartland benefits not only my Sherwood Park constituency, but it's of great benefit to our entire province. I am proud to be a member of a government that recognizes the importance of Alberta's energy advantage while remaining committed to energy diversification through initiatives like the petrochemical diversification program, that will create mortgage-paying jobs for Albertans. The heartland industries also contribute to charitable programs in the community.

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

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

1:40

#### *Alberta Street News*

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak about Alberta Street News. Street papers were a movement that began in the early 1990s. The first paper came to Edmonton as *Spare Change*. Street papers provide an opportunity for income earning by people who for various reasons are not able to sustain more conventional employment and a place where the voices and stories of people from the economic and social margins can be presented. I am sure many of us have purchased a paper at times in our communities from one of these vendors. Over the years scores of women and men have been given the dignity of earning income by their own efforts rather than depending on social services entirely. They have developed supporters and friends in their relationships with customers.

Mr. Speaker, Linda Dumont became involved with street papers in Edmonton, first as a woman living in poverty and raising a family, as a vendor, selling the paper on the street to earn money, and later she began to write. In 2003 she founded *Edmonton Street News*. She has kept the paper going since then, sometimes on a shoestring, covering some of the costs by working as a yoga instructor or personal care provider when necessary. A few years ago the paper expanded to Calgary, and the name changed to *Alberta Street News*.

The basic business model of the paper is that vendors purchase papers for 50 cents each from Linda and then sell them by donation at street locations. Over the years the paper has provided thousands of readers with stories that were not found elsewhere. It has also published the creative work – art and poetry – of many.

With almost no advertising, the paper has always teetered on the edge of survival, and Linda deserves commendation no matter what its fate may be. The Premier has been a supporter of the paper over the years, including spending an afternoon with a vendor, selling the paper in her own constituency.

Mr. Speaker, I think the work of Linda deserves our commendation and a loud accolade today.

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

#### **Nepal Earthquake Anniversary**

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Imagine some of the most beautiful landscapes on the planet, with industrious, creative citizens who have a spotless record of selflessness. Picture these beautiful people being rocked by a devastating catastrophe that killed almost 9,000 men, women, and children and injured more than twice that many, turning entire villages into dust in seconds. That's what happened one year ago, when a horrific earthquake struck the majestic mountain kingdom of Nepal.

Countless huge aftershocks have followed to this day, and hundreds of thousands of people are still living in temporary shelters. An inspirational Albertan volunteering in Nepal, our friend Elsie James, wrote to me a few weeks ago to say that the trauma and damage is still very much in your face and that the reality is as fresh as yesterday. Last Saturday's quake scored much higher on the emotional scale for many and brought back many difficult memories, not to mention the daily power blackouts, border closures, fewer tourists, failed businesses, a lack of essential commodities, and no transit to jobs or schools. Let's pray that political and nonpolitical will work together, putting aside individual wants in their desire for unity, to rebuild. Mr. Speaker, sound advice for us all.

In response to this tragedy, our PC caucus issued a news release. In it I was honoured to offer a perspective of our fallen friend, the hon. Manmeet Bhullar, who stated:

Nepalese workers and their families who came here on work permits have no permanent home to return to . . . Alberta is now the only home they have. Let's give these hard-working families some hope right now by allowing them to stay in Alberta as permanent residents.

Perhaps the government can give us an update on Meeta's suggestion.

In the meantime, Mr. Speaker, as we together try to build the best Alberta possible, please let's remember to be good Sherpas for our friends and neighbours who are in dire straits around the world.

Namaste, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Peace River.

#### **Women's Suffrage Centennial**

**Ms Jabbour:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was going to make a different statement today, but after participating in yesterday's events on the steps of the Legislature, I wanted to instead expand on comments made by my colleague from Edmonton-Centre.

Yesterday we celebrated an incredibly important event in this province, the 100th anniversary of allowing women the vote. Yet in 1916 this was considered a risky ideological experiment. Women were supposed to stay at home, washing dishes. Women were supposed to stay home and bake pies for their menfolk. Women had no rights unless they were granted those by their husbands or fathers.

But there was a group of women activists who refused to accept this idea. They put forth the risky ideological concept that women were actually persons. In 1913 a group of these idealistic women marched on the Legislature, only to be mocked by the Premier. Their ideas were dismissed as risky ideology that would break up homes and leave children being raised by servants, that allowing women to vote and be elected would damage the economy and kill jobs. Those against suffrage argued that it was dangerous to change a system that already worked very well. Thankfully, there were

those in government in 1916 who were willing to entertain the risky ideology of giving women the vote.

Last May Alberta voters, men and women, voted for a government with a new ideology. They wanted a government that would do things differently. You know, I've heard that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and hoping for a different result. We're not going to do that. We're not going to turn the clock back and repeat past mistakes. We're not going to slash and burn and blow up hospitals. Instead, we're going to invest in the province and its people, rebuild and diversify the economy. We're going to promote social justice and an inclusive environment for all, and we're going to continue to advance equality for women.

I'm proud to be part of a government that is willing to engage in what those in the opposition want to call risky ideological experiments. Progress is impossible without change, and all change involves an element of risk. Unless we're willing to embrace change and do things differently, we will be unable to grow and prosper as a province.

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

The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

### Canada's Office of Religious Freedom

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to rise today to speak about an issue that affects our country's ability to be able to protect human rights across the globe. In late March the federal government struck down a motion to continue funding the office of religious freedom. This decision went through despite pleas from religious leaders in Christian, Jewish, Sikh, and Muslim faiths. For those of you that are unfamiliar with the work that's been done by the office of religious freedom, it was tasked with protecting and advocating on behalf of religious minorities, opposing religious hatred and intolerance, and promoting Canadian values of pluralism and tolerance abroad. Now more than ever it is critical for Canada to continue to be a world leader in fighting against religious persecution.

One of the greatest strengths of our province and of our country is our freedom of thought. Unfortunately, there are many places around the world that do not enjoy the liberties that we experience today. I am proud to be from a country that stands up for those who cannot stand up for themselves, and I believe that it is our responsibility to protect marginalized and persecuted people whenever we can. Over the past three years the office of religious freedom did just that. Around the globe this office has created partnerships to protect our planet's most vulnerable. I have written to the Minister of Foreign Affairs asking that his government reverse their misguided decision to close this office. I encourage other members here today to make their voices heard to the federal government in support of religious freedom.

Thank you.

### Introduction of Bills

#### Bill 205

#### Pharmacy and Drug (Pharmaceutical Equipment Control) Amendment Act, 2016

**Mr. Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, I am humbled and honoured to request leave to introduce Bill 205, the Pharmacy and Drug (Pharmaceutical Equipment Control) Amendment Act, 2016.

The bill amends the Pharmacy and Drug Act to regulate pill presses, devices used to illegally manufacture deadly street drugs such as fentanyl. Fentanyl is killing Albertans at an alarming rate,

with 272 Albertans dying last year from an overdose, the highest number of deaths in Canadian provinces. Bill 205 will give police the authority to seize pill presses from manufacturers who are using the machines to produce tens of thousands of deadly tablets. In passing Bill 205, Alberta will become the first Canadian jurisdiction to regulate pill presses. Most importantly, we will save lives by helping police control the manufacture and, inevitably, the distribution of the potent pills. I look forward to a fulsome debate on this crucially important bill.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 205 read a first time]

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, when the Speaker is standing, would you please remain seated until the Speaker is seated. You also left the House and walked in front of me and the speaker. I'd appreciate it if in the future you did not do that.

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

### Provincial Fiscal Policies

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, I'd like to congratulate my friend and former colleague Mr. Brian Pallister, the new Premier of Manitoba, on his election victory last night. It's a lesson that voters won't tolerate governments that are less than honest about their plans for tax hikes or who hide the full impact of those tax hikes from the electorate. That's what happened in Manitoba. Albertans see this happening right here with the NDP's carbon tax, that they didn't campaign on and that we now have at a cost of a thousand dollars a year. Alberta families won't see rebates for rising consumer costs as a result of the carbon tax. Why won't the Premier just simply be honest with Albertans on the full cost that her tax increases will have?

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

The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, again, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the opportunity to respond to the question. As I have said in answer to this question a number of times already, the Official Opposition's numbers with respect to the cost of the carbon levy to average families is incorrect. That's the first thing. So it doesn't help the debate when the opposition chooses to torque it up by doubling their estimates based on no facts. It really doesn't help. This is an important issue that Albertans want to discuss. They want us to make progress on it. They want us to make progress on reducing emissions. They want us to make progress on the diversification that the carbon levy will support and fund and . . .

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

**Mr. Jean:** The NDP is simply making life more expensive for Albertans. Business taxes are up. Personal taxes are up. So are costs for gas, electricity, and heat. Now, crying into a beer: it would be good, but it won't help because that costs more, too. Don't even think that you can avoid it on the weekend at the museum or camping because, yes, those costs are up as well. Not even a thousand-dollar-a-year carbon tax was enough because the Premier is taking more of your property taxes now. Yes, that's right. It's another surprise tax hike, hitting every single household in Alberta. When confronted with a choice, this government will always raise your taxes. Why won't the Premier just admit . . .

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's interesting that the member opposite began his question by congratulating – I share in that congratulations – the new Premier of Manitoba, but let me just read from that Premier's platform. They plan to “work with the federal government and other jurisdictions” to introduce a climate action plan that introduces “carbon pricing that fosters emissions reduction.” Again, is it a spend day, a cut day, a come day, a go day? I don't know.

**Mr. Jean:** An example of a Conservative government being honest. Amazing.

It's obvious this government is only making things worse. They're not being honest with Albertans. The NDP could have made the choice to reduce spending this year to get our budget back on the path to balance, to save Albertans from tax hikes, and protect services for future generations, but now she's softening the ground for a sales tax, saying: not now, maybe later. Manitobans have seen this script before and have rejected it. This is what happens when governments can't reduce spending. Premier, how can Albertans trust you, because . . .

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I have said at every opportunity when asked about this issue, our government ran in the last election on the very clear assertion that we would not introduce a sales tax. I said that during the election, I have said it since, and I have committed over and over that that will not happen. I would suggest that the members opposite just simply ought to listen to the truth and accept it when they get something that they like.

**The Speaker:** Second main question.

**Mr. Jean:** You simply weren't honest. You didn't campaign on the carbon tax.

### Wildfire Management

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, I was the MP for Slave Lake when a disastrous fire almost wiped out that town. Albertans, rightly, take forest fires very seriously. That's why they are absolutely shocked to see that this NDP government is playing chicken with Mother Nature. Despite the very dry winter and the early wildfire season this government chose to make things worse by gutting the budget for fighting fires and limiting contracts of those who do fight fires. This is the only real cut in this budget. Has the Premier found a way to mandate fewer fires, or is this just the government's new policy, to let Alberta burn?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, as the minister explained yesterday, the fact of the matter is that resources that are allocated to firefighting will be maintained, and every single resource that we require to fight fires in this province this summer will be expended. All we are doing is managing and projecting the budget on the same basis, the same assumptions that had been done previously. If the demand is greater, we will meet the demand.

**Mr. Jean:** That's simply not true, Mr. Speaker. This year's wildfire budget of \$86 million is \$400 million lower than last year. Four hundred million dollars. It is \$200 million lower than the average over the last 10 years and \$100 million lower than even the lowest year. Fighting fires seems to be the only line item in this budget to take a hit with the NDP. Albertans want to know: was there a

significant change in fire management policy, or is the Premier simply gambling on a 400 per cent reduction in forest fires?

**Ms Notley:** Again, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the member opposite look at the difference between the budget projection and the budget actuals and understand the conceptual difference between the two. It is quite true that firefighting expenditures last year were higher. They were also higher than what was originally budgeted for because you budget with a base level, and then you add if necessary. That's exactly what will happen this year if we need to. That's exactly what's happened in the past. It is unfortunate that they're not able to tell the difference between projected and actual.

**Mr. Jean:** Mr. Speaker, they cut the base of funding.

Even though the average wildfire season is 143 days long, this minister told firefighting contractors to set their contract terms at 93 days. As a result, air tankers and other firefighting contractors are leaving the province and won't be here when we need them, and we will. This foolish policy will leave our forests, energy infrastructure, towns, and the very lives of Albertans at risk. If we have a bad fire season like last year, how does the Premier expect to fight these fires when her policies have forced all the necessary people and equipment to leave Alberta?

**Ms Notley:** You know, Mr. Speaker, the exaggeration is really hurting their credibility, and I would suggest that they think about that. As of this morning we have ready to fight new wildfires 654 firefighters, 67 helicopters, 85 pieces of heavy equipment, and six air tanker groups. We have contracts in place with those air tankers, and I am sure that we will have contracts in place for as long as we need them. To be clear, every resource will be expended that is needed. That is what we have committed to.

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

### Health Care System Manager Sick Leave

**Mr. Barnes:** When we questioned the Health minister about potential abuses of a very generous sick leave policy for AHS managers, she absurdly claimed that we were forcing sick people to go to work at hospitals. But the data is clear. The longest list of entries is from Calgary's administrative building. The second longest is from Edmonton's downtown office tower, far away from the front lines. Is the minister at all concerned about the hundreds of upper level managers and bureaucrats far exceeding the Alberta average for sick time while earning full pay?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister will, I'm sure, answer the remaining questions, but I really must take this opportunity to say once again that the outrageous statement by the member opposite suggesting that hard-working employees of AHS are somehow engaging in fraudulent behaviour is outrageous.

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

**Ms Notley:** It is slanderous, and he should be in this Legislature today apologizing.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, just a year ago AHS believed the excessive sick leave was such a serious problem that they instituted a program to curb it, and it's still a problem. Before getting elected, the NDP opposition was harshly critical of waste and, as the Government House Leader said, the systemic inefficiencies that have plagued AHS from the beginning. Now that the Health



minister has her chance to run the system, is she incapable of admitting that waste exists, or is she just incapable of fixing it?

2:00

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When I was on the radio this morning with the member opposite, certainly, the radio host asked: do you have any evidence to back up your claims that people are being fraudulent? And the member opposite said: anecdotal evidence. That's another word for gossip. If he wants to talk evidence, I've got evidence. The average sick leave for non-union Canadian workers last year in Canada was seven days. In Alberta Health Services it was six and a half. The use of sick days at AHS is lower on average than any other health authority across western Canada, including smaller jurisdictions. I'm sorry. Enough making up facts and accusations. Time for the . . .

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

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, given that we're talking about high-level bureaucrats taking weeks of paid sick leave and Albertans work hard to pay for a health system that should be there when they need it, Albertans have told us that they expect their health system to be accountable, efficient, and well run. They are tired of having more of their hard-earned dollars soaked up by a bureaucratic and top-heavy system instead of getting to the front lines. The same old mismanagement has to end. Since the buck stops with the minister, what is she going to do to restore accountability and tackle the widespread inefficiency happening under her watch?

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let's continue with more truths. AHS workers can be asked for a sick note for missing as little as one single day. The member opposite said it was four months. Not true. The supervisors have discretion to allow for longer periods of time, to a maximum of 10 days. Again, four months: not true. Non-union employees, which are being referred to, include intensive care unit managers, food service supervisors, clinical practice leads, and nurse practitioners. These people work first hand, front lines. The member opposite should apologize. It's clear that he doesn't understand health care.

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

### Budget 2016

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Budget 2016 remains a disappointment. As another layer is peeled away, taxpayers realize this budget will cost them a lot. Mayors, reeves, and councillors work hard to lessen the impact on their citizens, but they're just finding out that the NDP government budgeted for an increase in the education tax. To the Finance minister: without a carbon tax rebate to help Albertans pay increased property taxes, and higher food, clothing, and consumer goods costs, how can you say that families will be sheltered from your carbon tax?

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

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, when it comes to the education property tax, we need to be clear. We were clear with all Albertans, including municipalities, that the budget for education and particularly schooling would be increased by 2 per cent plus enrolment. We used the same formula that was introduced by that member's party in 2013, the 32 per cent formula.

The distribution of that tax was done also using the exact same formula. So, yes, that has resulted in changes, but this is all stuff that we were very clear was going to happen, and it was using the formulas that were in place all along.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, the mayors of Calgary and Edmonton are less happy than the Premier.

Alberta's coal industry employs 7,000 people and supports government programs and services through the royalties and taxes it pays. The government would rather lock billions of dollars of value in the ground and lay off industry workers than invest in technology that would provide a future for the industry, using clean technology, like Saskatchewan, and market it globally. To the Minister of Finance: since we know from your budget jobs plan that it subtracts 7,000 coal jobs from Alberta, can you be just as exact in telling us where 7,000 new jobs will be added for these same Albertans?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, you know, the hon. member would prefer that we throw good money after bad with more investments in carbon capture and storage. Alberta has done its fair share on carbon capture and storage, and now we're going to actually diversify the economy and invest in renewables. Many of the world's largest financial institutions already know that coal is yesterday's news. The *New York Times*, numerous banks stated that they wanted to transition from dirty coal to clean, renewable energy. This is yesterday's political party peddling for us yesterday's news.

**Mr. McIver:** Speaking of yesterday's political party, as we look across the prairies to Manitoba, we find hope and opportunity. In Alberta we'll have to wait three more years. The next government can quickly eliminate some of the NDP's damaging policies, but the debt Albertans are saddled with won't go away so easily. We know the Finance minister was wrong about Alberta's credit rating. We know Albertans brace for a budget jobs plan that will cost taxpayers money without creating many jobs. To the Minister of Finance: how many years will it take for industry to replace the tens of thousands of jobs your government has chased out of Alberta with your damaging public policies?

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

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The proposition put forward here actually is not close to the truth. We will be building the economy by investing over \$34 billion for capital investments over five years, the biggest capital flow that's going to take place. We're going to diversify the economy, and we're going to see a hundred thousand jobs as a result of the environment that we provide for private-sector employers to bring those jobs back that they did not diversify.

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

### Health Care System Employee Sick Leave

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Alberta Liberals released statistics on sick leave at Alberta Health Services through FOIP which show that the number of United Nurses of Alberta members, AUPE auxiliary, and Health Sciences Association of Alberta members on long-term disability has doubled or more in the last three years, and so have the costs. This is a clear and troubling symptom of serious issues within the

Alberta Health Services culture. Two weeks ago I asked the Minister of Health if she would commit to surveying Alberta Health Services employees to better understand the issues and the culture. To the minister: will you now commit to that survey and make public the result?

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

**Ms Hoffman:** It is a very good question, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I'd like to commend the member on his concern for the health and safety of our health care workers. It's a shame we can't say the same about our Official Opposition. We know that the use of sick days by both union and non-union employees at AHS is below the national average and the average for western Canada as well. Certainly, we are in the process of developing an updated survey. This happens usually every two years. The tender is out right now, and I'll be happy to discuss further details in later questions.

**Dr. Swann:** Our rates may be comparable, Mr. Speaker, but they've doubled or tripled in the last three years. I think that bears some serious investigation. Given that information on sick leave, though, is only tracked by union designation, not profession, and these unions represent thousands of employees in many different professions, will Alberta Health Services ensure that data are now collected by profession so we can actually identify what the problems are in each of the professions instead of a whole union reporting its data?

