Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, May 31, 2016

Day 36

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 29th Legislature
Second Session

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Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Anderson, 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-Ste. 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)
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W), Official Opposition House Leader
Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (ND), Government Whip
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W), Official Opposition Deputy Whip
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (ND)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC), Progressive Conservative Opposition Whip
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (ND)
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)
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Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)
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Jean, Brian Michael, QC, Fort McMurray-Conklin (W), Leader of the Official Opposition
Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (ND)
Kleinsteuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)
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Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)
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Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)
MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)
Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)
Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND), Government House Leader
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Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)
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Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)
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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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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m. **Tuesday, May 31, 2016**

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon. It's a beautiful, sunny day out there. I know we would all prefer to be out there in the sun, but since the sun is out there, I'm sure that all of you will help make this a sunny place together.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As always, I'm thrilled to have visitors from my amazing, wonderful, fabulous constituency of Peace River. Today I have a school group from Good Shepherd school. There are 37 in all, led by – I'm going to say the names, and I'll ask them all to stand – teacher Mr. Terry Hogan and parent helpers Mrs. Christine Bowman, Mrs. Tamara Belzile, Mr. Jason Penner, Mr. John Kuran, and Mrs. Courtney Brown. Would the class please all rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly 75 grade 6 students from Monterey Park school in Calgary-Greenway. They are joined by their teachers, Mrs. Heather Kis, Mr. David Ellen, Mrs. Laura Tennisco, and Miss Rita Kohli, and parent volunteers. These teachers and parent volunteers do great and amazing work at the elementary school. I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

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

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a real honour for me today to be able to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the grandparents of two of our current pages, Azan and Samir Esmail. Joining us today in the Speaker's gallery are Khatoon and Haider Esmail and Shelly and Firoz Charania as well as our pages' mother, Yasmina Esmail. All of them came to Canada as refugees from Uganda in 1972. Khatoon and Haider moved to Edmonton from Winnipeg in 1994 and currently reside in the beautiful riding of Edmonton-Whitemud. Shelly and Firoz have lived in Edmonton-Castle Downs since their arrival in Edmonton in 1977. They are here today to observe Azan and Samir in their roles as pages in the Assembly. I would ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome. As a grandparent I can feel the pride that you feel for these children.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly two very important teams from my department as well as one of my very valued stakeholders. They are the MGA review team, the legislative projects team as well as the president of AAMD and C. Since 2013 the MGA review team has worked tirelessly to consult with Albertans on the Municipal Government Act. They conducted numerous consultation sessions across the province and gathered feedback from approximately 1,500 people at 77 community meetings. The legislative projects team worked with the incredibly dedicated group at the Legislative Counsel office to turn the policies we talked about during the MGA review into the act that will be introduced today. They've worked tremendously hard to develop this legislation and made sacrifices along the way to meet goals and timelines.

Mr. Speaker, I've been continuously impressed by the work that these two groups along with the entire Municipal Affairs staff have done on the MGA. As well, I want to thank Al Kemmere from the AAMD and C for all his hard work on the MGA review. We wouldn't be moving forward today without the valued contributions of both the AAMD and C as well as AUMA, who couldn't be here today. I would ask that Al along with Karen Pottruff; Jeremy Schiff; Katie Nault; Linda Lewis; Angela Markel, if she managed to make it; Laura Klassen Bullock; Abdel Ahmed; Ida Dei; Men Yi Leong; Alex Nnamonu – and if I really did not get your name right, my apologies – Erin Foster-O'Riordan; Michelle Freethy, if she managed to come; Melinda Steenbergen, who's my ministerial adviser, along with little Mr. Jasper, who came with her; and Brandy Cox from cabinet co-ordination receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Thank you. Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise and introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Sandy Simmie. Sandy is from Stony Plain. She is a keen organizer for the Alberta Party in Stony Plain, in Edmonton, and, in fact, for the entire province. Sandy was instrumental in helping us at our recent policy convention this past weekend. If I can ask Sandy to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Mr. Bill Almdal and Fangfang. Bill is a true community leader in Stony Plain. He is the president of Almdal Consultants, a Rotary member, involved with NeighbourLink, and incredibly gracious. Fangfang is on the Rotary youth exchange from Thailand this year and is attending Memorial composite high school in Stony Plain, and I hear she is very beloved by the other students. I'm pleased that they're here to join us today, and I would ask that they receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all the members of the Assembly the Vaisakhi Nagar Kirtan committee, whose hard work I'll be speaking about more in my member's statement later this afternoon. Joining us in the public gallery above me are Pal Singh Purewal, chairman of the committee; Sakattar Singh Sandhu; Baldev Singh Sandhu; Davinder Singh Bains; Mehar Singh Gill; Gurcharan Singh Sangha; Harpreet Singh Gill; Charanjit Singh Dakha; Bahadur Singh Bahra; Harkamalpreet Singh Panesar; Inderjeet Singh Virdi; Parminder Singh Virdi; Sohan Singh Grewal;

and Nirpal Singh Sall. I'd ask all my guests to now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to introduce to you and through you Ako Ngu. Ako is a student in the NorQuest social work diploma program who is completing her practicum at the Edmonton-Rutherford constituency office. She's been a valuable member of our team, and in her time with us has put emphasis on ensuring that our services are easily accessible to constituents whose first language is not English. She is excited to learn about the strong link between social work and politics, and we welcome her. Accompanying Ako today is Vicki Anderson, who was previously introduced to the House as a caseworker for the Edmonton-Rutherford constituency. I would ask that they rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a distinguished guest from the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Consul General Mr. Pham Manh Hai. He is accompanied today by his colleague Mr. Nguyen Manh Hung, head of consular section, consulate general of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam in Vancouver. Mr. Hai is visiting Alberta to build on the growing relationship between Alberta and Vietnam, which spans trade and investment to strong cultural ties.