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thanks again, Mr. Speaker. I do commend the member for acknowledging that employees that have long-term disabilities have legitimate health concerns that have been assessed and identified by physicians. Yes, the number of nurses that have been assessed for long-term disability did grow substantially during the previous government, and that trend did continue for the first year of this government. It's a cause for concern, and it underlines the need for us to provide stability and improve patient care by finding efficiencies. We will certainly have conversations with the staff groups that represent those workers and discuss how best to use the information.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, can the minister comment on how the ballooning numbers of absent staff have affected access and quality of care in our health system?

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, when somebody calls in sick, somebody does cover off that shift for the person who's ill. Our number one driver is to make sure that patients are safe and that they are well staffed. Obviously, when somebody is away sick, there is a need for bringing in additional staff to cover off those shifts. In terms of citizens' safety and well-being – the question was around health care outcomes – that is not something that we should have to be overly concerned about. We are always making sure that we have our shifts covered.

## 2:10 Gender Equality Initiatives

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Mr. Speaker, I continue to hear from constituents who are so glad that we created a stand-alone Ministry of Status of Women. Yet, at the same time, these constituents remind me that Alberta still ranks very low on the gender equity indicators, and we

need to take concrete action to change this. To the Minister of Status of Women: what new investments is the government making in this budget to support women throughout the budget?

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

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Yesterday many of us celebrated the 100th anniversary of the first women in our province getting the right to vote. We know that our government, our economy, and our province are stronger when women are part of the decision-making. A hundred years ago Alberta took a major step toward equality, but as the member mentioned, until women earn the same wages as men for the same work, until women can walk down the street at night without fearing for their safety, we've still got work to do. That's why Status of Women is working to support women in getting good jobs, increase the number of women in leadership positions, and end violence against women and girls.

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

First supplemental.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the representation of women in leadership positions is still severely lacking throughout the province, again to the Minister of Status of Women: what is your ministry doing to ensure a more equal representation of women in senior leadership roles in both the public and private sectors?

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

**Ms McLean:** Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's women are smart and hard working, so it just doesn't make sense that there are so few of them represented in leadership roles in our province. We're not interested in perpetuating the old boys' club of a hundred years ago. We want to get the best person for the job every time. We will work to identify, recruit, and train talented women for leadership positions in the civil service. We will be working to make child care more accessible and affordable as our government finances permit, which will make it easier for women to succeed in the workplace.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Fitzpatrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that women are also underrepresented on our province's agencies, boards, and commissions, again to the same minister: what are you doing to ensure that we are increasing the representation of women on our province's ABCs?

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

**Ms McLean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is an excellent question. When it comes to getting more women in leadership positions, it's up to the government to lead by example. I'm proud to be part of the first gender-balanced cabinet in Canada. We know that when women are at the table, they bring a different perspective. As a result the decisions will be better for all Albertans. In our business plan we are setting targets to increase the percentage of women on Alberta's agencies, boards, and commissions to 50 per cent by the end of our mandate. It's time that Alberta's government looked more like the people it represents.

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

**Provincial Fiscal Policies**  
(continued)

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, under the Finance minister's watch we are running a deficit of \$10.4 billion on the operational side and over \$14 billion on a consolidated basis. This is the largest deficit in Alberta's history by far. The minister has repeatedly blamed low oil prices for all of the ills of the government's balance sheet meltdown, but we know that his big-spending predecessors couldn't even balance the budget at \$100 oil. Can the minister tell us at what price oil would need to be before the record-spending budget this year could be balanced?

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

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much. It's a pleasure to take a question from the shadowy Finance critic across here. What I can say is that we've built \$40 into our budget this year, and we have a price cushion in there, taking it down to \$36. In doing that and with the investments we have planned in this province as well as the diversification initiatives that will help create the conditions for 100,000 jobs in this province, we will get to balance in year 2024. That's my goal.

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

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Mr. Speaker, the minister sat on the budget cushion.

Oil prices would need to exceed \$120 a barrel for the budget to be balanced this year under the NDP's spending plan. The government's excuses just don't hold water. It's obvious that we have a chronic spending problem in this province. Will the minister admit that we should at least be able to balance the budget this year if oil was \$100 a barrel?

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

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much. The failed neo-liberal policies put forward by this side of the House all the time got us into this mess. We will balance the budget when the economy improves when we diversify this economy, which wasn't done under previous governments.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Shadowy answers from the minister, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Wildrose repeatedly warned the minister during the last budget debate that his revenue projections were grossly optimistic and that he would hit his debt limit and that this massive debt plan would mean an expensive downgrade to our credit rating and given that the Wildrose was, unfortunately, correct and we are now concerned about the effects that an eventual \$100 billion debt would have, in the hypothetical universe where the minister is still in charge and the budget balances itself in 2024, how much debt could Albertans be looking at in 2024?

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

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much. The three-year fiscal plan we talk about has an accumulated debt limit there. We are talking about trying to take measures that will help us in these difficult economic times. We'll invest in jobs, we'll diversify our economy, and we will get back to balance when the economy improves and when we invest in this province.

**The Speaker:** Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

**Wildfire Management**  
(continued)

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm afraid I've been scooped once again.

Forestry is one of Alberta's top renewable export industries, known for being a reliable and sustainable employer through good times and bad. As oil prices remain low and we lean on forestry and agriculture to further diversify Alberta's economy and create new jobs, we need to support the growth by reducing risk. My question is to the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: in a year that will continue to see record-breaking drought conditions, why did your government think it was good idea to cut wildfire management funding by \$400 million?

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

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. We are tremendously proud of the excellent work of the fire crews who have been assisting with local communities this week. Certainly, we continue to make the commitment. The Premier restated that today, that we absolutely – absolutely – will ensure that the money that needs to be spent to protect the communities and forests will be done. We've continued to commit to baseline funding, but we will add in emergency funds if needed, the exact same funding structure from right across this country with other provinces.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this year will most likely be a bad one for wildfires in Alberta and given that you cut specific funding for wildfire management, to the minister: how will you protect the livelihoods of Alberta's forestry industry producers if you won't fund disaster relief specifically for them?

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

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to the member for the question. Certainly, being from Slave Lake, I get it. I get what fires are about. I dealt with it. I watched my community deal with it. I watch them continue to recover. I can say that this government is committed to making sure that that does not happen. We are committed to protecting Albertans. This is about safety, and we will continue to be committed to safety.

**Mr. Speaker:** The second supplemental.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta's air tanker contracts have been reduced from 123 days to 93 days this year and given that these tankers will leave Alberta when they are hired elsewhere with solid budgets for wildfire management, to the minister: who be left to fight Alberta's wildfires this year?

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

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks again for the question. The main period for fighting forest fires is mid-May to mid-August, and last year 96 per cent of wildfires were in these three months. We have air tanker contracts in place for this time, but having said that, if we need additional support, we'll extend the contract. We have relationships with other provinces, with other agencies, right across there, and we are fully committed that if Albertans need support in terms of fighting fires across this province, they will have it.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members on the government side, during the second response you were hitting the tables, and I couldn't clearly hear the second response that the minister was giving. I want you to be conscious of that in the future.

The Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

## 2:20 Education Funding Formula

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. By law parents are their children's guardians and the decision-makers when it comes to their education. This government tried to pass an amendment to a motion to allow the Minister of Education to deny the parental right to educational choice based on his interpretation of whether or not that choice was available in the public system. To the Minister of Education: will the government admit that this was a poorly thought out amendment, or does it really believe that the minister and the public education system should be the government's twin gatekeepers, chosen to override parental choice in education in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Speaker. Clearly, every child in Alberta deserves a world-class education that enriches their life and prepares them for a career in a diverse economy. Budget 2016 maintains the stable funding for key public services that were introduced in 2015. As you can see from our budget, the current funding formulas are moving forward. That's the funding formula that we're using to fund all schools – including private, charter, and home-schools – moving forward in this year's budget.

**Mr. Smith:** I'm not sure how that answers the question, Mr. Speaker.

Given that some education stakeholders want to defund independent schools and they consider that more than \$155 million in the budget for independent schools is up for grabs and given that a recent report concludes that independent schools saved taxpayers about \$750 million in the past five years and since parental choice is a fundamental component of our education system, will the Minister of Education send a clear message that this funding is not up for grabs and that he will protect parental rights and the public purse?

**Ms Hoffman:** It's just that I'm so good at reading minds, Mr. Speaker, that I answered the question in my first response.

But to say it again, as you can see from the budget, the current funding formulas are in place for the next school year as well. We're moving forward with the exact same funding formulas that we have for public, for Catholic, for francophone, for private, charter, and home-schooling. Our government supports the critical role that parents play in their child's education. The proof is in the budget.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister did not approve the ReThink charter school application because he thinks the Calgary public system already offers a similar alternative and since that decision is consistent with the intent of the amendment to Motion 504, but given that this minister is quoted on the AHEA website as saying that he will withdraw this amendment, will this minister confirm for Albertans that his government will withdraw the amendment, clear up the confusion between his words and his actions, and revisit his decision regarding the ReThink charter school application?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, the application was received by the minister's office, and the minister has taken the act and the legislation that governs it very seriously as he moved forward in reviewing that application. I understand that there's a desire that it be reviewed, but at this time the minister's decision clearly stands that he is planning on moving forward. He's made a decision on that. Certainly, what was said by the minister about the amendment stands true.

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

## Government Policies

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

A... challenge is gasoline price. At any given time we pay on average 20 cents more per litre than the rest of the province. Not only does that impact our personal travel costs, but the increased costs of transporting goods and services is passed on to us in higher prices for everything.

That was the NDP Member for Peace River. With the new carbon tax we know that the NDP will just make everything worse for everyone in northern Alberta. To the Premier: can she please explain to the Member for Peace River and to all northern Albertans why she is raising the price of everything when we already pay so much more?

**Ms Phillips:** Mr. Speaker, you know, of course, our climate leadership plan will help create a modern and diversified economy, protect our environment, and improve access to new markets, which is exactly what we need. Unlike our government, the opposition continues to deny the science of climate change, to ignore the science, and pretend that one of our biggest challenges just doesn't exist.

Mr. Speaker, we have a very robust rebate program for lower and middle-income individuals. We will be making investments in communities, remote communities, municipalities, and others through the climate leadership plan. These are all initiatives that...

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

**Mr. Loewen:** It's too bad those rebates won't match how much extra it's going to cost.

Given that late last week I received word from a resident of the Minister of Energy's constituency that he had just closed down his oil field trucking business and laid off 35 people, some of which were owner/operators that won't show up on the unemployment statistics, can the Premier explain how higher taxes and sitting quietly on tanker bans on our west coast will help these Albertans who are now out of work?

**Ms Phillips:** Well, Mr. Speaker, the climate leadership plan will ensure that we are diversifying the economy and ensure that we are positioned to compete as a province in the industries of tomorrow with investments in renewables, in energy efficiency, which are good construction jobs. There will be a number of new investments in the economy. They are investments that the Official Opposition rejects. There will be a number of new investments in oil and gas innovation and so on. Those are initiatives that the Official Opposition rejects.

**Mr. Loewen:** Mr. Speaker, given that I have asked the Health minister multiple questions on the Grande Prairie regional hospital and seeing as the people in Peace Country deserve a straight answer to their concerns, I will ask this question again: is there any new

information on the completion date and any scope-of-care reductions on the Grande Prairie hospital, and can we get a definitive answer to this question?

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

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As is evidenced from times in the past where I have reached out personally over the phone to give a modified timeline, I certainly did that. If we do have any updates – I'll ask for one today – that are different from the information I've provided to you and the community previously, we'll certainly follow up with you and . . .

**Mr. Loewen:** What about the House? Provide the House.

**Ms Hoffman:** Sure. I can provide the House as well.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you.

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

#### Legal Aid and Petition on Chestermere City Council

**Mr. Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, Legal Aid is a critical service to Albertans, and a 16 per cent increase in its budget over the past three years indicates that. But last fall's funding increase also raised lawyer fees to \$92 per hour. To the Justice minister: will this year's \$2.5 million increase provide more service, or will it just give lawyers a raise?

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

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, of course, our government is incredibly supportive of Legal Aid, which is why they received increases last year and again this year despite the difficult economic times. You know, the budget last year wasn't actually tied to the interim measures we did with Legal Aid. We worked with them to increase some of the tariff rates, and that was because Legal Aid was unable to retain lawyers to represent clients in those matters, so we needed to do something about that, and we did.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Minister of Justice announced a comprehensive review of Legal Aid last fall and given that this review includes a governance model that would see the department hire its own legal aid lawyers and given that the current funding of almost \$70 million could fund 200 to 250 in-house lawyers dedicated to legal aid, again to the Justice minister: what has the review recommended regarding hiring lawyers versus contracting them, and will you commit today to make this review public?

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

**Ms Ganley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, of course, that review of Legal Aid is still underway. As is our policy with most programs, we like to review things as we're going along to make sure that they are meeting the objectives we set out for them to meet. One of the things we're looking at is the governance model. Another thing we're looking at is the delivery model, whether or not it's more effective to use tariff lawyers or to use staff lawyers. You know, I'm not going to make

the decision in advance of having the information, but when we get that information back, then we will make a decision.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Municipal Affairs minister received a petition signed by almost one-third of the electors of the city of Chestermere on March 24 and given that the people of Chestermere who signed the petition are asking for an inquiry into the affairs of their municipality and given that a due process is occurring to verify the petition as per the Municipal Government Act, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: when can the citizens of Chestermere expect to hear that you are calling an inquiry as per their request?

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

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Certainly, I have great respect for the autonomy of municipalities, and when the people who elected them are asking me for their assistance in ensuring that they are accountable, I'm happy to help them with that. We are continuing to follow – the processes are in place to review that petition. As you are aware, it does take a while to go through those very many names and to verify them all. However, as soon as that process is complete, I look forward to providing that information to the people who submitted the petition.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, I would be remiss to not remind you that the supplementary questions should be tied back to the main. In the last instance that was not the case, and I'd ask that you do that in the future.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

2:30

**Carbon Levy**

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is taking action on reducing climate change by implementing the climate leadership plan. The opposition has been putting very misleading information on the record and to the public. They have cited non Alberta-specific data from years past when, in fact, the author of the study they cite actually repudiated the use of his work. Can the minister of environment put the real facts on the record with respect to the carbon levy and the climate leadership adjustment rebates?

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

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, today I had the opportunity to visit the home of Ammanuel and Naomi Aberra, whose family will be benefiting from the carbon rebate. It was a pleasure to share with them how the rebate will work, and I would like to share the information with the Chamber. The rebates are designed to offset the average cost of a carbon levy for low- and middle-income households and will be dependent on a family's net income. Rebate cheques will be issued beginning January 2017. A couple earning up to \$95,000 per year will receive \$300. Parents will receive an additional \$30 per child up to a maximum of four children. Cheques will be delivered based on the amount of the cheque and on a schedule similar to the GST rebate.

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

First supplemental.

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you, Minister. To the same minister: why is a carbon levy an important component of

the climate leadership plan? Why is it important to take action on climate change now, when Albertans are struggling?

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

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and to underline to this House that climate change is one of the biggest collective threats facing the planet, and it's real. We're taking action so that we can have a resilient economy and a resilient environment. You know, Alberta is on the front lines of severe and catastrophic weather that is only getting worse because of climate change, which is real. The Insurance Bureau of Canada reported that insurers paid out \$3.5 billion in 2013 due to record-breaking catastrophic climate events, \$1.8 billion in Alberta alone. Climate change is real, so we are taking action.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.  
Second supplemental.

**Mr. Coolahan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that British Columbia has had a carbon levy in place since 2008 and given that many constituents have asked me if B.C. has seen a reduction in emissions, can the same minister tell me the results of the carbon levy in B.C.?

**The Speaker:** The minister of environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the member is quite right that there has been carbon pricing since 2008 in British Columbia. As of 2014 fuel use in that province dropped by 16 per cent. Over the same period fuel use rose by 3 per cent in the rest of Canada, and energy-related greenhouse gas emissions in B.C. dropped by 6 per cent overall. Those are the types of results we anticipate we will see here in Alberta. That must be why the Leader of the Official Opposition also supports a price on carbon.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

#### Postsecondary Education Funding

**Mr. Taylor:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government's \$3 billion carbon tax is going to raise the price on everything for everyone, including our postsecondary institutions. It will cost more to heat and light dorms, teaching areas, and cafeterias. This government's compensation for the tuition freeze fails to fully cover revenues lost, because the carbon tax means operating costs will rise. To the minister: how are postsecondary institutions supposed to cope with a potentially disastrous combination?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Environment and Parks.

**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, we've been very clear that a portion of the levy will be reinvested into the economy, and that is how we are going to ensure we've got a made-in-Alberta solution. We must take action on climate change. There is no solution that would have us do nothing, as the Official Opposition would have us do. That is not an option. We will ensure that our economy is resilient and that we are recycling those revenues back into efficiency throughout the economy.

**Mr. Taylor:** Given that building Alberta's knowledge infrastructure is a key part of maintaining our competitive edge as a province, especially in these difficult economic times, and given that the combination of increasing costs and frozen revenues lands our postsecondary institutions between a rock and a hard place, will the Minister of Education please make it clear to Albertans that he does

not expect and has not heard about any pending layoffs at postsecondary institutions?

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

**Mr. Schmidt:** Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's interesting. Apparently, we need to build more knowledge infrastructure so that the member opposite knows the difference between the Minister of Education and the Minister of Advanced Education.

Given that there was some false information, which is not a surprise, of course, given the information that we've had from his questions – the amount that the government is giving to postsecondary education is in fact going up under our government.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, until I call you, okay? Second supplemental.

**Mr. Taylor:** I guess I didn't really get an answer, but given that there will be no layoffs or internal adjustments to compensate for rising costs of the new carbon tax and frozen revenues, there may be a need for the government to provide public postsecondary institutions with extra funds again. Can the minister tell the Assembly where these extra funds will come from, if they'll be offset by savings elsewhere or borrowed or raised through new tax hikes on Edmonton, Calgary, or all Albertans?

**Ms Phillips:** Certainly, Mr. Speaker, we have already made the commitment. There will be \$2.2 billion of investment in green infrastructure and a further \$45 million in energy efficiency programs. We fully expect that there will be municipalities, hospitals, schools, and others availing themselves of those programs. Of course, the Leader of the Official Opposition is not only offside the largest employers in his own riding on the economy-wide carbon pricing; this Official Opposition also wants to stop us from investing in families, in efficiency, in diversification, renewables, innovation in the oil and gas sector. They'd rather do something else. They haven't said what. They haven't been honest about it.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
I believe we are at Calgary-Lougheed.

#### Indigenous Relations

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans can be proud that the late Premier Don Getty's Metis Settlements Act was three decades ahead of this week's ruling of the Supreme Court of Canada. Now, back in September 2015 a ministerial order was signed involving three Métis settlements in a joint business venture. To the Minister of Indigenous Relations: your predecessor was to appoint an inspector to review progress on the order's directions, and the long-awaited inspector was due to be named over a month ago. Can you please assure the three Métis settlements and all Albertans that the inspector is on the job and executing all of their duties?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much to the hon. member for the question. I'm very happy to report that we have undergone a round of hiring, first an initial round of hiring, in which we were unsatisfied with the results, and a second round of hiring, in which we proactively engaged a number of companies in order to provide bids on the position of inspector. The inspector has indeed been hired and is undertaking the task as we speak.

**Mr. Rodney:** Given that the Métis settlements and their communities have indeed waited for six months for an inspector to even start a review and given that it's only fair for every interested community member as well as each of the three Métis settlements to resolve these issues as quickly as possible and given that the issues involved in the business arrangement could provide pivotal future direction for other Métis settlements, to the minister: can you provide a definitive timeline for the inspector to complete the review and report on it publicly?

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

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much to the member for the question. Of course, this is a task that I'd say requires an in-depth examination of the history of the joint venture agreement. We have asked the company involved to do so in a very prudent manner, and we expect them to do so. We will expect that result to come out when it is appropriate for it to come out, not on our timeline.

**Mr. Rodney:** Given that last October the Premier appointed 10 Albertans to the Premier's Advisory Committee on the Economy and given that when I asked in this very House why Alberta's indigenous community was not represented on the committee, the Premier agreed that there should be a role for indigenous leaders but wanted an opportunity meet with them "a bit more" first, Premier, have you had enough time to meet with these indigenous leaders to determine the role that they can play on your Advisory Committee on the Economy as well as on other agencies, boards, and commissions?

2:40

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question because I think it's very timely. One of the pieces of work that I have engaged in since I became Minister of Indigenous Relations is to ask exactly the level of representation that has been on the boards and committees. It turns out that the previous government has failed dismally in every possible way to appoint an appropriate number of people from indigenous communities on the agencies, boards, and committees. We have started an internal mechanism of getting references from all of the indigenous communities and bringing forward people to stand for all of these committees, and we'll do so.

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

### Job Creation and Municipal Funding

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Mr. Speaker, municipalities are satisfied with many aspects of the new budget, the Alberta jobs plan. Given that strengthening local economies is a great way to support job creation, can the Minister of Municipal Affairs explain how municipalities, their economies, and their residents are being supported in the Alberta jobs plan?

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

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. You know, municipalities are so essential to providing support to Albertans, and I'm very proud of the support we've provided to municipalities in order for them to do so. Our government recognizes that it is very important to have core infrastructure for healthy communities, and that is why we're moving forward and supporting the infrastructure that municipalities

need through our \$34 billion capital plan. We're investing more than \$34 billion in necessary roads, schools, transit, and other public infrastructure to provide communities with the facilities they need while helping keep thousands of Albertans . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

First supplemental.

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that municipal leaders were frustrated to see that the planned increase of \$50 million in the municipal sustainability initiative was cancelled and given that many municipalities in Alberta have infrastructure deficits, to the same minister: why was the reduction made when municipalities so badly need the money to complete local projects?

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

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. You know, the fact is that that small reduction happened, but we continue to move forward by supporting the infrastructure municipalities need, to build a more resilient and diversified economy for the Alberta families we all serve. Considering the decrease in revenue we had following the collapse in oil prices, we maintained tremendously strong support for municipalities in the Alberta jobs plan. In fact, we continue to be the highest funder of municipalities across all provinces in the country, unlike any other provincial government in Canada.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that both Mayor Nenshi of Calgary and Mayor Iveson of Edmonton along with the AUMA stated last week that they believe MSI needs to be more stable and predictable so they can plan for any increases or decreases, how is the minister working to ensure that municipalities have the stable, long-term, predictable funding that they deserve?

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

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. Our government certainly recognizes the importance of stable, long-term, predictable funding for communities right across Alberta. The MSI agreements are actually set to expire in the next 12 months, and we are already talking to our municipal partners about what we can do to renegotiate. Again, no provincial government provides more support to municipalities than this government, and we will continue to work with our partners and continue to provide strong support to our municipal partners.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, in 30 seconds we will continue with the Routine.

**The Speaker:** Members, we had, I believe, two points of order today.

The first one was at approximately 2 o'clock. The Opposition House Leader.

### Point of Order Allegations against a Member

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak to a point of order under section 23(h) of the standing orders, "makes allegations against another Member," and (i), "imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member." Shortly after 2 o'clock the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat was on his feet asking a question with respect to sick leave of AHS managers. In the

response to the question the Premier, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, rose and made an accusation that was wildly untrue. What she said was – and, unfortunately, I don't have the Blues in front of me, so I am paraphrasing from memory – that the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat said that members of AHS had acted fraudulently. Never at any point in time, be it inside or outside of this House, did the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat say that employees, managers of AHS had acted fraudulently.

Now, there was a point of order on a very similar question yesterday, where there was discussion around the use of the word "deception," but that is significantly different than making an accusation that the member had said that AHS employees had acted fraudulently. I think it's reasonable that the member stand and withdraw those comments because certainly those types of comments are not going to create order in this place, and the accusation that she made was not anywhere close to the truth.

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With respect to the point of order raised by the hon. Official Opposition House Leader, I strongly disagree with his interpretation of the facts. Now, if we actually go back to what the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat said on April 19, it is this:

Clearly, this Health minister is more interested in protecting entitled AHS managers than actually improving our wasteful and ineffective health system. It makes me sick to know that under this government's watch wait times for cancer surgeries are climbing while millions are spent on a system that rewards AHS managers for deception. Again to the Health minister: will you fix the broken system, that rewards waste and abuse at Albertans' expense?

Mr. Speaker, clearly, what the hon. member is saying is that people are abusing the system, that they are deceiving the government and they're deceiving AHS, and that means that they are guilty of fraud. It's very clear – it's very clear – and in my view there's an absolute straight line between the member's statements and an allegation of fraud. If you go back to April 13, the hon. Official Opposition Finance critic stood up and said on another matter but directly related, "There's plenty of evidence of fraud." So it's been said on the other side more than once.

2:50

It's very clear that the Premier's interpretation is a reasonable conclusion that one could draw. There's no doubt in my mind that the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat was making allegations of fraud in this House, and he has no evidence to prove those allegations in any way. I would respectfully argue that there is, in fact, a difference between members, but there is certainly no point of order.

**Mr. Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, what we are discussing here is the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, and the question is: did he accuse Alberta Health Services employees of fraud? That is the question. That is what the hon. Premier said. That's the question that's before us. All this other stuff that's being brought forward by the Government House Leader is irrelevant. I was sitting beside the member, and he did not accuse anybody of fraud. That is what the Premier accused him of doing, which is not true.

**The Speaker:** I note the particular sensitivity of this kind of matter. I was intending in every way that I would make best efforts to in fact give an immediate response to points of order when they were

raised. However, with the nature of this one, I again will exercise my option to report on it tomorrow.

I believe there was a second point of order.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to your ruling.

#### **Point of Order Parliamentary Language**

**Mr. Cooper:** I rise now under Standing Order 23(j), "uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder," and in fact we could even use (i) here, "imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member."

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to just reference *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, chapter 13, a very small section here on page 618 on unparliamentary language.

The proceedings of the House are based on a long-standing tradition of respect for the integrity of all Members. Thus, the use of offensive, provocative or threatening language in the House is strictly [prohibited]. Personal attacks, insults and obscenities are not in order.

Then on page 619 it speaks specifically to whether there is a catch-all list of parliamentary language.

The codification of unparliamentary language has proven impractical as it is the context in which words or phrases are used that the Chair must consider when deciding whether or not they should be withdrawn.

In this case the Member for Calgary-Fort – some will refer to him as the Minister of Finance – called the Member for Strathmore-Brooks the shadowy Minister of Finance. Whether it was the shadowy Minister of Finance, the shadowy critic, whatever he used, it all remains the same. The word "shadowy" implies many things, which is exactly why it should be considered unparliamentary in this case and why the member should withdraw it. It can be said that it implies criminality, that it raises questions of the member's ethics, that it implies dark places and things that lurk in the night. [interjections] There are a number of implications with the use of the word "shadowy" that do not create order in this House, as we can see from the other side, so I respectfully request that the minister withdraw the comments and refrain from using them in the future.

**The Speaker:** The Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With regard to the point of order made by the hon. Official Opposition House Leader, it does seem that he's sort of arguing a different side of the case than he argued in the last point of order. In other words, in the first case he's arguing that unless you say exactly the word, in that case "fraud," you can't infer that from the context. Now he's saying that in the context it could be meant to infer that something is criminal or so on. So he's arguing against interpreting words in the first case, and he's arguing for interpreting words in this case.

Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, in this particular Assembly of ours I've learned that you've got to know when to hold them and you've got to know when to fold them, so on behalf of the hon. Minister of Finance I withdraw the words and apologize to the House.

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

#### **Orders of the Day Government Motions**

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.



### Provincial Fiscal Policies

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

[Adjourned debate April 19: Mr. Westhead]

**Mr. Jean:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm very pleased to have the opportunity today to stand in front of the government and respond to the government's very first – very first – complete budget. It's only taken about 12 months. You'll no doubt be surprised that I don't really believe in the vision that they have put out for the province and, instead, fundamentally believe that the vision of this government is going to create a tremendous amount of hardship for Albertans, for Alberta families. I think it's going to be very difficult, and it, frankly, puts our long-term prosperity at risk. Alberta has had a tremendous history of allowing people to benefit from their hard work and have one of the best qualities of life in the world, and I see that this budget clearly puts us down a road of not being able to enjoy that anymore. That's the situation.

We were hoping, Mr. Speaker – we remain very hopeful – to see a very reasonable path back to balance, back to balanced books, a reasonable path, actually, to set out how they would possibly get back to balance. We were hoping to see our government turn away from an approach on the economy that can only be described as ideological no matter what the situation is, no matter how impractical it appears. For the people that are unemployed in Alberta, for the people that are unemployed in Calgary or Leduc or Nisku, for those people it's completely impractical and unpractical, and this ideological bent to do whatever it is to put forward their thoughts is simply not good for Alberta. It simply will, as it goes from legislative to budget, hurt Albertans and hurt Alberta families.

We were hoping for some recognition about debt, and I think most Albertans recognize that debt is not good. Debt can be good and can be necessary, and sometimes it is necessary, but for certain, Mr. Speaker, here we have a situation where the debt levels are rising to such an amount that Albertans will not be able to pay for what they want to pay for, which is ballet lessons or hockey lessons or, frankly, the opportunity to put food on the table or have a new vehicle, as the Premier has suggested that they should do, find a fuel-efficient vehicle. They will have to pay their money towards interest that this government is racking up because they have no control and no interest at all in where they can save money.

We saw today that the only cut they brought forward was to fight forest fires, to play some number games with the budget when they know it's not even a close air of reality to what will be spent on forest fires here in Alberta this year, significantly less in this year, significantly less than any amount needed in the last 10 years. Why would they do that? Because they're hiding all the money they're putting into different ideological programs and ignoring the things that Albertans need: fighting fires. I saw what the Slave Lake fire did to the community of Slave Lake, and I'm shocked that an NDP member from Slave Lake would not voice her opinion to cabinet about this. Seeing what happened as a result of not enough assets to take care of our communities is simply negligence.

3:00

We were also hoping, Mr. Speaker, to see some way that this government was going to move forward and help Alberta families that are sitting around their kitchen tables saying: what in the world is going on with this government? We've had 100,000 job losses. There are over 100,000 people in Alberta that are out of work, and what's the government's answer? A \$5,000 job-subsidy plan that didn't create any jobs whatsoever except the minister's. Of course,

in January they bragged about that program being one of the three great achievements of this NDP government in the eight months previous, and what did they do after that great achievement came out in the news? They cancelled the program because they had nothing to brag about. Nothing. And that's what this job plan that this NDP government has brought in is. It's nothing. Nothing to help Albertans. They call it a jobs plan. I call it a no jobs whatsoever plan. The amount of debt they've racked up, \$58 billion, and the insignificant, paltry sum they've put towards any type of job-creation program should be absolutely embarrassing.

Mr. Speaker, while the members are making fun on the other side, people are losing their jobs, and they don't have enough money, and what happens? They're still laughing. This is a serious issue. People cannot afford – even though you have these plush jobs where you make hundreds of thousands of dollars per year on the backs of taxpayers, people are unemployed in this province. People cannot find jobs. It's embarrassing that you would take that as so trivial as to laugh. Totally embarrassing. In our belief, this budget simply fails Albertans completely, and it racks up more debt than we've ever seen. It has the biggest deficit this province will ever see as long as the NDP leave quickly. This is not helping Alberta families. This is not helping the moms and dads that want a better quality of life for their kids. The future is Alberta.

The future in Canada is Alberta families, and we need to support those families, whether it's when they don't have a job, so we fight with the federal government and make sure that they cover people that can't be covered in the current federal program on EI. They should stand up. I can't even hear them, and I'm sitting across from them. Stand up and talk to the federal government about supporting the jobs in Nisku, about supporting the families in Nisku and Leduc that don't have a job. What about all those families that can't get EI? You ever think about that? There are a lot of people, business owners that have closed their businesses, people that are unemployed because they don't have enough weeks and don't qualify because this federal government is so out of touch with Albertans.

It's time this NDP government woke up and supported the families in Alberta with real job-creation programs, not taxes that, frankly, will have to be paid by Alberta's families, by Alberta's children and moms and dads. They will do without because you have these grandiose schemes of how you're going to fix GHG emissions, although we're less than any state in the United States. It's embarrassing that you would think that we in Alberta can lead the world so significantly that we're going to damage our own economy. Now, I have no problem and I agree with you that we need to do something about climate change. We need to do something lockstep with the rest of the world, certainly with North America, but we need to do it together because what you're doing is that you're wrecking our economy to benefit nobody because we have such an insignificant amount of GHG emissions compared to anywhere else in North America.

Now, I know, Mr. Speaker, that they're not really listening to me except when they laugh, and I find that troubling because I don't think unemployment is a laughing matter for the families that are unemployed.

Mr. Speaker, I do want to start with the numbers. Last week we released a 10-point plan. You know, we were trying to help the government. We've been trying for a year to help this government. They reject our help. But we put forward a 10-point plan of practical recommendations to save Alberta's future, to make sure that we don't have these huge interest payments. Two billion dollars in three years we'll be paying in interest. Two billion dollars.

Now, I've never had a billion dollars. I don't think anybody in this place has had a billion dollars. But we're going to have to pay

back a billion dollars, \$2 billion. By the time this government is done, I would say that it's going to be a lot more, but let's just deal with what we know. Two billion dollars. That's \$58,000 for every household in Alberta. That \$58,000 is what you just put on the mortgages. Sorry, Mr. Speaker. It wasn't you that did that; it was them that did that. That \$58,000 is added to the mortgage. When you consider how much houses have fallen in value in Alberta, what does this mean, this extra \$58,000? Albertans are taking a big hit from this government to fill their ideological purposes that, frankly, are not supporting Alberta families.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that 10-point plan put forward some practical solutions, and I was really hoping, especially in relation to the WCB holiday, that this government would take us up on it. It was simple: ideas on how to save \$2 billion without losing one job. The WCB surplus right now is far beyond what they're required to hold in their bank account, billions of dollars sitting in a bank account doing nothing, that the government has access to. Yet you ignore our proposal when that \$1.5 billion to \$2 billion could help Alberta families stay employed. It was overtaxation. Businesses in Alberta paid it. I'm suggesting, we're suggesting that when you hire a new employee, you pay \$1 a year for WCB. That's a good idea. I think employers would like that. It's their money anyway. It encourages them to hire people. But not even a whisper of saying: "Yeah. We'll look at that. How about that? That was a good idea." That's \$2 billion of savings and not one penny saved, not one option taken up.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it's clear I'm a fiscal conservative. My track record is clear. I believe that we should be better managers for Alberta families because the future is Alberta families and it's their money. It's not yours. It's not mine. It's not anybody's in this House unless we pay taxes. Some of us do, but it's a paltry sum compared to what Alberta families put in. We need to move towards a path of sustainability and balanced books. We need to turn around because we're going the wrong way. It's a road map, and you can see that that way is debt, debt, interest payments, low quality of life, and this way is balanced books instead of interest payments on hospitals, on all this debt we borrow, on all these buildings we do, which are necessary.

Let's just save a little bit, Mr. Speaker, so we don't have debt, so we don't have interest payments, because when we start paying interest, those payments can't be made to schools. They can't hire teachers because there's not an indefinite amount of money.

We saw a credit downgrade. Did anybody notice a credit downgrade in this place, Mr. Speaker? I noticed it. I've never seen a credit downgrade 24 hours after a budget before. That was pretty impressive. I would say that the NDP set a record on that. I've never seen that before. A full point down. A full point. What did it mean to the Minister of Finance? Aha. That doesn't matter. That doesn't matter. It's not going to affect anything.

Well, Mr. Speaker, it does affect things. When you have good credit, you get to borrow at a cheaper rate, which means that interest payments don't go towards those things we want and need. I want nurses. I want more teachers in Alberta. We deserve it. Alberta deserves it because we've worked hard for it. I don't want to pay interest for nothing, to big banks somewhere else. Sometimes I hear: "Oh, it's just interest. It's just interest. It's zero per cent, .5." It's \$2 billion a year, \$58,000 per household, \$2,000 just to pay interest to every household. Every household in Alberta, a million of them – a million of them – has to pay \$2,000 a year starting in three years just to pay for the interest payments at the low interest rates we get. Those payments will go up.

I find it shocking that nobody seems to care over there. Along with the carbon tax that's \$3,000 that you're taking out when Albertans are unemployed, when Albertans are hurting, when they don't even know if they're going to have a job tomorrow, when

they're going to the food bank. The demand for food banks has doubled. These are real issues.

3:10

I've worked soup kitchens. I've worked for nonprofits. Nobody in this place has a monopoly on caring for other people; we just think we get at it a different way. I'm just suggesting that maybe in the future and maybe in the past look at some of our proposals. They're proposals that are good for Alberta. Maybe they're not perfect, but work with us. We're here to help. We're getting very nervous at the direction you're going, and, frankly, Albertans are, and you all know that. I hear it everywhere. I drive this province constantly, and I hear it in Tim Hortons. I hear it everywhere. Albertans are not pleased with the direction you're going.

I'm suggesting this: just consider the opposition proposals, yes, even from the third party and the fourth and the fifth. Consider our ideas. We were elected by Albertans. We represent Albertans, maybe not the same ones as you, but we do, and we're all in this together, and we need to work together to make Alberta better in the future and presently. We can't do that if you stick your head in the sand and don't listen. You put the blinders on, and you think you know everything. You don't. Neither do we, but working together for Albertans we can come up with some good ideas that will save Alberta, the future, which is so important.