1:40

Mr. Speaker, approximately 32,000 Albertans are of Vietnamese descent. Their heritage adds to the dynamic and diverse culture we enjoy here in the province. Beyond those close community ties, Vietnam is also a growing trade partner. We have exported significant agriculture and agrifood products and are well positioned to provide significant energy services and equipment to this emerging energy producer. We are honoured to have Mr. Hai, an accomplished career diplomat, as consul general. I would ask him and Mr. Manh Hung to rise and accept the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Vaisakhi Nagar Kirtan

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize the organizers of the recent Vaisakhi Nagar Kirtan, a procession held annually in south Edmonton in the constituencies of Edmonton-Mill Woods and Edmonton-Ellerslie. I'd also like to thank the broader Sikh community of Alberta who host the Nagar Kirtan not only in Edmonton but also in Calgary every year. The Nagar Kirtan is an important tradition commemorating special occasions in the Sikh calendar.

Traditionally the procession is led by the saffron-robed Panj Pyare, who are the spiritual and temporal embodiment of the collective Sikh community. They are followed by the Guru Granth Sahib, the holy scripture, which is placed on a float. Commonly members of the procession are unshod in deference to the displayed scripture. Bystanders bow their heads to the holy scripture as it passes. They also receive food and candied sweets from the floats. The procession concludes at the gurdwara with prayers.

I'm always encouraged when hearing the three pillars of the Sikh faith: to constantly remember the oneness that unites us all, to work with integrity while earning an honest living, and to share our wealth with all those in the broader community. Mr. Speaker, it is the sharing of our cultures that makes Alberta a great place to call home. As a Canadian not born in Canada I give thanks that we have a culture of respect and understanding.

Mr. Speaker, as we walked in the procession wearing orange head scarves with the rain pouring down from the sky, I thought of the cultural diversity that we all share here. If we dig deeper into the cultural identity of all who call Alberta home, we discover that we have much more in common than we have in difference. The diversity of perspectives helps us to strengthen the values we hold in common, values such as dedication to one's family, profession, and community, while at the same time being compassionate to those in need. We are stronger when we are united.

I thank the organizers of the Nagar Kirtan for sharing their values with us, values that we hold in common as we continue to build Alberta together.

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

Hand Hills Lake Stampede Centennial

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to be a farmer. The second Friday in June used to be a designated holiday recognizing farmers' day. Agriculture is the second-largest industry in Alberta, and it's the lifeblood of many Albertan communities. Producers know how to work, but they know how to have fun, too, when the time comes. For many Albertans there's nothing more fun than the sport of rodeo.

This weekend, on June 3, 4, and 5, the Hand Hills Lake Stampede will be holding their 100th anniversary annual rodeo. Located in the picturesque Hand Hills, the community comes together, as they have for a century now, to celebrate one of Alberta's signature rodeo events. In 1917 Jack J. Miller organized the inaugural rodeo as a fundraiser for the Red Cross to aid in their effort during World War I. Since that time Mr. Miller's fundraiser has become a legacy that is still growing strong an amazing 100 years later.

This event is only made possible thanks to volunteers, spectators, and participants, who step up year after year to make this event possible. Alberta is all about the families and friends who work together to keep a legacy from the past alive for the future.

Like so many of the small community events across the province, the Hand Hills Lake Stampede has become an important part of Delia in Alberta's history. As we all know, it's our unique western culture and heritage that draws people from around the world to Alberta and further enriches our lives with this important connection to our history and roots. It will be my great honour to participate in their parade taking place this weekend.

Please join me in wishing the organizers, competitors, and spectators all the best as we continue to celebrate the legacy started by Jack J. Miller a century ago.

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

Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Two weeks ago our Progressive Conservative caucus toured the Li Ka Shing centre for health research, a world-class facility, where renowned cancer

researchers are refining life-saving cell transplant surgery. We were proud to learn about the state-of-the art centre and the globe-leading professionals it has attracted to our province. When one of the scientists told us that the heritage fund is the reason for the centre's existence, I felt a surge of pride for a government that had the vision to create this kind of fund. Then I grew concerned because I'm all too aware that many people have misrepresented the heritage fund. So let me offer some facts to clear up the record.