One idea, Mr. Speaker, was a hiring freeze. They have 200,000 civil servants. We're not suggesting a hiring freeze for all civil servants, but we have 26,000 bureaucrats that work straight for the government and about 5,000 or 5,500 managers. Now, those aren't essential services. Why don't we just freeze those salaries right now and freeze the hiring right now? Through attrition, which is 8 to 10 per cent in all these departments a year, 8 to 10 per cent of the people turn over. They either retire or they quit and move. Why not just say for, you know, a year or two years: we're not going to hire any more people in those positions, but what we will do is that we'll hire from within. We'll reorganize from within. There'll be a mandate for the departments to reorganize instead of hiring new people, and within two years we're going to be at the same level, in essence, as British Columbia.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know if you know this, but can you imagine that Alberta is 20 per cent more expensive than British Columbia? We have relatively the same population. That's on the population base. We spend about \$10,800 per person for government services. It's going up. It's going way up. The Friendly Giant would say: way, way up. B.C. can do it for \$8,800. Now, I wouldn't call B.C., British Columbia, the most capitalistic, free-market place in Canada. In fact, I think most Canadians would agree that it's not that. But how in the world can they have the same constitutional obligations, the same obligations to their people, yet do it 20 per cent less expensively?

I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker. It's because we operate the most expensive government in Canada, and these folks over here, the NDP government, are making it much more expensive. They talk about looking at empirical evidence and looking at the facts. Well, the facts clearly indicate that the NDP are going in the wrong direction. The facts clearly indicate that we have the most expensive government in Canada, and it's getting way, way more expensive. Who's paying for it? Alberta's families. They're paying for it through the unemployment line, through the food bank. They're paying for it, and they're going to continue to pay for it.

Four years. Mr. Speaker, this NDP government is going to cost us a lot more than four years. It's going to cost Albertans a lot of quality of life, and the biggest issue is that they're not even considering other options or even taking any input from anybody else in this Chamber. That is shameful, absolutely shameful.

Well, I think those things would be a good first step, just a wage freeze and a hiring freeze. Mr. Speaker, there's no question that we need more nurses, we need more doctors, we need more hospitals, we need better services. I want that. I really want that. I want our government service to be the best in the world, and it's not. I want our government service to be competitive. I don't want it to be the cheapest because I don't think that works well. I want it to give a return on investment to Albertans. I want to be proud of it. I'm proud of our nurses. I'm proud of our teachers. I'm proud that our teachers could operate, frankly, under that government for so long and be effective. I mean, we did go from number one in the world in education to number five or six in Canada, so they didn't do that good a job. In fact – well, I won't get into that right now. I'll wait until after May. But I'm surprised our teachers and nurses did as well as they did under that government's watch. I'm shocked that they feel at all like they want to go into work under this government's watch, truly.

Yes, there would be some tough decisions, Mr. Speaker. There's no question. There always have to be tough decisions when you decide who gets the priority. We also agree that there would be some programs that would have to be reviewed or reformed, but we need to make those decisions today because we're going so far down that way – and we need to go that way – that it's going to take a lot longer to get there.

Now, everybody knows what it's like to get in a car and go on a road trip, and I will assure you, Mr. Speaker, that that road trip we're going on right now is going to cost a lot, billions upon billions upon billions. You know, everybody says "billions" like it doesn't matter. It does matter. Every single penny of that billion dollars has to be made up by somebody, and it's not going to be made up by these folks because, frankly, they don't know what they're doing. It's going to be made up by Alberta families that pay taxes, that work hard, that want a better lifestyle, that want that money to go not towards government bureaucrats and, frankly, this NDP government. They want it to go to the things that their children want and need and that they want and need: a holiday, dance recitals, those things that everyday people want. That's what we're here for.

We're not here for ideological reasons. We're here to serve the people of Alberta. Mr. Speaker, I can't say it enough. I'm not here for big banks. Now, I will never be here for big banks. I'm not here for big oil either. I work for Albertans, and I'm proud of it. So when people bring up companies in my riding, I'm okay with that because I don't work for the companies in my riding. I've made it clear every single year, every single day that I've worked for the people of Alberta, and I've done that for more than 10 years now. I don't work for them. I don't work for big oil. I work for the people of Alberta, and I'm proud of it.

What we're seeing from this NDP government is a failure to recognize this fiscal reality. Other jurisdictions have. In fact, Manitoba recognized it last night in a big way. Mr. Speaker, it's so obvious. I said that they don't know what they're doing, but I don't want to criticize, and I don't like throwing insults. I really want to work with them, and I find some of this discussion today not very – I'm not very happy about it. I don't think that's helpful. I think we're here together to serve Albertans, and I think we should do it in a respectful manner.

Just five months ago, Mr. Speaker, this government came in, and they said: "We're going to change the cap, the debt-to-GDP ratio, on borrowing. We're going to change the cap. It's not going to be 3 per cent or whatever the former government did. It's going to be 15 per cent. You know what? We're going to raise it just so we have more borrowing capacity, so we can borrow for important programs." Well, five months later they got rid of the cap. So why was it so important five months ago to set a cap at 15 per cent when

today the cap is unlimited? You won. You have an NDP government. You can borrow all the money you want.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** To infinity and beyond.

**Mr. Jean:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. To infinity and beyond. Frankly, that's scary.

Three hundred billion dollars, Mr. Speaker, \$300 billion. Let me tell you where that number comes from. It comes from the start, the NDP government in Ontario, with the Liberals finishing it off. Today that's what Ontario owes, \$300 billion. That's the path you're going on. Do you know how much money that is per month in interest? One billion dollars. You know, \$1 billion: that's a lot of money. That's \$1,000 for every household in Alberta, if it was in Alberta, \$1,000 for every household in Alberta per month just to go towards interest payments. That's where we're going. I see it. It's right over there. It's not very far away, and truly we need to come closer, over here. We need to start.

The fact that after five months they would change their own law because they don't want to break it after they just made the law clearly indicates that they don't know what they're doing. And now they say: "Let's go to infinity and beyond on borrowing capacity. Let's borrow as much as we need because – you know what? – it's just paperwork." It's not paperwork, Mr. Speaker. First comes higher interest costs, then comes more unemployment. Then guess what businesses do. They move. That's what they do. That's what they're doing in Ontario.

3:20

When you have hydro costs that are outrageous, you have to move because you're not competitive. I'm going to tell you, Mr. Speaker, that based upon all of my meetings with every single company in Alberta that deals with electricity: 200, 300 per cent. I'm not fearmongering; I'm telling you what the experts are telling me. Now, if you're manufacturing things in Alberta and your electricity input costs go up 300 per cent when you're already paying thousands of dollars to make these products and sell them in Alberta or elsewhere, guess what you're going to do? You're going to move.

Mr. Speaker, they can say: "Oh, this is just going to be passed on. It's going to be recycled, this carbon tax is going to be recycled in the economy." Yeah. Let's make math really simple. Let's take \$3 billion and divide it by how many households there are in Alberta, 1 million households. Now, I'm no genius at math, but I can tell you that that's \$3,000, right? It's pretty shocking when you think about it.

Now, the target that they released to get our finances back to black – I just wanted to point this out – is, frankly, unrealistic: 2024. It must be nice to be able to make plans that you're not going to participate in enforcing. Does this government really think that based upon the track they're going, because they're way down there, that track is going to bring them back to any kind of power or any kind of election? Do you think they're going to be back here, Mr. Speaker? It's nice to pass on jobs to other people. Well, that's what they're doing because they have no intention of doing anything but putting in their ideological positions – the carbon tax, the levies, the GHG – putting coal out, all these 6,000, 7,000 people out of work. By the way, I don't know if you know it, but I found out that coal workers make about \$92,000 a year. Those are good jobs: 6,000, 7,000 Albertans unemployed with one stroke of the pen from this government. Wow. Talk about heartless.

Now, I'm hoping that after my great speech today and after all the members of the Wildrose caucus have an opportunity to address the NDP government today, they'll listen to us, and they'll say:

“You know what? I’m going to listen from now on. I’m going to listen the next time the Wildrose comes forward with a 12-point job action plan.” Yes, that’s right, Mr. Speaker. We also did that about a month ago. We came up with 12 great, common-sense ideas to create jobs in Alberta. How many of those ideas were picked up by the government? One.

Now I have to give them a compliment. Here you go; this is it. I do compliment them for reducing the small-business tax from 3 per cent to 2 per cent. See, Mr. Speaker? I can say nice things, too, and I will. When I see some good things from this government, I’m going to say that there are good things. That was a good thing. That creates employment. It’s unfortunate, though, that this carbon tax is going to wipe out by at least 10 times anything that that small-business tax cut would have done: \$3 billion compared to, I believe, \$150 million is what one point off will do. There’s no comparison. Businesses are going to be paying more. So this small-business tax cut, frankly, is just smoke and mirrors. That’s all it is, just trying to change the channel, trying to appear balanced.

They’re not balanced. This is an ideological agenda to bring in tax, tax, and more tax. I find that troubling because, ultimately, Albertans pay that. You know, I can understand that when you need to make changes and you need to modify your position on certain things, you have to bring in some taxes. Mr. Speaker, I don’t know if you know it, but I’m not going to raise your taxes. I don’t like taxes because somebody has to pay those taxes, and it’s not these folks over here. It’s Alberta families. It’s moms and dads. The kids will go without.

We are set to be \$58 billion in debt by the time of the next election. A \$2 billion price tag per year just to cover the interest payments: that, to me, is outrageous, especially for a population of 4 million people. Mr. Speaker, just to equate it to what it means – and I’m hoping that all of the NDP government members are listening, no matter where they are – in two years, three years interest payments will be the largest government payment except for health, which is \$20 billion, education, and social services.

What does that mean? Well, it means that more money will go towards interest payments than justice, keeping criminals off the street. More money will go towards interest payments. Now, I would like more money to go to justice in this province to make sure that we keep criminals off our streets, to make sure that – you know what? – Legal Aid has the opportunity to represent those people that deserve to be represented because people deserve a lawyer. People deserve justice, fair treatment, the rule of law, democracy. As you know, Mr. Speaker, I love democracy.

Seniors – you know, Mr. Speaker, seniors brought me here, in part – and agriculture: spending more money on interest payments than we are on seniors and agriculture. That’s so shameful, and all we need to do is take a few pennies out of every dollar this government spends, a few pennies. We are spending more money in three years on interest payments than on seniors. Doesn’t that make you shocked? It shocked me when I crunched the numbers. Agriculture, our second largest industry: we’re going to be paying more on interest payments than we do for all of the agriculture department in Alberta.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Infrastructure department: more money than the Infrastructure department, not more money than they invest but more money than it costs for them to manage that. More money for interest payments than for Transportation, the entire transport department, that deals with every roadway, everything to do with transportation in this province. We’re spending more money on interest payments.

All the government has to do is find a couple of cents in every dollar. I think all of us can do that. I’m prepared to do that. Are you?

**Mr. Nixon:** Albertans want us to do it.

**Mr. Jean:** Albertans want us to do that. They need us to do that.

Credit downgrades are coming. Oops. Sorry, Mr. Speaker. I missed that by three days. I predicted it three months ago, but more are coming. This is not the end of it, folks. More credit downgrades are coming.

Interest payments will be higher. They have never been lower than they are today. As long as I’ve been alive – and I remember paying 18 per cent, Mr. Speaker, back in the ’80s. I remember what the Trudeau Liberal government did to Alberta. It’s doing it again – it’s just a different first name – and you guys are going along for the ride. It’s time to stand up for Alberta families. It’s time to fight for Albertans. I cannot believe that nobody on that side sees interest payments as a challenge. Just when our economy needed a boost, what did we find that the NDP government has done? Raised taxes on everything for everybody.

I’m going to skip ahead, Mr. Speaker. I only plan to talk for 90 minutes today, but I want to talk a little bit about the \$3 billion carbon tax because I keep hearing it and people talk about the \$3 billion carbon tax. They say: 500 bucks; it’s just going to cost 500 bucks. Well, I don’t think 500 bucks is just. I think 500 bucks is a lot of money. Three billion dollars is a lot of money, but when you divide that \$3 billion, as I said earlier, by a million homes, you come up with \$3,000. Now, that’s per year. So that is what the typical family will be paying, less the large emitters, which are about, I think, \$600 to \$750 million of that \$3 billion.

They talk about: you know, you’re going to get a full rebate. Well, full, in this case, does not mean the full amount you paid in. What full means, Mr. Speaker, is \$300. Now, that’s per individual, but if you’re a couple, you can have \$500. If you’re roommates, you can get \$600. That’s a little bit of a penalty on being married. And, of course, if you have kids, you get about 35 bucks or so up to a maximum.

Mr. Speaker, they haven’t costed how much it’s going to cost families on average for everything that’s transported, for instance, because, you know, when you raise gas taxes – and we’re going to see an 11-cent difference from a year ago to today through this government, an 11-cent increase just from this government. When you look at that, Mr. Speaker, and you’re a trucking company – and I’ve talked to some trucking companies – you say: “5 per cent at least. My rates are going up 5 per cent.” Why? Because – guess what, folks? – the input cost for fuel is a huge cost for trucking. How many things come to Alberta without using trucks? Oh, you’re right: the things that come by plane, which use a lot more fuel and cost a lot more. Everything coming to Alberta will go up 5 per cent or pretty darn close. That’s the reality. You didn’t consider that.

You didn’t consider the cost of food going up, the cost of shelter going up, and now you’re adding more taxes. Increased taxes for Calgary. They’re not happy. They’re not. I’m not talking about the property taxes that you’re going to put on the backs of all Calgarians and Edmontonians and everybody that lives in a house. I’m talking about the fuel costs. I heard this morning that fuel costs for a fleet in Calgary could be \$6 million or \$7 million just for your carbon tax to the city of Calgary. Are they getting a rebate? Are they getting any help from this government? No, because this government expects Calgarians to pay for their ideological agenda. That’s not right. It’s wrong.

3:30

A full rebate, Mr. Speaker, does not come anywhere close to the thousand dollars per family. Actually, basically calculating it grossly, on the big numbers, it comes out to \$3,000 per family, so by saying it’s at least a thousand dollars, we are not out to lunch at

all. I don't know where the government thinks the other \$2,500 per family is coming from, because \$3 billion is the number. We know that this is going to cost families a lot of money. For those who make under \$50,000 and qualify, the tax rebate program – it's not a levy; it's a tax, folks – completely ignores the impact of higher power prices, higher power bills and skyrocketing costs to consumer goods.

I'm not fearmongering. Those are the facts. You cannot tax your way into prosperity. You cannot do that. You can't tax your way to a situation where you have better jobs, except for these folks. Mr. Speaker, this tax is not a fair tax because right now it's going far beyond what our obligation is as world citizens, far beyond our obligation as Canadian citizens, as Alberta citizens. It goes too far. Should something be done? Yes. Should this be done? Not now. Don't punish us when we're down on the ground. Don't kick us when we're down. This government seems to think that's the proper motive to do it and the proper thing to do.

Mr. Speaker, I've heard time and time again: oh, it's a levy. Well, that's not a levy; that's a tax. You know, you can clearly put lipstick on a pig, but you still have a pig. And you can put lipstick on a carbon tax, but you still have a pig. You can dress this carbon tax up as friendly and as fun as you want, but it's still a tax, and it's not a carbon tax because it's not revenue neutral. I say this: you can put lipstick on a carbon tax, you can dress it up, but all you have is a PST in disguise. That's what this is.

You can come back later, as you have, and say: no, no, wait; we're spending it on infrastructure. Well, you haven't even named what it is. That's not a carbon tax. A carbon tax is revenue neutral. Everybody knows that. It's revenue neutral. You can put lipstick on it, but this carbon tax is not revenue neutral. It's just a tax grab. It's just a cash cow grab. It's just the government looking to make excuses to get more money into their pockets from Alberta families so they can spend it on their pet projects. Shocking. Absolutely shocking. When people are in an unemployment line, when people are in a soup line, when food bank demands have doubled, what do these people say? Oh, green infrastructure. I think people are little bit more concerned about putting food on the table for their kids, being able to afford hockey for their kids, going on that holiday with their family. That's what they care about right now.

We're already the greenest, most environmentally sound province in Canada. We do oil sands and oil and gas extraction better than anybody else in the world. I invite you to my home, like I did the Liberal caucus in Ottawa and the NDP caucus. Guess how many of them came? Zero. You don't want to see the truth. What you want to see is your ideological agenda enforced and executed on the backs of Alberta families because you think you have the answer while people are in unemployment lines and soup lines. You should be ashamed of yourselves, ashamed of yourselves for backing up a cabinet that doesn't understand the realities of what's going on in Alberta right now.

Mr. Speaker, I did go through half my speech by putting the pages forward, and I know you're getting a little tired of me. I can tell. I have been watching you for a while. You're not? Okay. Good. I'll keep going. Do you mind if I flip back a couple of pages?

Mr. Speaker, the other thing that I'm so concerned about is coal. We have 200 years of coal here in Alberta. What does this transition money do for the coal plants that are being shut down, for the communities that are going to be shut down, for the families that are going to be out of work? Seven thousand jobs gone like that. I don't think that's the right way to go. We have told these coal companies to come to Alberta and to set up shop here. We have had Albertans working for those companies and said, "Listen; we're going to close them down gradually; we're going to have some clean-coal technology," which I think is the way to go. New

technology, I think, solves the problem, and I frankly think this government should invest in some of that.

Look at what's happening in Saskatchewan. We have clean-coal technology there that's almost – almost – as close as clean-burning natural gas. The United States: I had an opportunity to talk to somebody from the U.S. the other day, and they told me that they had lots of plants that are very close to natural gas. So why are you closing it down when it's already getting cleaner? It's because you're ideological. It's because you think you have to to make yourself feel better or to make those NDP friends of yours from right across this country feel wonderful. It doesn't make Albertans feel wonderful. It doesn't make Albertans feel wonderful. [interjection] I hear from the other side some chirping about evidence. Well, I'm happy to sit down and go through the evidence with any of you. I'm happy to talk to you and talk to the coal companies in Alberta and the families that are going to be out of work. I'm happy to hear that. Happy to do that.

You know what? Mr. Speaker, there's no doubt that it is a large amount of money, and you'll notice if you look at the details that most of the money is going to be paid after they're gone, after Albertans have done the big boot. That will happen. That's what happens to all ideological governments. Ask Bob Rae.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Ask Selinger.

**Mr. Jean:** Ask Selinger.

I'm concerned that you don't want to govern, that you just want to impose your ideological agenda. I heard from the third party – and I thought it was very funny; I have to say that – that most of Selinger's NDP workers will probably come to Alberta because there are job openings here. In fact, 247 new civil servants were hired by this government over the last 11 months, just since 60,000, 70,000, 80,000, 90,000, 100,000 Albertans are unemployed. You add more to the public sector? Well, guess what? Guess what, guys, people? Albertans are moving out of Alberta. We have a net migration out of Alberta, and it's not the low oil price, Mr. Speaker, because they're going to Saskatchewan and B.C. to work in the oil sector, where they don't have an NDP government. That's where it is.

I have to say – and I know they're convinced by my arguments; I know they're going to turn around – that \$196 million in transition funding for the coal industry, Mr. Speaker, in those communities doesn't even come close to covering the wages or the social costs, not even close. These people relied on this government, the previous government, and we are obligated to follow through with previous governments, unfortunately, and the contractual obligations you create for us. I think you should have done it differently. I think it's a transitional thing, and we need to do things in step with the rest of Canada, with the rest of North America because we have such an insignificant amount of GHG emissions compared to the rest of North America. It's true.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Now, Madam Speaker, Wildrose believes in a different vision, a vision that is much bigger and, frankly, longer term, a vision where we see that the heritage fund and the interest from, not to, the heritage fund – payments not to but from – supports those deficits we might need in the future when oil prices go down. I see a vision that is bright and beautiful, where people are employed and they have a selection of jobs they want, where they get training support from the government for new jobs and new opportunities, where the government supports AHS workers so AHS workers want to come to work, where they don't take four months off because they're sick and tired of AHS or the people within it. I know. I sat there for four

months. It was terrible. AHS workers don't like AHS. They're not happy with the status quo and how things are. I'm not either, and I sure hope you aren't, but today I heard the Minister of Health support the status quo at AHS. Well, the Premier, the Minister of Education, and the Minister of Economic Development and Trade for years have all been saying that AHS is broken and we have to fix it. They get into power: "AHS is perfect; we're going to protect it."

That's not what people voted for. You said that they voted for health care and they voted for you. Well, then do something about it. We have some of the longest wait times in Canada, and we spend more money on our health care than anybody else in Canada. Folks, it doesn't match. Something's wrong with AHS when people don't want to come to work. We want public servants to want to work for us, to be proud to work for Albertans because we're proud of them when they give Albertans a good return on investment, when they want to work, when they're willing to work, and when they show up for work.

3:40

Madam Speaker, we're just looking for a few pennies: 3 cents on every dollar, 4 cents on every dollar if we can find it. No job losses. Why can't we see this government even consider that? Ideology. They're too set on their agenda to destroy this province, and I just don't understand.

When I talk to families, when I talk to Albertans, they tell me that they're sitting around their kitchen table and going through their budgets. When dad got laid off, they had to make changes. Mom is still working; she has to get a second job. They have to make changes in their own lives. Why in the world wouldn't we think that we have to make changes in the public service, the 200,000 workers in Alberta that are making on average \$80,000 to \$100,000? The cost is, I think, \$102,000 per public servant. I'm not one hundred per cent sure of that, but I'm pretty positive I read that a few months ago. Why would we not say, "Let's just find some efficiencies"? When people quit or when people move out of the province, let's just not rehire them for now, until our province starts growing again: instead of people moving out, people moving in.

**An Hon. Member:** That'll help morale.

**Mr. Jean:** It would help morale, Madam Speaker. It would.

People that don't know what they're talking about should go check out AHS. I sat there for a long time, Madam Speaker, and watched first-hand. I saw and I had people come to me and tell me that morale is terrible. I mean, I heard that somebody on the other side obviously went for a new job because they weren't happy where they were. It happens, and that's the way it works. Every family in Alberta is forced to make these decisions. Why does this government think they don't have to do it for them? They are here for the people of Alberta, not for themselves. So work for the people of Alberta, not for yourselves.

Well, Madam Speaker, I received a tug on my coattails telling me that it's probably time, and I don't blame you because I'm not going to change my speech much. I do believe that government can do better than what this government is doing. I believe government can do better than what the previous government did. That's why I got involved in politics. [some applause] Thank you for the clap from the NDP. I do believe government can do better, and I don't think we should ever stop doing better. Albertans expect us to do better.

Alberta will get through this, Madam Speaker, but it's going to cost a lot. It's going to hurt a lot, and I don't want to see any more pain out there. I want to support Alberta families. I want to help Albertans. I commit to you today that the Wildrose opposition, our

party, will not stop. We will fight every single day for the priorities of Albertans: to keep their tax bill low, to make sure they get all the services from health care, from education, from social services, from justice, from infrastructure, from transport, from all those things that these people on the other side laugh about and think is a joke, the \$50 billion that they take out of the pockets of taxpayers without any interest in finding efficiencies. I promise Wildrose will stand up and fight for the priorities of Albertans every single day throughout Alberta. We won't stop.

I know you're going to be surprised with this, Madam Speaker, as everybody on the other side is going to be surprised, but I'm not going to support this budget. Wildrose will not support a budget that puts pain on the people of Alberta and keeps them unemployed. We will support programs that keep people working, that invest in the things they need, but this government is not doing that. That's why in three years we will work hard to win the hearts and minds of Albertans so that they will put a real fiscal conservative government in power in Alberta.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** I'd just like to make a brief comment that it is the tradition of budget speeches not to heckle the speaker on strict budget speeches. We afforded the Minister of Finance a room that was silent as a mouse on this side. We never heckled him once. When I spoke, when the Leader of the Opposition spoke, and when the leader of the third party speaks, I expect that we would be accorded the same respect during the tradition of budget addresses.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other questions or comments?

Seeing none, I'll recognize the hon. leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise today and talk on Motion 13, regarding the budget of this year. So much to say. So much to say. I guess where I have to start is that Budget '16 continues to be a disappointment to Albertans. It's a budget, unfortunately, focused on optics rather than on the economy. Each day as Albertans learn more about this budget, they find out that their families will pay a lot more and receive a lot less. Why do I say that? Well, there are many reasons.

The government talks about slash-and-burns, but they're the only ones talking about slashing and burning. One would ask themselves: why is that? I think that's because they need to distract from the very unfortunate effect on Albertans that their budget will have. It's going to be harmful to Alberta families. It's going to cost them more money. It's going to make it harder for Alberta families to stay in their homes. It's going to make it harder for seniors to stay in their homes. It's going to be harder for those families with kids to afford sports and music lessons and tutoring and vacations and clothes and running shoes and all those other things that make life work for families with kids. It's going to hurt almost every single thing that this government claims it was going to help. They got it wrong, Madam Speaker. They didn't get it a little bit wrong; they got it really wrong.

Now, we Progressive Conservatives feel like we led the conversation going into this budget in terms of making recommendations to the government. We made recommendations for the government to decrease spending without laying off workers. We tabled the Engage document, that asks some very important questions – open for discussion to government members, other opposition members, all Albertans – on things that we can do better for Alberta. Heck, we even, as part of that, issued the \$4

billion challenge on how the government might be able to reduce some of the borrowing they're going to do this and every year. Think about that.

Right now the government with this budget is going to put Alberta into an almost \$60 billion hole by the time the next election comes around. If the government was to use the Progressive Conservatives' \$4 billion challenge and find at least \$4 billion a year in savings, well, it would still be really bad where we would land, but it would be \$12 billion less; \$45 billion instead of \$57 billion is a lot. While that's still too deep a hole to climb out of, it would be a lot less deep hole, and government only needs to take the advice that we handed to them.

Heck, we even gave them four ideas that could save a billion and a half dollars without cutting front-line services, without laying off a single teacher, a single nurse, a single doctor. The government laughed at it when we talked about it in here. They completely dismissed it.

We also presented to the government an idea, which is really obvious, about dealing with emergency rooms. We know from government documents, from AHS documents, that, according to AHS, 90 per cent of emergency room visits are not emergencies. We also know from AHS that the annual budget for emergency rooms is about \$3.2 billion. If you figure 90 per cent of that is the top end – and I know it's lower than that, but the fact is that 90 per cent of the visits aren't emergencies, so start there at \$2.7 billion, \$2.8 billion. We're not saying that you can save \$2.7 billion. We are saying that the \$2.7 billion currently spent providing the most expensive care possible, which is emergency room care, could be used to provide the care needed in a much more appropriate and a much more cost-effective setting.

**3:50**

You know, Madam Speaker, we didn't even say to the government that it's easy. We just said that this is such a big win. They need to put their effort into it, set their minds to it, talk to the staff, talk to the doctors, the nurses, the patients, the EMS people that come out of those emergency rooms and say: "How can we make this better? How can we deliver that \$2.8 billion worth of service in a way that you might be able to save another billion and a half?" While we don't think it's automatic and we don't think it's easy, we think it's doable. It just takes a commitment from the government working with others to make it happen.

So far the government has scoffed at it and dismissed it as if it did not matter. That truly is a shame. That is one of the many indicators we have that this government isn't ready for prime time in terms of delivering good value to Albertans, in terms of caring for Albertans, in terms of looking after their health care and looking after their wellness because we gave, respectfully, a \$4 billion challenge, and then we kind of showed them how to win that challenge. We showed them at least \$3 billion out of the \$4 billion that they could save without cutting front-line services.

Then we challenged them to work with the 220,000 Albertans that now get paid out of the public purse through this province directly or indirectly, and we said, "Let's get their advice," because they're experts. The doctors are experts, the teachers are experts, the nurses are experts, the people driving the snowplows on the highways are experts because they know things about their job that the rest of us don't know. The people who keep maintaining the buildings, keeping the furnaces going, keeping the boilers going, the people fixing the broken windows, cutting the grass: each of them know things about their jobs where they could be done more efficiently if we would just take the time to listen to them. That's all we've asked, and so far we haven't heard any positive noise back out of this government.

As long as the government continues to ignore advice, they are back with the two extremes that they always talk about. It's either increase spending or slash and burn. Well, good for the government. They didn't slash and burn, but by gosh they sure are increasing spending, and they are making no efforts whatsoever to contain that. The government needs to actually have thoughts in their head, Madam Speaker, that are not extreme, that actually take the more reasoned middle road, that say that if we work with people, if we put our minds to the task at hand to meet the \$4 billion challenge, who knows? The government may be able to find more than \$4 billion in savings without cutting front-line services. No slashing, no burning, just common sense, just working with people, just listening to government employees, just gathering the knowledge that is already there and employing it in such a way that not only will the taxpayers gain by having to supply the government with less money, but the employees would have greater job satisfaction.

We all go home from our job at the end of the day and say: I did the best I can. The same is true of about 220,000 employees that are paid out of the public purse provincially. Not one of them goes home to their family and says: I did the worst job I could do today; I really messed things up, and I'm proud of it. Nobody says that. Nobody says that. They all go home and say: I did the best I could. Some of them say: "I had a great day. I accomplished this or that. I made things better. I served Albertans. I maybe saved somebody's life. I maybe made the road safer. I maybe made the park safer. I maybe made the campground more fun for Albertans to go to next summer." Or sometimes they say: "You know, the system's getting in my way. The government and the managers won't listen to me. I have some ideas on how to save money. I have ideas on how I could maintain six campgrounds a day instead of four, whatever the number happens to be, because I know my job and I know how to do it better if only someone would listen."

That's what the Progressive Conservative caucus has said to government. Please make that effort. Please listen. Don't leave these things on the table. Don't just not leave the money on the table, but don't leave the job satisfaction for those 220,000 Albertans that toil every day on behalf of the taxpayers – do not leave them hanging.

In fairness to the government, this is a job that'll never be done. There is no finish line. There never has been, and there never will be because in any machine as big as this province, that employs 220,000 people and spends around \$50 billion a year, there's always something changing, always something to be maintained, fixed, improved, always bad habits or waste that creeps in here and there that needs to be looked at and looked for ways to root out. That day will never end. It'll never all be rooted out, and I'm okay with that because things are happening. I'm okay with it as long as we're doing the best we can and making the effort, and that's what our Progressive Conservative caucus has asked this government to do. So far what we've heard is crickets. It's not a good thing.

On budget day the Finance minister said that the province's credit rating would not suffer a downgrade. He said, and I quote: they will see that we are sticking to our plan. Unquote. However, their plan is precisely why Alberta was downgraded. Heck, the people that set credit ratings: they only slept once before they downgraded. Within 24 hours, less than a day, after this government dropped on the table their absolutely disastrous budget, what they call a jobs plan, though I'll come to that later in my comments, the world financial community rejected it soundly and lowered Alberta's credit rating. That is ominous for Alberta because a small increase in borrowing rates right now will make a horrendous difference to this government.

You know, obviously, I don't know exactly what it's going to take, but here's what I do know. Historically credit interest rates are

at if not an all-time low, very close to it. The reason why that is important and why the government should think about that when they're trashing Alberta's credit rating is because right now it will have a bigger effect. There are times in history where the interest rate averages 6 or 8 per cent, and it's just simple math. The fact is that if the interest rate on borrowing goes up by 1 per cent and it starts out at 8, well, that's damaging and hard to take and quite painful. But if the government is borrowing now at 2 or 3 per cent and the interest rate goes up by 1 per cent, that is crushing. That is crushing.

The government's budget documents say that three years from now the government of Alberta will be paying \$2 billion a year in interest rates without even servicing the principal on the loan. If the interest rate is up by 3 to 4 per cent, then all of a sudden that \$2 billion won't do it. It might take two and a half billion dollars. That is a potential negative effect of ruining the province's credit rating, a credit rating that the previous government, the Progressive Conservative government, protected jealously. The previous government, while imperfect, made some mistakes along the way – but I can tell you that for the last 15 years they were governing, they had a triple-A credit rating and during that time did not borrow for operations because we learned and protected the value of that triple-A credit rating.

This government didn't waste any time in having it downgraded twice in the first year of their existence, and Albertans will pay the price, our children and our grandchildren. I'm just making what I think is a pretty safe assumption, that even government members love their children and grandchildren. I'm sure they do. I'm sure they do.

**An Hon. Member:** I don't.

**Mr. McIver:** One said, "I don't," but I think that person was trying to be funny. I don't believe them when they said that.

Madam Speaker, they will be saddled with debt that they will pay the rest of their lives. It's going to be painful, and this government is inflicting that pain, inflicting that debt on their children and grandchildren. If there's one thing that this government should be more ashamed about than anything else in this budget, it is the pain that they are inflicting on kids that aren't born yet that will have to pay this debt that they have no plan whatsoever in their budget to pay for.

4:00

As we peel away the layers of the budget, we can see that it's going to cost people a lot more. Mayors, reeves, and councillors have taken the government to task, starting with the mayors of Edmonton and Calgary. I was at an AUMA breakfast three weeks ago, and what was said was that for the municipalities there, they estimated that the carbon tax was going to cost each of those municipalities on average 3 and a half to 4 per cent on their property tax rate for their municipality. Madam Speaker, that's not revenue neutral. That's revenue negative for Alberta families, revenue negative for Alberta children. That is the legacy of the budget that this NDP government is inflicting upon Albertans.

Now, municipalities have said that this government demonstrated in its budget that it did not deliver stable funding.

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

**Mr. Strankman:** Yes, Madam Speaker. I think that the member needs to continue his dialogue there in regard to negative funding. I'd appreciate it if he'd continue that.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. With the time remaining, I'll go as fast as I can to talk about the negative effect. Let's just go to the government's budget documents here. If you look at page 96 in the fiscal plan, under the section entitled Economic Outlook, the government continually talks about how the rebate on their carbon tax is going to be good for Alberta families and how they're going to break even. Balderdash. Nonsense. Not a chance.

But we're going to take the government's word on something. There's the truth, there's the whole truth, and there's nothing but the truth. I'm going to give the government credit for telling the truth, but I'm surely not going to give them credit for telling the whole truth. The truth on page 96 – I'm going to take their word for it – is that the average family uses 4,500 litres of gas in a year and 135 gigajoules of natural gas. When you figure it, on a high point right now gasoline costs a dollar a litre, so it's \$4,500 a year for Alberta families. I don't know about you, but I think my utility bill is \$200 a month. Let's call it \$400 just to be fair. Let's call it another \$4,800 a year, 12 months. So there's about \$10,000 a year of the average Alberta family that's going to get rebated the extra costs on the carbon tax. How many of those families of four live on \$10,000? Not very many. So on all the other expenditures it's not covered. Alberta families are not breaking even. They're getting the heck kicked out of them. They are losing big time. If a family has \$50,000 after taxes to spend and they get rebated back on the first \$10,000, that's \$40,000 more that the carbon tax isn't rebated on. Families are getting it between the teeth.

Now, the Official Opposition is more right than the government because they say that it'll be a thousand dollars a year that it costs families, and the government says that it'll be \$500 because that's what they're rebating. But the fact is, with all due respect to the Official Opposition, that I think they're wrong, too. I think they're low with that number. I think they're low with that number because there's no rebate on what people pay for food, which arrives on a truck; clothing, which arrives on a truck; their electricity bill, which will be taxed. Entertainment, travel, all the other things that people have, will cost more.

This government is killing family budgets, not protecting them. They're saddling us with a \$2 billion budget and a \$2 billion annual interest payment that doesn't even touch the principal three years from now. And, by the way, the Calgary cancer centre is not scheduled to be built till 2024. That \$2 billion could build a cancer centre every year. Every year Albertans will pay for one and not get it after this government is done. That's no good for families. The \$2 billion in interest would pay for 50 to 100 schools, depending upon the size of the school, and they're going to pay for that every year after this NDP government is done, and they're not going to get that either.

To the hon. member, when I talk about it being negative for families, I can't imagine a budget scenario being more net negative for Alberta families than the budget scenario presented by this government in this House in this session, and they should be ashamed. I can tell you that the fact that they're killing Alberta's triple-A credit rating, the fact that they've taken the lid off borrowing – again, I will say that taking the lid off borrowing, even though the government's own said that it doesn't need to be done for three years, means that either they're planning on spending a lot more money than they've admitted or they're planning on the economy getting a lot worse than they admitted in the next three years in shrinking the GDP, which is why they've got to take the lid off.



I think that probably a combination of the two is the way it's going to turn out, Madam Speaker. That's part of the net negative to Alberta families, too: more tax burden, less economy to pay for it with. This government is doing less with more when all of Albertans are doing more with less. They are completely out of sync with Albertans. They're attacking our major industries, our energy industry, through Bill 6 our agriculture industry. They are going to make the tourist industry more expensive with the carbon tax. They're out of touch with Albertans, and they're making it worse instead of better. That is the unfortunate fact of what this particular government has burdened Albertans with, not for a short period of time but for a long period of time.

The next government – and I'm glad to see that yesterday Manitoba replaced an NDP government with a Progressive Conservative government. That was a very good idea.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Standing Order 29(2)(a) is done.

I'll recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thanks very much, Madam Speaker. Very pleased to speak to Motion 13. All Albertans know that we're facing difficult times, with unemployment rates approaching all-time highs and revenues approaching all-time lows. Many of the factors causing these extremes are beyond our immediate control: price of oil, lack of national infrastructure such as pipelines, and short-sighted policies of the recent Alberta government. The future, though, is firmly in the hands of the NDP government now, at least for the next three years, and the choices it's making.

Tying our economic well-being to one industry over many decades without convincing environmental standards; averaging \$10 billion less in revenue every year, less than the lowest taxing province in the country for the past decade; neglecting the social supports of our most vulnerable people, including First Nations: we have all enjoyed this, quote, Alberta advantage, which, unfortunately, was a delusion. Well described in children's stories as the golden goose or the king with no clothes, we've been living beyond the means of our province and of our planet. The proof is in the pudding.

We now have a naïve government, young and idealistic, who are, for the first time in my memory, making necessary and meaningful change. The past government couldn't make the changes necessary when oil was at \$100 a barrel. They couldn't do it during the recessions of the '80s and '90s, when they followed an austerity plan that we are still recovering from today. So let's work together to make this difficult time as short as possible and stop the partisan blame game, which does not serve the public interest. We cannot continue to increase services and protect the environment and build an economy and not pay more than we've been paying for the last 30 years.

To be fair, I do not envy the ministers and the Premier in these difficult times, steering Alberta through an unprecedented time, in my memory. Nonetheless, leadership and vision are the definitive roles of government, and Albertans deserve the best efforts of this no longer new NDP administration. The release of the 2016 budget leaves me with some serious questions about the vision the NDP has for our province.