Alberta's heritage fund was always used to invest in Alberta for Albertans. Revenues earned by the fund were invested in many ways, including to develop projects like the Li Ka Shing centre for health research innovation, the University hospital, the Tom Baker cancer centre, and Kananaskis Country, and the list goes on and on and on. Today these quality-of-life investments that exist all around us continue to provide value and have helped keep Alberta's taxes low. And there's more, including millions of dollars in endowment funds to support medical research, educational scholarships, addiction programs, energy research, and much, much, much more.

It is provincial lore that Premier Lougheed had the vision to establish our fund and set Alberta on a course that has earned envy around the world. This is not a myth; this is the truth. As a member of the heritage trust fund committee I will guard against misrepresentations that can be used to change the fund's course. Mr. Speaker, the $18 billion in this fund today belongs to Albertans. They need to know that its true worth over the decades has been much, much more, and they need to value it accordingly. I hope to help them do that.

Thank you, sir.

Climate Change

Mr. Shepherd: Mr. Speaker, our Official Opposition has a difficult relationship with the truth about climate change. Their leader would have Albertans believe that their party has finally accepted that the planet is warming and that just maybe humans have something to do with it, or at least that's what gets said on camera. But outside this House members opposite continue to peddle conspiracy theories claiming that climate change is a hoax.

Recently the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo retweeted a video claiming the multitrillion-dollar global climate change scam. When questioned on this, he stated that he's simply in the middle of the road on the issue. Well, Mr. Speaker, perhaps it's time he crossed over because 95 per cent of scientists are on the other side.

It seems that our opposition wants to have it both ways. It seems that despite what they've been told to say, in their heart of hearts many of the members opposite still don't believe climate change is real, and that just gets the better of them sometimes, like the members for Cypress-Medicine Hat, Airdrie, and Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock, who've happily retweeted the so-called Friends of Science, an organization that supported a declaration saying that there's no convincing evidence that the CO_2 from modern industrial activity has or will cause climate change and, instead, places blame for climate change on the sun. On the sun, Mr. Speaker. With friends like those, who needs enemies?

Meanwhile the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake has posted articles arguing that global temperatures are cooling and ice caps growing while the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner has posted articles disputing the reality of man-made climate change. Perhaps he feels that polar bears are too entitled.

Mr. Speaker, man-made climate change is real. As the opposition leader has stated, it "is, indeed, one of the biggest threats to our environment, to our people and to the future of our earth." I hope he shares the concerns of myself and many Albertans that members of his caucus continue to use their positions to promote conspiracy theorists and climate change deniers, behaviour which will only ensure that Alberta is mocked and vilified while facing more roadblocks to diversifying and supporting our energy industry.

Our government stands with science. Our climate leadership plan will reduce emissions and protect Albertans' health. We're moving Alberta forward. Let's hope the opposition stops holding us back.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

Canadian Hockey League Memorial Cup

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As many of my colleagues in this House know, last week the Memorial Cup championship was held for the first time in Red Deer. It was last held in Alberta 42 years ago. This was an amazing event which would not have been the huge success it was without Red Deer's amazing volunteers. Over this last week I fielded many questions from people wanting to know: why was the military present at every game, and why did the cup get flown in on military helicopters? So I'm going to give you all a little history lesson on the Memorial Cup.

1:50

The Memorial Cup is the junior hockey trophy awarded by the Canadian Hockey League following a four-team round robin tournament between the host team and the winners of the WHL, the OHL, and the QMJHL. Next year the cup will be held in Windsor, Ontario, and hosted by the Windsor Spitfires.

Donated by the Ontario Hockey Association in 1919, the trophy was originally known as the OHA Memorial Cup. The Memorial Cup was proposed by Captain James T. Sutherland, the president of the OHA, who was serving overseas in France. He submitted the idea to present a trophy to honour two of Kingston's greatest hockey stars, who died in World War I – Alan Scotty Davidson, lost in battle in 1915, and Captain George T. Richardson, killed in action in 1916 – and all the other Canadian hockey players who died in battle.

The trophy was designed and then dedicated to honour all the soldiers who died fighting for Canada in the war. During the 2010 tournament it was rededicated to honour all soldiers who died fighting for Canada in any conflict. For almost 100 years the military have been acknowledged for their sacrifices with this trophy.

Through the generosity of some very special organizations in Red Deer I was able to spend . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Oral Question Period

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

Carbon Levy

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know the NDP carbon tax is going to take a heavy toll on core services Albertans rely on, all so the government can fill its carbon tax slush fund. It's been well documented that many things, including heat and transportation, will cost our health care facilities millions more after this new tax comes into effect, costs that would otherwise go into hiring front-line workers or delivering critical patient health care. Why is this government putting millions of dollars away from critical health care services under the guise of the new NDP carbon tax?

Ms Hoffman: Honestly, Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. We are the government that actually campaigned on protecting public health care, on protecting education and funding it accordingly while other parties were proposing massive cuts. We also said that we take climate change seriously. We know that members opposite continue to perpetuate misinformation about climate change not being man-made. It is man-made. We respect the scientists and the children of this province, and that's why we're moving forward on making sure that we can be proud and that our world can be here for future generations.

Mrs. Aheer: Future generations are exactly what we're concerned about on this side of the House.