This is not to say that I disagree with every element of the budget. There's funding, albeit qualified, for affordable housing, an item sorely neglected by the previous PC administration for at least four years. There is a cut to small-business taxes and an investment tax credit, policies we have very strong support for. There's also commitment to the environment, a new provincial park in southwestern Alberta that will help promote tourism. This place is the destination for recreation and film industry and tourism,

obviously. It will, all of this, along with the carbon tax, help us get off our carbon addiction. There are alternatives. The rest of the world is moving on, and we have to move on, too. These are all issues the Liberals believe in and have pushed government to introduce, so I am thankful that this government is making some of these difficult decisions.

**4:10**

My concern lies not with some of the specifics but with the long-term vision, again, and the necessary leadership, which seems to be lacking in this document. I would start with the most dramatic number, a \$10.4 billion deficit just this year. The number itself should give us serious pause. We must have an adult conversation about how we can and will share fairly in the suffering and the opportunities created in this time with the right combination of borrowing, finding savings – our public services included – and paying for our important goods and services that keep people off the streets, out of depression, out of jail, and out of hospitals. Understandably, given the remarkable drop in provincial revenues and the decision not to drastically cut government services – but this doesn't mean we shouldn't look to reduce public service costs. That is a real, sore bone of contention in the public today, that we are protecting one sector and not another. I'm not saying that we have to be draconian, but we do have to look fairly at incomes and stability across the communities.

What is unacceptable is the lack of any reasonable plan to repay debt or return to balanced spending. The year 2024 has been put forward but without evidence. It's an arbitrary shot in the dark. The government are taking a wait-and-pray position, primarily for oil prices, as past governments have done with Alberta's future. Should the price of oil remain low, we face a staggering potential for over \$50 billion in debt at the end of their term. This budget offers no contingency for prolonged low oil price and very little vision for an Alberta in the grips of a perennially low cost of crude. Virtually every economist and most political commentaries have rightly pointed at the gaping hole in our revenues. Whether or not oil prices rise, we have to start paying our way. We have a structural deficit based on a history of using oil royalties for 20 to 35 per cent of our budget. We must start paying more as a society if we want safe, healthy, generous, peaceful, stable communities where everyone has their basic needs met.

It does appear to me that we along with others in some ways are suggesting a consideration of not only public-sector cuts, a provincial sales tax, evidence-based cuts to various aspects of government services, and a new look at fees and other forms of revenue, including health care premiums – all of these need to be considered – but I would say that all of us, including the elected MLAs, have to look at how we can contribute to reducing our take in this province. We have to build a sense of solidarity, not an us-versus-them culture, and, I would say, a culture that has been aided and abetted by the Official Opposition in these debates. It's not us versus them; it's all of us together finding constructive ways to go forward, not alienate and divide. I find the situation particularly distressing as there are savings to be made in Alberta if we manage our expenses more readily. They're not easy. They require difficult choices and strong leadership, but they're there.

First and foremost, Alberta Health Services: clearly, a lot of money not being well spent. Primary care not serving people as well as it must and cuts to the primary care networks have not served to develop the innovation and adaptations that are needed in primary care services. There's a lack of evaluation to provide check and balance in the health system to improve care. Testings and investigations are significantly overused. Medications are too often used, resulting in the wrong solution; complications, especially in

the elderly; and the potential for problems of dependency and addictions, that we're seeing more and more of. The lack of community care is overwhelming our emergency rooms and hospitals when people are best cared for in the community.

These are millions and millions of dollars of savings that are not and have not yet been addressed. Study after study, not least the recent report of the mental health and addictions committee, have suggested that the money needs to go into early intervention, into high-risk families, and into prevention programs that would prevent so much suffering and a lot of health care costs. The government, in changing from the status quo budgets of the Progressive Conservatives, had an opportunity to support team-based community care, and to be fair, there is some allocated for this but nowhere near the emphasis that's needed.

The budget states that the government is suddenly going to find \$300 million in savings in 2018. This is what they call bending the cost curve. However, there's nothing in the line items to tell us exactly how.

Glad to see capital spending on housing for the at-risk population after four years of no spending. Money designated for affordable housing directed at repair and maintenance: these are essential if we're going to keep people safe and secure.

I'm fully aware that this budget has incredible limitations and there's little fiscal operating room. It would seem, though, that having made the hard choice to not drastically cut government spending, the government has then made no further hard decisions. It's time to look again at government services. The status quo is not going to help Albertans in the long run. We cannot run up debt with no plan to pay it off, and we cannot keep spending on entrenched systems like those of Alberta Health Services in the same manner.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Anyone wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to speak in response to the budget. When I first saw the budget last Thursday, I was literally speechless, and those of you who know me know that that is rare. That's a rare thing. I was a little like Nell, absolutely gobsmacked by the scale and frequency of deficits. I understand we are in a very difficult financial position, but a \$10.4 billion deficit this year, a \$10.1 billion deficit next year, an \$8 billion deficit the year after that, and on and on and on with absolutely no plan beyond crossing your fingers and hoping perhaps oil revenues go up or something magical happens to eventually find our way back to balance. It's beyond troubling.

While some may be angry about this, my instinct was concern, was worry for the future, worry for our viability, worry for what happens if you're wrong. What happens if it gets worse? What happens if we end up just a few years from now with \$50 billion in debt and continued declines in oil prices and continued economic challenges for our province. What then? What happens then?

As I said earlier today, it feels like the person who moves out of the house for the first time and doesn't realize they need to pay back the Visa bill. But the Visa bill always comes due, and interest always accrues. We've got a government that has no ability to manage their debt load, no willingness or ability to manage debt costs. Our credit-rating downgrade was a direct result of the complete lack of a plan to come anywhere close to balance and the abdication of any plan to cap debt costs at a reasonable level.

The plan for the 15 per cent debt-to-GDP ratio lasted less than six months. Now this year we're going to have a debt-to-GDP ratio

in excess of 9 per cent, next year in excess of 13, the year after that in excess of 15. And where does it go from there? Well, we only have three years forecast. I can't even begin to imagine how high that gets. That takes Alberta out of having the best balance sheet in Canada by having the lowest debt-to-GDP ratio in the country. Our friends in Saskatchewan under Premier Brad Wall have that distinction, and good for them. They are in a far stronger financial position than Alberta finds ourselves in as a direct result of the choices this government makes. Of course, you don't control the price of oil. Of course not. But this government does control your response to that.

Now, there are some things I do like about the budget, and I think they're worth mentioning. It's always nice when you see some of your own ideas and some of your own party's policies implemented in a budget. The small-business tax cut and the investor tax credit are two core Alberta Party policies, so it's good to see those happening. I think they're good for Alberta, and I congratulate the government for putting those in.

The increase to postsecondary education funding I think is a good idea. A nod to mental health funding: although I don't think it is sufficient, it's a start down that path. Funding enrolment growth for K to 12 I think is a good move.

Continued investment for infrastructure: this is where I think responsible borrowing has a part to play. I think it's okay to borrow money for infrastructure because we have an asset at the end of the day, but you need to have a plan to pay it back. If you're borrowing for operations, as this government is doing, and not just a little bit – borrowing just to keep the lights on, borrowing for pens and pencils, for office furniture, just to operate the government – and you're doing that at massive levels with no plan to even not borrow for operations in the foreseeable future, we've put ourselves in a big hole.

4:20

I believe that the funding for affordable housing and seniors' housing is absolutely welcome as well, long overdue and necessary as part of that infrastructure investment.

On the whole I feel this government is on the wrong track, that they're setting Alberta up to fail, setting us up for even more difficult choices in the future, either significant public-sector cuts or big tax increases or potentially both. It's a huge risk. I don't want this government to fail. I do not want the ND government to fail – I really don't – because if this government fails, Alberta fails. That's not good. That's not what I'm here for. That's not what I'm cheering for.

I really worry that if you stay on this path, you will fail, and Alberta is not going to be as well off. And that's all Albertans, including vulnerable Albertans, not only business owners, not only those who have lost their jobs, but vulnerable Albertans. Where does the money come from to pay for important services to support vulnerable Albertans? It's an important question that I really urge this government to ask themselves. Where does the money come from? How does that happen? You keep plucking the golden goose, eventually that's not going to happen. Eventually it's going to be gone.

There are options. There are options and choices between massive cuts and between massive deficits. There is a middle way. There is a better way of doing this, which, my friends, is why we have proposed and presented our second shadow budget, which I'm going to talk about now, the Alberta Party shadow budget. And I would hasten to add that we're the only opposition party in this Assembly to present a shadow budget because I think it's important. I think it's important that those of us on this side remember that our job is not just to oppose the government. Our job is to propose ideas.

Now, our friends in the PC caucus have their Engage document. It's a good document. There are lots of really interesting ideas in there. I don't agree with all of it, but there are a lot of interesting ideas, and they've continued the conversation. That's a good thing.

Our friends in Wildrose have some bullet point, general ideas of kind of vague things they might do, but I would challenge the Official Opposition to put some numbers to that. That's important. That is important. When we're talking about the budget, Albertans need to know how would we on this side of the House, how would we as opposition solve these problems, and they need to know in detail.

That's what the Alberta Party shadow budget does. Our shadow budget balances in four years. We accommodate population growth and preserve front-line services. We use more conservative revenue forecasts than the government, especially on nonrenewable resource revenues. In two years from now this budget, Budget 2016, assumes that oil will be at \$64 a barrel and that the dollar will be at 74 cents. Of course, as we know, the lower the dollar, the more money we return. Ours, on the other hand, assumes that in two years' time oil will only be at \$56 a barrel and that the dollar will be around 78 cents. Again, more conservative revenue forecasts, yet we're still able to balance in four years and accommodate population growth, not decimate front-line services.

We do that by freezing public-sector salaries. That seems only fair. At a time when our neighbours are losing their jobs or they're being asked to take salary rollbacks or reduced work hours, we ask the tremendous public servants in the province of Alberta to get paid the same next year as they got paid last year. I think that's fair. I think that's fair, and it's going to help us get a long way towards some sanity in this budget.

We need to engage public servants in a genuine way, most particularly in the health care system. There are tremendous people in this province, many countless hundreds of whom I've talked with, who have great ideas on how we can manage costs and improve service delivery, truly, truly do more for less, but they're not listened to. There is a toxic culture within Alberta Health Services. It is a huge challenge to be overcome.

This government needs to commit to that, not nibble around the edges but make real, true change, real culture change within the public service and truly, genuinely listen to the great people who provide those services every single day. Yes, that means front-line direct service providers who interact with Albertans, but it also means management. There are a lot of tremendous people in the management layers of Alberta Health Services, in particular, but also all throughout the public service.

We need to empower those people. We need to take smart risks within the public service. We need to create a free market for good ideas within Alberta's public service. Any time we hear, "Well, we don't do it like that around here because we just don't," that's the wrong answer. Why do we do it that way? Can't we do it better? Challenge ourselves, challenge our public servants to continually improve.

That's how we're going to find more for less. That's how we're going to steward Albertans' tax dollars and ensure that Albertans get the services they deserve at a reasonable cost coupled with a priority-based budgeting exercise to ensure highest priority projects are completed first. This is going to result in bringing per capita spending in line with the national average within three years. That's a reasonable target. That's a reasonable plan that will not result in massive public service cuts but will also ensure that we are not burdened with unsustainable levels of debt down the road.

If we make Alberta's carbon tax revenue neutral, ultimately work toward making it revenue neutral by cutting personal tax, by cutting small-business tax, by cutting the large corporate tax rate just 1 per

cent and using the proceeds of the carbon tax, what we do is that we create a frame for innovation. We have a disincentive for what we don't want. We don't want carbon emissions. Let's make it more expensive for people to burn carbon – that's the purpose of a carbon tax – so people burn less of it and people and individuals innovate and find ways of doing less. That's a good idea. That's what a carbon tax should be. But let's reward people for the things we do want. We want an attractive investment climate in this province. We want people to keep more of their hard-earned money, the money they've earned through their honest efforts. So let's cut personal and business taxes and offset that with the carbon tax.

That's not what I've heard from this government, and I have a tremendous problem with that. There are opportunities, there are choices, and there is a middle way and a better way than massive public service cuts, than massive unsustainable debt and deficits. That's what the Alberta Party stands for, and that's why I have a big challenge with this budget.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-North West.

**Ms Jansen:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd be interested to hear, in light of your comments about wage freezes and that sort of thing, if you could touch a little bit more on the reduction of our triple-A credit rating, how you see that as a priority for you and how you see us tackling that problem.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you. That's a great question. I think that if we were to go to credit-rating agencies with a credible plan to get back to balance sometime before a vague 2024, that's what they asked for. The debt-to-GDP ratio of 15 per cent is one of many factors that they consider. It's an important one, but it's not the only one. What they see is a government that's profligate, that just seems to think that money is absolutely infinite.

In terms of the impact – you asked about the impact – I've asked repeatedly in this House whether the Minister of Finance has done the calculation for what the impact of a potential credit-rating downgrade is. Now, I suspect that somewhere in Treasury Board and Finance that exists, but the minister, for whatever reason, has chosen not to share that with us. If he hasn't done that work, that's troubling. Even a few basis points, even a few hundredths of a per cent multiplied by tens of billions of dollars is tens or hundreds of millions of dollars. So we're already facing \$2 billion in debt service costs alone two years from now. Where is that going to go beyond the three-year plan? We don't know.

Those numbers start to get very frightening, and that's billions of dollars that are not being spent on programs. That's what credit-rating agencies look at, our capacity to pay back our debt, and that creates a spiral, which could very well be a huge problem for this province. And I repeat that question: what if we're wrong? What if this government is wrong? What if it's even worse? That's frightening. So I really encourage this government to think hard about that and about what the impact of that and implications of that could be, not just for us in this generation but for future generations.

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

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I was also interested in the hon. member talking about the carbon tax and, particularly, the rebates and what improvements he thinks that the government might be able to make to the way that they have determined and decided to lay that plan out for Alberta families.

4:30

**Mr. Clark:** I'm on the record as being in favour of a carbon tax. We've done our own climate plan that includes a consumer-based carbon tax. The objective of a carbon tax is to make carbon more expensive. That should be the objective. It should not be just to simply transfer wealth.

I think that perhaps the lowest income quarter of Albertans should be entitled to a rebate. I think those people genuinely would suffer under the carbon tax. But I think the carbon tax should be paid by more Albertans. That may not be the most popular view, frankly, amongst Albertans. But if the carbon tax is set out to do what the government says it's supposed to do, which is to actually reduce our carbon emissions – and, by the way, we've had absolutely no meaningful estimates of what the carbon emission reduction will actually be, and we haven't seen any plan to tie together a climate strategy with important things like market access for our province – and we haven't seen any progress on that file, then Albertans are rightly wondering: what's the point of a carbon tax? Is it just another cash grab from the government?

I think the carbon tax needs to be very clear. Like our friends in B.C. do, lay out in the budget very specifically the incoming from the carbon tax and the associated cuts and direct investments in innovation that that money's being used for, so it's not just seen as a cash grab by government. That's why Albertans are so concerned, especially at a very difficult time.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any other questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Any other member wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to move to adjourn debate.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Hon. member, you can't adjourn debate as you've already spoken to the motion.

I need someone who hasn't yet spoken. The hon. Member for Calgary-Hawkwood.

**Mr. Connolly:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

### Bill 9

#### An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences

[Adjourned debate April 19: Dr. Turner]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any hon. members wishing to speak to the bill? I will recognize the hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

**Ms Miller:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak on Bill 9, An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences. The way the law works now is that when a person gets a ticket for something like jaywalking and that person does not pay their ticket, a warrant is issued for their arrest. Not only does this practice contribute to the criminalization of poverty, but it also has serious implications on another specific group of people, victims of domestic violence. For example, let's say that a person who was ticketed for these minor infractions just happens to be someone in a domestic violence situation. The perpetrator of the violence

prevents the victim from appearing in court, and an arrest warrant is issued. Now the problem is twofold. The victim is unable to report the DV situation because they will be arrested, possibly leaving vulnerable children in the custody of the perpetrator. Therefore, the victims do not report the domestic violence. It is a vicious cycle.

Bill 9, An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences, will allow victims of domestic violence the ability to report these issues and escape. I've spoken to many in DV situations who've said that they stay because of the fact that there is a warrant hanging over their heads and they need to protect their children. This will give them the ability to report and flee.

[The Speaker in the chair]

In addition to protecting vulnerable Albertans, these changes will put our government and social agencies in a better position to help them. I believe that this is an innovative and fair way to help address the growing pressures on our justice system while protecting vulnerable Albertans from a cycle of incarceration and poverty. These amendments will end the practice of issuing warrants for people who have not paid their fines for minor infractions, a practice that contributes to criminalizing poverty, and these changes will allow police officers and court staff to focus on more serious offences and offenders.

This is a common-sense bill, and I'd encourage all members in this House to join me in supporting these important legislative changes that will help so many people. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any questions under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Strankman:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite from Red Deer-South talked about the criminalization of people who are given warrants. I was wondering if she could explain to me the fact of a summary conviction or a Criminal Code offence and the different requirements, therefore, of the issuance of a warrant.

**Ms Miller:** What it does is that it enables the people in domestic violence situations to flee from their perpetrators. The way it is now with any outstanding warrants is that the people are unable because they've got this hanging over their heads. I've spoken to police officers, and I've spoken to people in DV situations. They've been told – they've talked anonymously to police officers – that if they report the situation, they will be arrested. This way they will not be arrested because there will not be a warrant issued for minor infractions. Nothing major: jaywalking, parking tickets, that type of thing.

**The Speaker:** Any other questions? The Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you. I'd like to say that I appreciated the hon. member's remarks. There's just one element of this that I've thought about for some time. Really, ever since I was chair at the Calgary housing company, when I was on city council, this came to mind.

I have great regard for the idea of not issuing an arrest warrant for people committing minor offences. The only point where that becomes a bit of an issue for me is that for some of those people that repeatedly commit minor offences, there's an underlying issue. If somebody doesn't put their hands on them, not to punish them but, rather, to help them, while they're committing minor offences, it sometimes leaves them on the street long enough that things escalate till they commit major offences or, worse, are victims of

major offences. Assaults, beatings, even murder: these are all things that we would hate to see happen to somebody who has a mental illness problem or an addiction problem.

Have you thought about: if there's no arrest warrant, how does society put their hands on these people, not so much to punish them but, rather, to deliver to them the help that they need before the minor offences escalate into something that's harder to fix? I don't know if you put any thought into that or not.

**Ms Miller:** Okay. When there's no warrant issued, it frees up not only the justice system but the mental health areas because the people aren't – what's the word I'm looking for? – forced to go into programs. They're voluntarily going into programs. I spoke to some people at the mental health office in Red Deer, and people who are forced to attend treatment for different issues are quite often no-shows, whereas if a person is going under voluntary conditions, they are more likely to attend.

**The Speaker:** Under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

I would recognize the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

4:40

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak today to Bill 9, An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences. I want to begin by saying that I will be supporting Bill 9 in second reading. As one of the hon. members from the third party explained yesterday, there was a motion that was brought forward in 2012 by a member of the government of the day, but the motion ultimately failed to receive that government's support. I am hopeful that Bill 9 will not succumb to the same fate.