This government said that it would stand up for education, but this new carbon tax only hurts schools and students. Like in Health, this carbon tax will cost our school boards millions of dollars just in heating and transportation costs alone, costs that will either be passed along to parents in the form of new fees or taken from students in the form of cuts to services like arts and lunch programs. Why is this government putting this carbon tax above the needs of students and parents?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We have an Official Opposition that is constantly advocating for significant cuts, cuts that would actually negatively impact the children and the very schools that we're standing up for. Albertans will benefit from the climate leadership plan through programs like energy efficiency, and we want Albertans to know that they can be a part of the solution and that that's how they can also lower their carbon prices. Certainly, we're proud of the possibilities that we have moving forward and of the investments that we will be making to support the very schools that the members claim to care about.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Only a small portion of this tax is going to end up in the hands of Albertans, and meanwhile this new $3 billion tax will put millions of dollars away from services that actually help Albertans on a daily basis, services like PDD care, policing, road maintenance, just to name a few. Funds directed to these important public services will actually be funnelled back into this government's carbon tax slush fund. How can the Premier justify compromising the quality of core services by sending precious dollars from the front line into the climate fund?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, just another math lesson. Two-thirds of Alberta families are going to benefit from a direct rebate. That is a significant number of Alberta families that will be benefiting. The opposition likes to pretend that they're arguing about these little things when the truth is that we all know that they are continuing to question the science. They want to bury their head in the sand and pretend that they can continue with the ways of the past. Our children, our scientists, our families expect more from their government. They expect leadership, and that's what they've got.

The Speaker: I want to urge the House again to control the volume.

The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Public Service Size

Mr. Stier: Mr. Speaker, these NDP risky economic policies are compounding the effects of low oil prices, and businesses and workers are paying the price. Everywhere you look, businesses are cutting back their hours, laying off their staff, or finding new ways to reduce their costs. Meanwhile in government times have never been better. In fact, this government added over 1,413 jobs since being elected. Albertans understand that times are tough, and they're making the hard choices to get by. Why isn't this government doing the same?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, I think Alberta families are very proud of the fact that we've hired teachers, educational assistants, health care staff. That's what Albertans voted for, and that's what they're getting. There have been 257 full-time equivalents added across government, very different from the number mentioned by the member opposite. That's because we're investing in an office for Status of Women and a climate change office, facts that we know are very important to moving our society forward, and I will not apologize for that.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Stier: Again, Mr. Speaker, thank you. The Premier was already running the most expensive government in all of Canada. Now she's making the same government even bigger and more expensive by hiring 3,260 more full-time equivalents in the '16-17 calendar year. Last year the Alberta economy shrank by 4 per cent, and a hundred thousand taxpaying Albertans lost work in the private sector, all while yet more manager positions were added to the government payroll. Will the Premier commit to putting an end to bloated ranks of managers and only hire when it's necessary for front-line workers?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, 3,013 front-line workers for universities, colleges, school boards, and AHS were hired because this government was elected and the cuts being proposed by the members opposite did not go ahead. We also have invested in economic development and economic diversification, the status of women, and climate change, three priorities we know that the Official Opposition is not keen on because what they want to do is to sit on their hands and pretend that the ways of the past are somehow going to bring us forward. Albertans voted for change, and this is exactly how we're delivering.

Mr. Stier: Well, Mr. Speaker, people are losing work. When they look to this government for support, they're told to go somewhere else, to apply for EI, or to wait for one of their many failed job-subsidy programs to stick, unless, that is, they possess the NDP world view. Then there's a cushy job waiting for them in the government. In reality, Albertans are bracing for yet another year of economic contraction. To the Premier: will your government face the facts and realize that fiscal restraint and managerial hiring freezes are absolutely necessary when Albertans are losing work and businesses are suffering?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, we have demonstrated fiscal restraint. Hiring positions needs to be approved by the deputy minister. We are certainly making sure that we are operating a lean, efficient public service, but that doesn't mean that we have to turn back the clock, like members opposite have advocated for, to the positions of the 1990s, when teachers were laid off, educational assistants were laid off, nurses were fired, and the public service was shrunk to a deficit so significant that we have hospitals and schools across this province that have been ignored for far too long. I hear the members opposite saying that they want new schools and new hospitals. We need people in the public service to help us deliver.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Provincial Fiscal Policies

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans know that we are in the depths of an economic recession, and new numbers released this month back that up. Alberta is feeling the pain of this downturn, and the NDP government's policies are making things worse. In 2015 Alberta had the most contraction, with the GDP shrinking the largest amount in Canada, by 4 per cent. With the state that our economy is in, why does the NDP government continue ahead with policies like the carbon tax, that will only make things worse?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much for the question. Mr. Speaker, the reason why we're moving forward with a price on carbon is because of organizations and people who are going to benefit from it. For example, the director of Vibrant Communities Calgary, a community member from the city the hon. member is an MLA within, said:

> We applaud the government as it tables the legislation to mitigate the impact of climate change. We especially appreciate the rebate of the carbon tax for the working poor in our province. Coupled with other key initiatives such as the Alberta Child Benefit, it will help to reduce poverty in Alberta.

We're very proud of that.

2:00

Mr. Panda: When you look at our neighbours in B.C. and Saskatchewan, they're not in the same boat as we are. While the NDP government has been removing reasons for businesses to invest in Alberta through their higher taxes, raising the minimum wage, and the $3 billion carbon tax, B.C. and Saskatchewan have opened their doors to investment. Will the Premier acknowledge that the Alberta advantage is flatlining and economic impact studies must be completed before plunging ahead with these policies?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Economists from a variety of different areas across the country have made it really clear that the best way to actually have the free market play a role in addressing climate change is to make sure that there's actually a price on carbon. There are incentives for businesses and individuals to take personal responsibility, something I know the members opposite often tout. There are conservative governments, more conservative, certainly, some would argue, than the alternatives, like B.C., that's had a carbon tax for many years, and there are other provinces across Canada that are doing the same. Actually, many conservative leaders have said that this is the right way . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Deputy Premier.

Mr. Panda: Well, Mr. Speaker, everyone does a cost-benefit analysis before they bring any risky policies. GDP data released today for 2016 doesn't reflect the impact that the Fort McMurray wildfire will have. The fire, on top of the economic downturn, means that we need reasons for businesses to invest in Alberta more than ever. Aside from a failed jobs plan the NDP are dropping the ball on ways to create jobs and growth. Wildrose developed a common-sense, 12-point jobs action plan to get Albertans back to work . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The Minister for Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. As opposed to the opposition, that is just talking, our government is taking action. We've issued a number of initiatives, including the largest infrastructure spend the province has seen, over $34 billion over five years. As well, our government has introduced two different tax credits, which are incentives that the business and industry communities province-wide have been asking for, an investor tax credit that's going to help spur investment in Alberta businesses right here at home. We also dropped the small-business tax by one-third. Our government is committed to working with businesses province-wide.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The member of the third party.

Springbank Reservoir Flood Mitigation Project

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. There have been several questions asked in this House about the Springbank flood control project and, in my view, not enough information provided so far. I'd like to give the Infrastructure minister an opportunity to provide answers and clear up whatever misunderstanding might be there. To the Infrastructure minister. I believe your ministry is building the project. Have you consulted with all of the landowners, all of the municipalities, and all of the First Nations adjacent to the river, and are they fully informed about your ministry's plans?

Mr. Mason: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I can tell the House that we've held over 40 meetings already, many of them under the jurisdiction of the previous government, and 15 meetings are yet to be scheduled. We've had six open houses. We've had with the Tsuu T'ina two formal letters, three phone calls, three meetings, including one with myself, and 28 e-mails. The Tsuu T'ina has met with the Minister of Environment and Parks and had a technical briefing with administration staff. The Stoney Nation has had three formal letters, 20 e-mails, and three meetings, including one with the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure on the phone. Rocky View county has had four meetings . . .

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

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's June tomorrow, so the construction season has begun. In my view, the government ought to know how they will proceed with the Springbank dam project, the project of a dam. To the Infrastructure minister: are you planning on taking away land from people through expropriation or some other legal process, or are you going to make arrangements where they can keep the land, with the government then able to use it for flood control only when the situations arise, where that's necessary?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On the contrary, I think it's a fine project.

I've asked the question that the hon. member has just asked. We are intending to acquire the land in order to build the project. There are a number of issues, including liability issues and so on, that I think would make what the hon. member is suggesting an imprudent move.

Mr. McIver: Okay. Well, Mr. Speaker, not only the local residents but all Albertans are curious, I believe, about the costs for the Springbank dam project. By now, again, the government ought to

know the cost for the land compensation, construction, operation expenses, and other things. So to the Finance minister or Infrastructure minister or whoever can answer questions about money because I'm hoping for an answer with a number in it: what is the current cost estimate for the Springbank dam project? Please give an answer in the form of a number. What is the overall project budget?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The hon. member, having been a Minister of Transportation and of Infrastructure, knows that if you give out prices in advance, that's what your contracts will come in at, and if you try to predict the price of land, that's probably what you're going to pay. These are matters of open tenders and a fair, negotiated process, and it's too early to say what the cost will be.

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

Renewable Energy Strategy

Mr. Clark: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This past weekend the Alberta Party held our policy convention, and members voted in favour of a price on carbon as part of our overall electricity and climate strategy. The Alberta Party knows that climate change is real and human caused, and we know that Alberta should take action, but the more we learn about this government's carbon tax, the more questions we have. To the Premier: are you committed to a 30 per cent renewable generation rate even if a different mix of gas and renewables would achieve similar carbon reductions at much lower cost to Albertans?