I will be supporting this bill because I believe that this type of legislation is exactly what the government should be trying to pursue, red-tape reduction that saves money in administration and puts more resources into our front-line services. The introduction of both amendments in this bill will increase efficiencies by reducing filing times, eliminating redundant administrative procedures like duplicate data entry, and ultimately decreasing the expenditure of Albertans' tax dollars. By clearing up administrative barriers, law enforcement officers can do what they do best, protect our communities and bring justice to real criminals. Currently the system of issuing warrants for minor offences is chewing through law enforcement resources, and it is time to put an end to the unnecessary expenditure of government money.

Hard-working Albertans are having warrants issued for their arrest. In some cases they are being jailed for a day. As was pointed out previously, this can often just mean that the individual is apprehended, taken to the nearest prison, processed, forced to pay their fine, and then released. This does nothing to make our communities safer. In fact, one could argue that it does the opposite due to the fact that this process takes an officer off the street. It also wastes a significant amount of the police services' time and wastes correction officers' time.

We must also consider that it places otherwise law-abiding citizens in a dangerous situation. Jail is a scary place to go, in part because of that danger. As some of my hon. colleagues have already mentioned, an individual lost their life while in prison for a minor offence. While correction officers work steadfastly to minimize these risks, they are still present, and it is unreasonable to think that someone should be exposed to that environment for the tardy payment of a minor offence.

I want to be clear that minor offences are still offences. We should not be paving the way for scofflaws to take advantage of our system, nor would I argue that police turn a blind eye to what are

considered minor offences. It is necessary for our police officers and municipal bylaw officers to enforce all aspects of the law. However, bringing justice to those who are responsible for causing serious harm should be our focus and our top priority.

I have been hearing from Albertans across the province and in my constituency that they are worried about the increase in criminal activity. Thefts and fraud are on the rise, and we need to take action so that our men and women in uniform are able to address the most serious threats to our communities. Decreasing ticket processing time is a great step toward helping our police officers. It helps our police officers decrease paper-pushing and lets them do their job.

Much can be said about the benefits of the e-ticketing process, but there may still be the need for some smaller communities to take a little bit of time to adopt this new process. I am glad that this bill has the provision for municipalities and police forces to opt in to the e-ticketing program as they best see fit. I imagine that the start-up costs for this program may be a barrier to some police forces immediately adopting the technology and providing training to their officers, so there needs to be an allowance for smaller law enforcement agencies to adjust their budgets and build a plan for the new technology.

Also, I think that, like any new process, it sometimes takes one group to lead on implementation. They then share best practices with other partners in the field. I believe that was the purpose of the pilot programs that the RCMP conducted in some parts of Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and New Brunswick. Now I think that with police forces in Alberta's larger municipalities signalling that they will be the leaders in e-ticketing implementation, there will be some real benefit for other parts of the province that may take a little bit more time to get there. And there is nothing to suggest that the process may not go the other way around, with larger police forces following suit with their smaller counterparts. Either way, Mr. Speaker, empowering local decision-making will lead to better legislation and better results for Albertans.

In closing, I would like to reiterate how important it is for members of this House to be cognizant of the outstanding difficulty, the degree of professionalism that law enforcement officers provide around Alberta. Often they are the unsung heroes that keep our communities safe, so I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their great work and support any initiatives that make it easier for them to do their jobs and spend less of Alberta taxpayers' hard-earned tax dollars.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any other members who would like to speak to Bill 9? The Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have been appreciative of my fellow members' comments here in the House. I think that there are many elements of this bill that will actually be a plus. Surely, any time that we can be more efficient with the way that we handle the justice system and more sensitive to people that have not committed major offences insofar as finding it unnecessary to throw them in jail – of course, as has been recounted before in this House and even referenced here today, there have been examples where people have died in jail by being assaulted there after committing what is otherwise considered a very minor offence, having paid the heaviest of prices as a result because of the violence that can occur in a situation where people are incarcerated.

I think the government for being thoughtful about raising some of these issues. I will sit down now and look forward to further debate from my colleagues.

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

My apologies to the previous member. I neglected 29(2)(a).

Anything for Calgary-Hays under 29(2)(a)? Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you. I understood that people want to maybe ask me some questions under 29(2)(a). But you know what? I'd like to transition a bit. I think I've already mentioned that I'm absolutely in support of this bill and, of course, ensuring that we do not have this revolving door . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I just need to clarify. It was just pointed out to me. Were you speaking under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Ellis:** No.

**The Speaker:** You've already spoken. I'm advised that you've already spoken.

**Mr. Ellis:** Oh, that's what I thought. Okay. Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mr. Ellis:** Well, sir, I'll speak to 29(2)(a).

**The Speaker:** All right.

**Mr. Ellis:** I'm sorry. I've been running around.

I will ask a question to the hon. Member for Calgary . . .

**An Hon. Member:** The one who last spoke.

**Mr. Ellis:** Pardon me? Oh, the one that last spoke.

Well, I'll ask somebody a question. How about that? I just got here.

**Mr. Cooper:** Have you been on the south lawn of the Legislature?

**Mr. Ellis:** No.

I will ask somebody, Mr. Speaker, in regard to this bill. Calgary-Hays. Sir, in your experience in city council, certainly, you had close ties and relationships with the Calgary Police Service at that time. You were certainly aware, sitting on the Calgary Police Commission, of the number of tickets that were issued and, of course, the stats. Can you maybe touch a little bit in regard to the recidivism that was going on and maybe specifically touch in regard to the arrest processing area, that dealt with the amount of flow going through there and, maybe, what positive impact that could have in regard to finances, actually, with a reduction of people going through that system?

**The Speaker:** Hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, would you like to answer the question under 29(2)(a)?

4:50

**Mr. McIver:** Yeah. Sure. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will just say that during my time on city council, which actually did include two years on the police commission, I touched on these issues. At that time I can tell you that one of the things that irritated the police service the most was what they used to call the catch-and-release system, where they would arrest people, put them in jail, and they would be out on the street doing the same thing again and then get arrested and be back in jail again. This continual cycle would go over and over and over again. It was expensive. I don't think it served society very well. I don't think it served the police very well or the courts or the justice system, and at the end of the day it didn't

actually serve the people that were the subjects of the arrests very well either.

That's largely because in these cases most often there was an underlying issue of mental health, addiction, some other issue which never got solved, which is why while this legislation is good – and I intend to support it – one thing I think we need to think about as we go forward, too, is a mechanism for people who find themselves in this situation of being arrested over and over and over again or indeed being charged with minor offences repeatedly and repeatedly, even if we're not going to issue warrants for that anymore. I think we haven't really done our job as legislators and representatives of society until we can get better at getting people the help they need once they're in the system.

I say "in the system" in the broadest sense. If they're getting repeated minor offence tickets, if they're repeatedly arrested, if they're repeatedly incarcerated, somehow I can't help but feel that not only would it save money but also serve society a lot better and probably make it safer if we were – and I appreciate that what makes it difficult is people's personal rights, that you can't make people get better if they have an addiction problem. You can't make people, lots of times, accept help if they have a mental illness problem. It's not just a matter of what you can make people do – although to some degree making them get help is a good thing – but, rather, getting better at convincing them to accept help when they touch on the justice system.

While this legislation is good, I think we have to think about a methodology that would be legal and not offend people's human rights and their legal rights so that we could deliver unto them the type of help that they would need to make their lives better and make them less subject to committing offences, being arrested, and all the rest of that. While this legislation is very good – and in my remarks now I would be happy if no one took what I'm saying as criticism of the legislation, because it is not. All I'm saying is that I think that we have some other things to think about, too, beyond what's in the legislation.

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

Are there any other members of the House who would like to speak to Bill 9?

**Mr. Westhead:** Question.

[Motion carried; Bill 9 read a second time]

## Bill 10

### Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016

[Debate adjourned April 20: Mr. Loewen speaking]

**The Speaker:** I do not have a list of names with respect to speaking to Bill 10.

The Member for Highwood.

**Mr. W. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We'll get our act together. I rise today to address Bill 10. With this bill the Finance minister has asked this House to relieve this government of its obligation to protect Albertans by managing the province's debt level, a task the NDP apparently deemed too onerous. When will this government stop making things worse? The news that Alberta's credit rating has again been downgraded wasn't enough for the NDP. This NDP government seems determined to show not only that it cannot manage Albertans' tax dollars but that it also has no interest in attempting to manage the province's finances within reasonable limits.

Credit-rating agencies are already taking actions based on their deep concerns for Alberta's financial position. DBRS downgraded Alberta's credit rating last Friday because this government made such irresponsible budget choices. Reputable credit-rating agencies like DBRS are concerned that the elimination of the debt ceiling removes an important self-imposed constraint on the level of Alberta's debt burden. Independent economists have commented that the recent DBRS downgrade is probably the first of more to come after this budget, though it's not the first to come under this government's watch because Standard & Poor's already dropped the triple-A credit rating in December.

What economists have found more alarming than this budget's deficit is the fact that the NDP has no credible plan to get Alberta out of it. Even if one fails to find the current debt level alarming, the true problem is the utter lack of direction and leadership Albertans are seeing from the NDP. This government has no plan to get us out of debt, and it is so far from having a plan that it is asking the members of this House to watch as it throws its weight around and obliterates the only and already generous limitation of how much debt it can rack up.

On the same day of the DBRS downgrade Moody's warned the province's Finance minister again that Alberta's credit rating was under threat due to increasing debt load. Our significant upcoming deficit and rising debt levels are considered credit negative for the province.

Is the government removing the debt ceiling because it knows that the debt level necessary in order to survive the duration of their current term would alarm Albertans? It is unbelievable that the only action this government is willing to take on debt is to remove the ceiling on it. Fifteen per cent is the absolute maximum debt level for a jurisdiction seeking a triple-A credit rating. This is not an allowable limit for an economy that is classified as resource dependent like Alberta's. This limit, just set a few short months ago, was already beyond what the province's debt level should be. Now we have the Finance minister requesting that the limit he himself put in place just a few months ago be removed altogether. Talk about poor planning.

This government has no regard for the obligation that this House has to protect the next generation of Albertans from the financial consequences of living in a debt-strangled province. Make no mistake; what we're debating today is a moral issue. This debt bill will be passed on to the next generation of Albertans. Our children, our grandchildren will be paying for the operating expenses for services that none of them voted for. As this government continues with massive deficit budgeting, the province is falling further and further down into the spiral of dependence on debt financing.

In its defence the NDP came to this office after previous governments had presented about seven straight deficit budgets, but unfortunately they are only stepping up the deficits instead of trying to correct them. We're saddling future generations with an ever-increasing risk that the Alberta they grow up in, the Alberta they try to raise a family in, the Alberta they will one day come to buy a house in is a high-tax jurisdiction that is not attractive to invest in. Their Alberta will have a weakened economic outlook if this House continues to refuse to acknowledge the risks associated with persistent debt spending. If the members of this House make the wrong decision today and support this bill in its current form, they're making a decision to risk a future with higher and higher taxes.

This government has put us on a path that will ensure that the interest rates on the province's debt will not be lower forever. But let me put that in context. Even with a low interest rate, on a big number it's a lot of money. By the next election the government

will be spending \$2 billion a year to bankers just for interest. That's \$2,000 per family that will go to paying the interest alone on the government's debt. This just goes to show how a rise in interest rates and this level of debt will seriously weaken Alberta's financial position. Debt comes with serious liabilities, especially when, as is the case with this government's fiscal plan, there's no plan to pay off the principal.

Many Albertans are already struggling to achieve financial milestones like owning a home, paying off student loans, or finding gainful employment. It was recently reported that one-third of Canadians find themselves \$200 a month away from financial disaster. Higher taxes get in the way of Albertans' aspirations to achieve these financial milestones.

If Alberta doesn't get its debt under control, the calls for increased taxation will surely follow. Right now it's becoming increasingly clear that this government would like little more than to soften the staunch opposition of Albertans to introducing a PST. It seems like lifting the debt ceiling and spending without any restraint may be the NDP's strategy for softening this ground.

Social change is coming. Demographics in Canada are changing. My baby boomer generation is entering into retirement. With this, a massive influx of individuals will be collecting from the system far more than they are contributing to it. They've already made their contributions. This government needs to signal to Albertans that it has its priorities straight. These pending demographic changes will have a significant and long-lasting impact on our society. Alberta needs to be in a strong position to weather these financial changes.

**5:00**

We hear all the time from the government that it believes it was elected with a mandate that entitles it to take a number of risky actions. We're now finding that the NDP misled Albertans during the May 2015 general election campaign, promising first to eliminate the budget deficit within two years and then three and then, after being elected, within four, and in less than a year admitting that there was no intention of eliminating the deficit within its term or the next one. Maybe by 2024, the Finance minister recently said with a shrug. It's no wonder that Alberta's creditors are so nervous.

This NDP government has demonstrated a history of disregarding the importance of a province's financial responsibilities and breaking the trust with Albertans. The current debt limit is already large. It is an option for the NDP government to propose a simple raise in the debt ceiling, yet it has chosen not to do so. Wildrose shares the concerns of the province's creditors, not exactly knowing what this means for our province. Debt seems to be this government's only solution. It refuses to manage government bloat or say no to the demands of pay raises for its public-sector unions. Now it's refusing to commit itself to any constraints on debt.

Bill 10 is akin to removing the requirement to be honest and transparent with Albertans about the extent of the province's debt. Without a debt ceiling the NDP are hoping to avoid having to raise that ceiling again when in a few months it becomes clear that its hopeful revenue projections and inability to look inward and find efficiencies requires more and more debt. Having to raise the limit would only force the attention back to the government's financial mismanagement, and it is quite clear that they're hoping to avoid having a larger spotlight shed on its absolute incompetence.

Bill 10 gives this government licence to inflict untold levels of debt on our children and our grandchildren. I'll not be supporting this irresponsible piece of legislation. I encourage everyone here to vote against it and commit to working together to make sure that

we stay under our current debt ceiling and avoid hanging a millstone of debt around the necks of future generations.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions for the Member for Highwood under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, what's the wish of the House?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:03 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

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

5:20

Against the motion:

Anderson, W.	Godfried	Starke
Clark	Jansen	Strankman
Cooper	McIver	Swann
Cyr	Orr	Taylor
Ellis	Schneider	van Dijken
Fildebrandt	Smith	Yao
Gill		

Totals: For – 52 Against – 19

[Motion carried; Bill 10 read a second time]

### Bill 1

#### Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act

[Adjourned debate April 20: Ms Drever]

**The Speaker:** Calgary-Bow, any wish to speak to Bill 1?

**Ms Drever:** No.

**The Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak to Bill 1, promoting job creation? Mr. Smith. Oh, I'm sorry. Mr. Clark. It's late. It's been a bad week. The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It has been quite a week.

Rising to speak to Bill 1, finally getting the opportunity to do so, and surprisingly so, that it has taken this long for what would presumably be the flagship bill for this government to reach the floor of the Assembly for debate. Finally, it has, and here we are. I was tremendously disappointed when I saw the contents of the bill, or the lack of content for this bill, and how thin it is. It is absolutely remarkable that this is the very best the government can come up with for their flagship bill. It is just enabling legislation, but even if that were all it was, even that wouldn't be enough. It doesn't enable anything that the minister is not already able to do. It's truly odd, actually, why we have a bill here before us in the Assembly that really does so little.

What does this bill do that the minister cannot already do? If I was to look at the bill, it says that the minister can create committees. That's something that you can always do. Increase access to capital: I'm not sure what that means. That's already been done by this government in Budget 2015. Help working people upgrade their skills and secure employment: well, that's actually the role of the Minister of Labour, I would assume. I would hope that's the role of all the government. That's certainly the role of the Minister of Advanced Education. But what does that actually mean? Increase the development and adoption of Alberta innovations: how, exactly? Through what mechanism?

None of these things don't already exist in the Alberta Competitiveness Act, the Access to the Future Act, the Post-secondary Learning Act, the Alberta Enterprise Corporation Act, the Government Organization Act. All of these powers that are reportedly granted by Bill 1 already exist. What's going to change by passing Bill 1, and, conversely, what's going to change by not passing Bill 1? The answer is: nothing at all.

I would describe this bill as singularly unambitious and unimaginative for a Bill 1, the flagship bill. Bill 1 is supposed to be the thing that you should take to the doorsteps of your constituencies and you should use as your cornerstone for your re-election campaign in three years' time. You should be able to go to Albertans and say: we did these things. But this bill does nothing that you can't already do, so it's odd that we are here.

It doesn't enable any tax incentives. I've spoken numerous times about my support for the investor tax credit, but of course that happens through Treasury Board and through the budget, and the annual reporting of the minister is only to Executive Council. I would hope that that happens anyway through cabinet meetings. Curiously, that reporting from the minister is not to the public, so the public has less insight. We have less transparency, less idea of what the minister is up to than we may otherwise have. It was an opportunity, perhaps, to codify the requirement to file some form of meaningful annual report, more than just numbers but activity that the minister is doing.

What I wonder is if this bill really somehow opens up the minister or creates a legislative framework, if it actually does in fact do anything, to enable the minister to pick winners and losers. That's always a huge concern of mine when we have a role, a Minister for Economic Development and Trade. It's always a worry when the government seems hell-bent on economic diversification. I'm sure we would all agree in this House that some more economic activity of any kind in the province would be absolutely welcome, but on what, exactly, the role of government is in achieving that I think there is some debate, some disagreement, and some difference of opinion. I think most of us on this side of the House would agree that that job should fall to entrepreneurs, and Alberta has many still, fortunately, entrepreneurs who can drive economic development of



this province, and ultimately economic development leads to economic diversification.

It makes me wonder if there's another shoe to drop. Is there something else coming? Or is this the bill – as they say, a camel is a horse made by committee. Was there a committee somewhere that had some, perhaps, disagreement about what this bill could or should be? Are there amendments coming at committee from the government that will actually put some powers, will actually put some things in this bill that would allow the minister to do something that he or the other members of the Crown can't already do? It really is confusing. I am really, genuinely confused, and as I'm often not at a loss for words, I'm also not usually confused. Perhaps some of the activity on the south lawn of the Legislature is contributing to my confusion right now, but I don't think so. I was equally confused when I first read the bill.

Given that, I don't think I can support the bill, but frankly if I do or don't, I'm not sure it makes any difference at all because the bill does absolutely nothing. In expressing those concerns here at second reading, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to seeing, perhaps, some amendments from the government at committee that will put some meat on the bones of this bill because right now it is truly the *Seinfeld* bill. It is about nothing.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills on 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Cooper:** On 29(2)(a), yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just wonder if the hon. member, the independent member for Calgary-Elbow, would offer some comment on what actually is my favourite portion of the bill, section 4, the reports section, where it says, "The Minister must annually, and more frequently if the Premier directs, report to the Executive Council on the Minister's progress in establishing and implementing any programs under section 2." I'm just a little curious to know if you would be willing to elaborate on the extensive reporting program that the Premier may or may not require of cabinet ministers.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much. You know, as leader of the Alberta Party opposition, proudly so, this is a topic to which I give a great deal of thought. I do wonder. You know, given the tradition of government in this province and in other provinces and in our country to not only give ministers of the Crown mandate letters but to publish those mandate letters, publicly share those with Albertans so we know what each minister should be working on and we can all hold them to account and also, equally important, that they know what they're working on, I think it is curious that this government has chosen not to do that. Instead, here we have something that sounds remarkably like a bit of a homework assignment and perhaps even a bit of a sword of Damocles hanging over the head of each minister. Annually or more frequently if the Premier directs: I just wonder under what scenario the Premier would direct such a report more frequently.