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

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Certainly, we have set the 30 per cent target because we believe that it is achievable. It's a good mix between natural gas and various renewables that we know are very cost competitive, both wind and utility-scale solar. We are in the process of designing those programs right now and that competitive procurement process. We believe it's a good target because it plays on Alberta's strengths and ensures that we are open to all of that new renewable investment that is waiting to make those investments here in Alberta.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, as I've said, the Alberta Party believes in a carbon tax, but we're not sure that we can support this carbon tax without more detail. The role of Energy Efficiency Alberta is unknown even though the budget allocates $645 million to this agency over five years. Again to the Premier: what specific programs will be delivered to recycle revenue? Can Albertans expect a home renovation tax credit, low-emission vehicle rebates, incentives for geothermal energy, something else, or nothing at all? When will we learn the details of this so-called revenue recycling?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a good question because it comes from an area of the House where there's an appreciation for diversification and also the science of climate change. We will have more to say about the various programs that will be delivered through the energy efficiency agency very soon. We're going to ensure that we conduct the right amount of consultation on this matter and the right level of conversation with Albertans of all kinds: individual homeowners but also small businesses, municipalities, indigenous communities, and others.

Mr. Clark: In other words: trust me; we'll let you know later.

Mr. Speaker, I want to reiterate that the Alberta Party believes in a carbon tax, but we're not sure that we can support this carbon tax without more detail. I'll try one more time. Investors are ready to commit now to renewable energy projects, but they're frustrated that the government's plans to date have been so short on details. There are literally billions of dollars on the sidelines waiting to be invested. To the Premier: when will investors know the details of your renewable energy plan so that they can build the capacity we need and get people back to work?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a good question. It's a thoughtful question. We have said that the AESO is conducting its consultations on the large-scale renewable competitive procurement process. Those details will be available by fall. As we move forward on the energy efficiency and the community energy systems piece, that part will be consulted on over this summer and fall period, and those programs will be available by January 1, 2017.

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

2:10 Domestic Violence

Ms Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. New statistics show a concerning rise in the number of domestic violence incidents in Calgary. To the Minister of Justice: what kind of investments is this government making to ensure that survivors have the support they need?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the absolutely critical question. This government knows that no one should have to feel unsafe in their own home. Our government recognizes that we as the government have a role to play in ensuring that survivors of domestic violence are able to feel safe. In the fall we increased funding to women's shelters by $15 million to create protective spaces for women and children affected by family violence. We've also committed an additional $3.5 million to the family violence framework to support programs that protect women and girls.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that police officers are dealing with more domestic calls this year compared to last year, to the same minister: what supports are in place to ensure that officers have the tools they need to respond to these calls?

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our government recognizes that police have a critical role to play in supporting victims of domestic violence. That's why, in addition to creating guidelines which govern the way that domestic violence survivors are handled amongst the police services, my ministry also provides

training, which is offered four to five times a year to front-line officers as well as supervisors. In addition, there's mandatory training for Crown counsel to ensure that they're able to support the victims throughout the system.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the volume of these calls has increased, again to the same minister: what other provincial agencies are able to assist municipal police forces when it comes to domestic violence cases?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for the critical question. We're very proud in this government to have invested additional funds to make up a shortfall experienced by ALERT. One of the programs that falls under that ALERT umbrella is the Integrated Threat and Risk Assessment Centre, or I-TRAC. I-TRAC helps to develop assessment of risks to domestic violence victims as well as developing risk-reduction plans to ensure that everyone can feel safe in their own home.

Thank you.

Alberta Health Services Decision-making

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, the use of nonambulance transport for low-risk facility transfers can save money and save lives by freeing up vital ambulance resources. Unfortunately, while a wise idea in theory, we have obtained data showing system resources still being managed by the NDP. In all Alberta Health Services zones ambulances are overwhelmingly used to do the most routine patient transfers, transfers that could often be done by nonemergency vehicles. Why is the Health minister so slow to implement something we know can alleviate pressure on an overstretched EMS system?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Absolutely, when there are opportunities to do a transfer and it can be done safely without a functioning ambulance but still with proper medical oversight, that is the right direction to move in. I actually tabled some documents in the House, I believe just two weeks ago, in response to questions from estimates that talked about an increase of five vehicles in the central zone alone, and we continue to find ways to move forward on that. Absolutely, this is an area where we can continue to improve, and I expect so from AHS.

Mr. Barnes: AHS has talked about this for years but only moves at the speed of bureaucracy. Given that advanced life-support ambulances are in short supply in our towns and smaller cities and given that these advanced units are crucial for complex emergencies and saving lives and seeing as there are AHS zones where our most highly equipped and advanced ambulances are doing the majority of the lowest risk facility transfers, why has a centralized approach to EMS failed to allocate resources more efficiently, as you promised Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Obviously, there is nothing more important than knowing that when you do call 911, help is on its way and you'll get the right supports. The best way to organize first responders, we know, varies from community to community, so assertions that it's all being done from one central place isn't actually the truth. From rural areas to urban centres there are different nuances. That's why we have five different zones, and they do work with their local leaders to make sure that they find ways to operate efficiently. There still are areas for improvement, and we're continuing to make those stronger.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, while I hope that the NDP finally takes this important issue seriously, I couldn't help but notice that they have just hired a new AHS CEO, Dr. Verna Yiu. Given that we wish her great success implementing some common-sense changes to AHS's broken centralized management and while, you know, they do say that the eighth time is the charm, I have to ask the minister at the head of AHS: how many applications did you receive for such a highly coveted role?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the member should know, AHS is run by a board. We named that board several months ago, and I'm very proud of the work that they're doing. The board itself oversaw the search and recruit process, and they certainly did have a number of well-qualified applicants. I couldn't be more excited about working with Dr. Yiu for many years to come. She has proven herself to be a leader both at the university as a children's pediatrician as well as at AHS as a fantastic interim CEO, and I wish her the most success possible.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Affordable Housing

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, it's a stone cold fact that the carbon tax will increase the cost of building, operating, and maintaining seniors' and affordable housing units in Alberta. In estimates this government publicly stated a preference to build and operate such facilities themselves, with increased costs then being borne by taxpayers, delivering fewer beds from debt-funded coffers. To the minister of seniors: how much is the carbon tax going to increase the average capital cost of delivering affordable and seniors' housing on a per-unit basis?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of environment.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the carbon levy will be reinvested and recycled back into a number of different programs, including energy efficiency retrofits and other initiatives, to make sure that we've got our affordable housing stock up to snuff with respect to efficiencies. That's why we are investing $45 million this year and $645 million in the next five years on efficiency programming. That is something that the previous government failed to do, leaving us as the only jurisdiction in North America without an efficiency program.

Mr. Gotfried: A simple calculation not yet done.

Mr. Speaker, given that the downturn, job losses, and demographics will see growing demand for low-income and seniors' housing and given that the carbon tax will increase capital and operating costs on the shoulders of either taxpayers or renters, again to the minister: what new projects, over and above the 2,000

re-announced from the PC ASLI program, have you put on the books since October 2015, and when will we get a fresh list of publicly owned and operated housing planned by this government? When?

The Speaker: The Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. This government is very proud of their $1.2 billion commitment in our capital plan. We're working with housing management bodies across the province, working with seniors' lodges. We've also committed $60 million to, you know, put fire suppression systems in. We have a billion dollars in deferred maintenance that we're also investing in, which we inherited from the previous government. We are committed to working on affordable housing and supporting seniors in this province.

Mr. Gotfried: One wonders what will happen when your inheritance is spent.

Mr. Speaker, given that this government's carbon tax will increase the cost of building both affordable and seniors' housing and given that private and nonprofit organizations are efficient, innovative, and bring capital to the table, keeping unit costs down and accelerating use of green technology, again to the minister: why, then, did you publicly state a preference to move away from working with experienced, proven, and community-spirited builders and operators, and are such partnerships in the crosshairs of the NDP world view?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We're working with housing management bodies and municipalities to determine the needs of the communities in Alberta. The priority for capital funding will be direct investments in government-owned and -supported housing units rather than capital grants to others. I've said that the private sector will benefit from this significant investment because, of course, we'll need planners, architects, builders, so everyone is working together.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Carbon Levy and AISH Recipients

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have received a number of concerned calls from my constituents who rely on the income supplements from the assured income for the severely handicapped, or AISH, program. Now, they're not only concerned that the carbon tax will raise the price of consumer goods but also that the rebate might actually work against them by increasing their nonexempt income, disqualifying them from receiving the full benefit. To the Minister of Human Services: what are you doing to ensure that this benefit will not be calculated against AISH payments, which support our most vulnerable?

The Speaker: The Minister of Human Services.

2:20

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. Requirements of the AISH program still remain the same as they were before, but we have increased funding to the AISH program so that we can manage the per-case growth, the cost of the case, and more people coming on to that program. We will make sure that in the new program they have benefits available throughout.

Mr. Schneider: Mr. Speaker, given that the carbon tax will mean that many people have to spend more on basic shelter and food needs and given that Alberta's most vulnerable, especially those who have to live on fixed incomes, will be hit hard by this ideological tax, again to the Minister of Human Services: have you actually conducted any analysis at all on how this punishing carbon tax will affect those receiving AISH?

Ms Phillips: Well, indeed, Mr. Speaker, the climate leadership plan that was released in November discussed this matter of rebates, ensuring that there's adjustment for low- and middle-income Albertans, which is precisely why 60 per cent of Albertans will receive the full rebate and 66 per cent a partial rebate. In fact, many people who have the lowest income will come out just a little bit ahead because we know higher income people use more emissions. That is a well-documented fact, that is in the climate leadership plan.

In addition, we have had these conversations with community groups and others all through last fall. It was this Official Opposition that took a pass on those conversations because they don't . . .

The Speaker: Hon. minister, thank you.

Mr. Schneider: Mr. Speaker, given that under the AISH program policy there is currently no fully exempted income provision for money received as a carbon tax rebate and given that this government, clearly, did not think of the most vulnerable when they crafted their poorly timed and punitive carbon tax, will the minister commit to adding funds received from the carbon tax rebate into the fully exempted income list in the AISH policy manual?

Ms Phillips: Mr. Speaker, the adjustment rebates are in fact not subject to a clawback of any kind. Any suggestion otherwise is simply trying to misinform the public and foment fear among people given that it is a policy that will move us forward, accepts the science of climate change, and wants to diversify the economy, which are all goals that the Official Opposition does not share.