You know, in all seriousness, do those reports ever see the light of day? Do they ever get tabled in this Assembly for Albertans to review them so that we can judge for ourselves if the minister is meeting his objectives as so very vaguely laid out here in this bill? I think the reporting piece, especially for a new ministry and especially for a ministry that has such a broad and, frankly, vague definition, is important.

5:30

You know, there's one piece I will take an opportunity to talk about here now that I'm talking about this ministry and others reporting. I spent some time with some folks in the economic development community in Calgary earlier this week, and they had

some good things to say about the minister. I think that's important to relate because I think the minister himself has been well received within the economic development community, certainly by folks I talked with in Calgary. That's worth noting.

But I come back to my main point about this bill: what is the point of the bill? It's unclear to me why this bill exists and unclear what will change in the lives of ordinary Albertans once this bill receives royal assent and why the government has chosen their flagship bill to be something that, frankly, does nothing. It's just a fluff piece that I suppose has some marketing content they can spend some of their \$750,000 advertising budget on.

I hope, hon. member, that that answers your question. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Any questions to the hon. member under 29(2)(a)?  
Seeing none, the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to be able to stand and address this House and be able to have a little discussion about Bill 1, the Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act. You know, I can remember – this is a few years ago, I'll grant, and maybe some of you were still a twinkle in your parents' eyes when this was occurring to me – actually being in high school. [interjections] Yeah, a long time ago. [interjections] Okay. A long, long, long time ago. [interjections] Okay. Enough. Enough.

**An Hon. Member:** What were the Beatles like?

**Mr. Smith:** I remember the Beatles.

Now, I can remember sitting in my social studies classroom with my social studies teacher at Jasper Place composite high school, and we were looking at that time at the Russian Revolution, and he was talking about a story that I guess has historical relevance.

There's this old Russian story set in the time of Czar Catherine the Great. The story goes, Mr. Speaker, that a governor of the territory of Crimea, a man by the name of Grigori Potemkin, in order to stay in Catherine the Great's good books and in order to keep his job had to impress the monarch with the prosperity of the region over which he had governorship. So as this monarch went on her royal progress down I believe it's the Dnieper River, he had a series of crew members dress up as peasants and move ahead of the ship as it was going down the river, and they would set up fake buildings along the side of the river to augment the villages that were there. They did this in order to make the villages appear to be prosperous. He had the individuals of his crew dress up in costumes, and they would walk around the villages and would make these villages appear to be bustling havens of industrial and economic activity, all to try to ensure that Catherine the Great would continue to see him in a positive light. These villages along this royal progress would say a lot about what Russia was under her leadership.

Now, these Potemkin villages and this story became famous because it highlighted, Mr. Speaker, what lengths sometimes we as politicians will go to in order to sometimes paint a false picture of what an economy could be like or what certain political events might mean.

I may be stretching it a little bit but, hopefully, not too much. I think that I would make the analogy – and all analogies break down – that this story could highlight perhaps some of the problems that we in the opposition see with this bill. I think that it would appear that Bill 1, as we will find out, was designed to give the appearance that there is progress, that the government was protecting and promoting and encouraging the Alberta economy, without there actually being any real progress.

The author of this Potemkin bill would like Albertans to believe that this government is productive and producing jobs and that the

government is the root of that prosperity, but I think, like many of the members who have already spoken before me, we question just whether this bill actually will result in the things that the minister or this government would claim it will do. This government wants to appear to be busy, this government wants people to believe that progress is being made, but in reality all they seem to be able to do is present a bill that gives power to a minister to do things that the minister already has the power to do. Perhaps in a 20th-century context this bill is all show and no go.

Let's dig into this bill and expose it for what it really is. This bill has a lot of verbiage but not a lot of substance. It does not provide new authority or powers to the minister that the minister does not already possess. Section 8 of the Government Organization Act reads:

8(1) A Minister may establish or operate any programs and services the Minister considers desirable in order to carry out matters under the Minister's administration.

(2) A Minister may institute inquiries into and collect information and statistics relating to any matter under the Minister's administration.

In other words, once becoming a minister, you have the ability to operate and to ensure that your ministry is a productive ministry. You don't have to ask permission to do the things that you would have in the course of being appointed a minister.

In Bill 1 we see Potemkin at work when it wants to create partnerships that support entrepreneurship and have a focus on innovation. It sounds great except that the Minister of Economic Development and Trade already has the power to do this. The Ministry of Economic Development and Trade doesn't need Bill 1 in order to support the creation of new businesses or to help companies become innovative. By virtue of the Government Organization Act the minister has all the power that he needs to do this already. Bill 1 is that fake village designed to make it look like the government is working hard.

Bill 1 gives the power to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade to increase access to capital, help businesses to grow and succeed, help working people upgrade their skills and secure employment. Once again, it sounds great, but what did you think the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade was going to do? I would hazard a guess that every province in Confederation has its version of a Ministry of Economic Development and Trade. I would also lay money that they all try to increase access to capital, that they all try to help businesses grow and succeed, that they all try to help working people upgrade their skill and secure employment, and I would bet that none of these ministries in the other provinces thought to pass a Bill 1, that a Bill 1 equivalent was necessary in order to do their job. Who would have thought that the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade would have to have a Bill 1 in order to help communities and regions build on their economic strengths and support economic development? No, this is a bill that tries to set up a series of fake villages. It might make the governing party look pretty good, but that's about it.

5:40

If this bill is going to be worthy of support, there needs to be something in it worthy of supporting. Let's start by thinking about section 4 of the bill so that when reports on the success of growing business in Alberta are released publicly, Albertans can know that their tax money and the efforts of this government are being spent wisely and efficiently and are actually resulting from the goals of Bill 1.

Let's take the goals that are stated in this bill, and rather than making them so broad and general as to be meaningless, let's make them a little more specific. Let's place some specific goals and

targets into this bill that would move the economy in a sound and practical job-growing direction by providing businesses with fewer taxes and more capital to invest in business growth. That's not something that is limited to any side of any House. I'm sure that every political party can take a look at those kinds of goals and targets and can put some specific goals and targets there so that they can actually grow the economy.

I guess, then, that at the end of the day I'm going to have a hard time supporting Bill 1. [interjections] I know. Sorry, guys. I guess my social studies teacher in Jasper Place composite high school, a great public school with a great social studies teacher, was able to instill in me that sometimes you have to look below the surface, that you have to look at the content and see if it will actually do what it's supposed to do.

I will be voting against this bill. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, under 29(2)(a) are there any questions to the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon?

Hearing and seeing none, I would recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

**Mr. Gotfried:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to speak to Bill 1. It's an interesting time that we live in here. I guess I'll start off by saying that I do believe that the minister of economic development is well intentioned. I've seen him. He's worked hard. He's been to China to promote Alberta, and I give him credit for doing that. But the best of intentions don't create jobs; good plans do, and good policy does. I would suggest that a positive business environment achieves those results and more.

The minister has talked about being nimble. We'd like to maybe see nimble and quick, as the saying may go. Being nimble is not good enough, and Albertans need quick as well. If we don't do this in a timely manner, we will not get Albertans back to work, and that concerns me. Now, past governments have been deeply chastised for not diversifying the economy enough, but many Albertans do not realize that if we actually took the 25 per cent of our GDP away which is attributable to the energy sector, the remaining resulting number would be \$271 billion. That number would still rank the nonenergy economy of Alberta as the third-largest GDP in Canada, ahead of British Columbia, who has chastised us for lacking vision and diversification in our own economy.

I think that's a key number. We went from 34 per cent, as mentioned by my esteemed hon. colleague from Calgary-Hays, to 25 per cent, and in doing so, the other 75 per cent still represents the third-largest economy in our country. Can we do better? Absolutely, we can. We hope this government will, and we can promise that future governments will as well.

You know, a bill giving the minister powers he already has is a bit hollow and a bit empty. In the words of our friend George Costanza, this is a bill about nothing. You know, it's been said before that it's a bill about nothing. It's kind of hard to debate it, but we're doing our best here, and we're going to try and put forward some of the reasons why we feel it's a bill about nothing.

In the bill it talks about creating partnerships. Well, we have great partnerships already, the Alberta Enterprise Group and many others. Increasing capital: well, that's already been done as well through ATB, through AIMCo, through AEG and others.

We talk about growing and succeeding. I would suggest that in this market we actually need to first figure out how to survive and retain the jobs that we already have, which this government seems not particularly focused on because we seem to lose jobs every day through the actions and policies of this government by not having a positive business environment that people have confidence and trust in.

We say that we're going to help communities across the province. Well, we already have that in place. We have great economic development groups across this province. I met with them up in Kananaskis just a few weeks ago with the minister, and we have passionate, knowledgeable people in their own backyards who know what's best for them, who know what the opportunities are for them to focus on their assets. The core sectors of agriculture, forestry, tourism: there are many active groups and strong advocacy groups within those that can tell us what they need to do. We need to facilitate them and to provide them with the environment to succeed and to move forward and with some of the tools to do that.

You said that you're going to support export development, but there are no clear plans in place. A trip to China: great. What are we going to do with that trip to China? What actions are we going to take to facilitate that export promotion? What about things like coal, that we are large exporters of? We're just going to shut it down. We're not going to be innovative. We're not going to introduce new technologies. We're not going to take a resource that we have that would be the envy of most of this world and use it to the best advantage and maybe innovate and take some technology with it so that we can actually do more good than shutting down the 18 coal plants here in Alberta. Maybe we can help build 180 and cut back the emissions by 10 per cent – there's your 18 right there – and double that and triple that and quadruple that, and we'll actually have a greater impact on what's happening in terms of climate change in this world.

There are regulations noted in here: “[may] give effect to a program.” Wow. That's a strong plan. I'm really running for that one. That's really something great. Then we're going to hand that to his ministry, and we're going to say: go and execute this great plan. We're going to give it to his hard-working staff, innovative people, hard-working people with lots of experience. Mr. Speaker, it's hard to execute a hollow plan. I've never seen that. I've been in business for many, many years, and the only success I've seen is from good plans, good plans with commitment and foresight and strong ideologies that support them.

We see the investor tax credit. It's already in the budget. A bill about nothing: what are we going to do with that? Scrap the bill. Get on with the investor tax credit. Let's go.

The minister is supposed to report to the Premier and Executive Council. Wow. That's a cozy little group to report to. The minister must report to Albertans. That's who we're here for. That's who we're trying to create jobs for. That's who we're trying to support to build a stronger economy. Ultimately, that's who we should report to. That's not part of this bill. We're going to keep it pretty cozy, behind closed doors with the Premier and the Executive Council.

You talk about committees and panels. Wow. More committees and panels. You know what? Just have a dialogue with business. The minister has said before that he wants to be nimble because he wants to work with industry. Well, get out there, have those conversations, and hear what they have to say. There are groups out there. There's Petroleum Services Association of Canada, there's CAPP, there's the Canadian Association of Oilwell Drilling Contractors, there's the Energy Pipeline Association, there's the Independent Power Producers Society of Alberta, there's the Coal Association of Canada, and many, many more. Calgary Economic Development, Economic Development Edmonton, and similar groups across this province, in every municipality and in every county: let's work with them. Let's work strongly with them, and let them tell us what's best for their community and how we can help them to achieve that.

You know, we said in our Engage document: to make Alberta the most business-friendly jurisdiction not just in Canada but in North

America. That is what Alberta was recognized for before this government took over, the Alberta advantage. An advantageous tax system, investment attraction initiatives, entrepreneurial support: that's what we need to make this happen. It's not happening in this bill, Mr. Speaker. To me, it sounds like the Alberta advantage is, sadly, with this government's support becoming something new, a new regime and a new brand. Wow. Rebranding is always a good thing, throwing lots of the babies out with the bathwater. I think we could call that the Alberta disadvantage.

5:50

Mr. Speaker, as we lose jobs, we also lose talented people, we chase away investment, and we handicap, perhaps even decimate, the bright future of not just those people in Alberta today but future generations. Many people have moved to this province not for themselves. In fact, many have sacrificed themselves for future generations because this has been the land of opportunity. I dare say that we seem to be moving away from that.

We've talked about export development, robust market access strategies. That's what we need to follow – agriculture, forestry, tourism, and, obviously, energy – to get to market. Right now we need that diversification in agriculture, forestry, and tourism. Let's get out there and identify those markets, those existing markets. Let's leverage and enhance those markets by supporting them, by getting out there and selling with them to other parts of this world who are demanding our products.

God forbid, let's look for new markets. If we can grow the ones we have and we can find some new ones that are demanding our products, we will be able to expand and add value to those industries. Let's give those people the tools and enhance the skills that they require to achieve growth in those areas and support this economy through its tough times.

Mr. Speaker, where are the plans? More importantly, where are the plans in this bill to allow the minister's very experienced and able staff – and I've had the pleasure of working with many of those staff in my various careers over the past 25 years. They have good staff. They have experienced staff. They have staff around the world knowledgeable about the key markets for us. They're in Canada. They're here working with industry. They're in the overseas offices, that he oversees as well. They're there. They're ready to work for Albertans.

In this bill as well it talks about measuring success. I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, but how do you measure success of a bill about nothing? This doesn't serve the best interests of Albertans. I challenge anyone to try and measure something that has no substance to it. This in no way serves the best interests of Albertans. All we're seeing is that Bill 1 so far has been about one job.

By this government's record, Mr. Speaker, if the Minister of Finance, who's claimed I think a couple of times today or made reference to 100,000 jobs that we're going to create, if he's following his esteemed colleague's record of creating one job for 27,000 jobs promised, we can look forward to the creation of 3.7 jobs.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?  
The Opposition House Leader.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you. I'm just enjoying the debate so much that . . .

**The Speaker:** Are you under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Cooper:** No, no. On the bill.

I'm just enjoying the debate so much that I thought that we could continue. I know that there are a number of folks on this side of the House that are pleased to rise and speak to Bill 1, Mr. Speaker. I look forward to a large number of members on the other side of the House adding important comments to the important piece of legislation that we have before us.

I'd just like to point out a couple of things. While I agree with a lot of the things that the third party is saying here today about just how insignificant this piece of legislation is, I just would like to take a brief moment, just a brief moment, to point out that it's quite possible that members on the Premier's team and in cabinet learned a little about pieces of legislation just like this from the third party because they, too, certainly engaged in such activities, with lofty names and extensive communication efforts to talk about the importance of something that they were doing, but when it came down to the nuts and bolts of delivering upon that, sometimes the results were very similar to the results of Bill 1.

In fact, unfortunately, I don't have the day and the *Hansard* in front of me, but I recall the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, when she was the leader of the then fourth party, speaking in this House about a certain piece of legislation, and she said on that particular day that this legislation was more about an exercise in communications than it was an exercise in legislation. So I'm a bit surprised that while in opposition she was so keen to rally against the very thing that we're seeing here today.

Good evidence of it not being everything that they tried to communicate to the Alberta people is the very fact that this bill was introduced on the very first day of the legislative session, which is over a month ago now in calendar dates, and it's been sitting much on the back burner. My guess is that there are even members on that side of the Chamber that are asking the very question: why is it that we introduced this piece of legislation? My guess is that there are members on that side of the Chamber that aren't very excited about this piece of legislation because they know what we know, Mr. Speaker, that the Minister of Economic Development and Trade does not need this piece of legislation to execute the duties that he has been entrusted with.

One of the very, very first observations that I had, Mr. Speaker, about Bill 1 on that first day of session – in fact, in my hands today is the copy that was delivered to my desk, and I kept it because there's something that was unique about it. This particular piece of legislation that was delivered to my desk is a piece of legislation

that at that time had never gone to the print shop. I can assume that because a piece of legislation that has gone to the print shop is significantly smaller in size, it's been hole-punched, and it's stapled appropriately. This particular piece of legislation that was presented before the House on that day has merely been photocopied and stapled together by a few staffers in the Premier's office. One can only speculate that it's been done like that because this bill was put together in such a hasty manner that they didn't even have time to send it to the print shop before it was introduced in this Chamber.

It's disappointing. It's disappointing that they wouldn't have taken the time over what was a significant break between the first session and this one to actually put together a real plan. Just a few short weeks prior to the opening of the session, it's my guess that they realized: "Oh, my goodness, we don't have anything ready. We've got to try to put something together when it comes to job creation and diversifying the economy." So they looked at what the minister's job description was, slapped it down on a piece of paper, printed it through the photocopier, and delivered it on day 1 of the session.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans deserve and expect better. I've got to tell you that when this government was elected, I was hopeful. I was hopeful that they had a desire to do things differently. [interjections] They might think it's funny, but I actually genuinely hoped that this government would do things differently than the previous government. But what we have is a communications exercise introduced on the first day of this session that's very similar to other communication exercises that the previous government did. This is the exact type of legislation that the Premier used to rally against and say that this House's time is more important, that the legislation that we're debating is more important than getting the government's message out. But that's, unfortunately, all that Bill 1 does. It is an effort of the government to get their message out.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but the House stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 1:30.

Pursuant to the Budget 2016 main estimates schedule a legislative policy committee will convene tomorrow morning for consideration of the main estimates. Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates for Agriculture and Forestry in the Grassland Room.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]





## Table of Contents

Introduction of Guests .....	705
Members' Statements	
Manitoba Provincial Election .....	705
Alberta's Industrial Heartland .....	705
<i>Alberta Street News</i> .....	706
Nepal Earthquake Anniversary .....	706
Women's Suffrage Centennial .....	706
Canada's Office of Religious Freedom .....	707
Introduction of Bills	
Bill 205 Pharmacy and Drug (Pharmaceutical Equipment Control) Amendment Act, 2016 .....	707
Oral Question Period	
Provincial Fiscal Policies .....	707, 711
Wildfire Management .....	708, 711
Health Care System Manager Sick Leave .....	708
Budget 2016 .....	709
Health Care System Employee Sick Leave .....	709
Gender Equality Initiatives .....	710
Education Funding Formula .....	712
Government Policies .....	712
Legal Aid and Petition on Chestermere City Council .....	713
Carbon Levy .....	713
Postsecondary Education Funding .....	714
Indigenous Relations .....	714
Job Creation and Municipal Funding .....	715
Orders of the Day .....	716
Government Motions	
Provincial Fiscal Policies .....	717
Government Bills and Orders	
Second Reading	
Bill 9 An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences .....	728
Bill 10 Fiscal Statutes Amendment Act, 2016 .....	730
Division .....	732
Bill 1 Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act .....	732

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For inquiries contact:

Managing Editor

*Alberta Hansard*

3rd Floor, 9820 – 107 St

EDMONTON, AB T5K 1E7

Telephone: 780.427.1875