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

Grande Prairie Regional College

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In many aspects of life succession planning is just a smart idea. It's a concept not just limited to business. The Grande Prairie Regional College is trying to do just that. Unfortunately, with the recent ABC review their board lost three members last year, who are yet to be replaced, and will likely lose three more this year as terms expire. To the Minister of Advanced Education: what are you doing to ensure that this board has the members in place to properly ensure the smooth transition of the board?

The Speaker: The Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I'm proud to say that our government is committed to an open and transparent process for recruiting and appointing public members to boards. I'm aware, of course, of the three vacancies that the Grande Prairie Regional College currently

has. Applications for the recruitment for those positions closed April 26. My office is currently working with the board to shortlist and interview candidates, and I'm looking forward to working with the board and the community to find the right people to serve in these critical roles.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you. Given that the Grande Prairie Regional College has recently submitted a proposal seeking polytechnic university status in response to a demand for trades training and degree completion, again to the minister: can you help facilitate these growing demands for trades training and degree completion at the Grande Prairie Regional College?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to the member for the question. Of course, our government is well aware of Grande Prairie Regional College's aspiration to gain a polytechnic university designation. The proposal that they have put forward will be considered in the broader context of the postsecondary system in the province. There are many factors, of course, including ongoing funding pressures, that would need to be examined in detail before we make any decisions on this proposal, but we'll continue to meet with the Grande Prairie Regional College to discuss the implications of their proposal and make sure that the needs of the students at the Grande Prairie Regional College are met.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you again. Given our economic uncertainty GPRC was forced to reduce its transitional vocational program. This program offers adults with special needs a bridge between living at home and living and working in the community. Given that this program focuses on the key areas of employment training, independent living skills, work placement, and graduate follow-up, again to the minister: will your department work with related ministries to find a way to restore this incredibly worthwhile program so that all Albertans have an equal chance to succeed?

The Speaker: The Advanced Education minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I had a meeting with the Grande Prairie Regional College president and board, and they brought this issue to my attention, as the member has done today. I understand how important the program is to the community of Fairview and to all of northwestern Alberta. We've asked Grande Prairie Regional College to submit a proposal regarding the transitional vocational program to identify a sustainable budget plan, and we continue to work with the college to make sure that the supports for students will be in place where they're needed.

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

Tick-borne Diseases

Dr. Starke: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government prides itself on acknowledging the science of climate change and responding. It also prides itself in saying that its decisions are thoughtful and science based. So let's look at some science. Several studies have shown that climate change is causing an increase in the incidence of vector-borne diseases. A study published in the journal *EcoHealth* predicted that the geographic range for the principal vector for tick-borne diseases such as Lyme disease would significantly increase in Canada because of climate change. To the Health minister: what adjustments has Alberta Health made to improve the monitoring and diagnosis of tick-borne infestations?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, those who have contracted Lyme disease: this is very difficult for them and their families. We know that there are ticks in Alberta that have been confirmed to have Lyme – that's very troubling – or to have the same components. We want to encourage everyone to take preventative measures and make sure that when you're walking off path, you're wearing long sleeves, long pants, and protecting yourselves. I'd be happy to hear advice from the hon. member around further monitoring as we move forward.

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's on the way. First of all, tell your chief officer of health that the disease exists in Alberta.

Given that many Albertans have experienced needless suffering because of delays in the diagnosis of Lyme disease and given that Alberta Health continues to maintain an attitude that it is nearly impossible to contract Lyme disease in Alberta and given that diagnostic delays caused by this attitude of denial cause both untold expense and needless suffering, to the minister: why won't you direct Alberta Health to adopt broader diagnostic criteria needed for the early diagnosis and treatment of Lyme disease?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much for the question. I wonder if the same question was asked by the previous government, that was certainly dealing with this issue for many years. Certainly, we are continuing to move forward. I think I was very clear that there are ticks that we suspect could have Lyme in Alberta. We want people to take precautionary measures to protect themselves. Certainly, the diagnosis piece is very complicated. The pieces that are happening south of the border are different than north of the border. We certainly take leadership from Health Canada as we continue to move forward in finding the best way to diagnosis, treat, and remediate.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Dr. Starke: Mr. Speaker, climate change has increased the range, so given that Alberta Health's attitude that it can't happen here coupled with an inadequate diagnostic protocol is causing Albertans suffering from Lyme disease to seek treatment out of province and given that the exportation of patients to other jurisdictions in order to obtain medical care not available in Alberta is surely not part of the NDP world view, to the minister: will you commit today to the development of a comprehensive provincial strategy for the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of Lyme disease?

Ms Hoffman: I believe in the last question I just talked about the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment. Certainly, we are going to work with Health Canada to make sure that across Canada we have the very best up-to-date measures to make sure that we're protecting citizens. Once again I want to remind all Albertans that if you're spending time in a situation where you could be encountering ticks,

please take preventative measures. Obviously, an ounce of prevention is worth far more than a pound of cure. We want to make sure that we are keeping ourselves and each other as healthy as possible, so remember to wear those long sleeves and long pants, Mr. Speaker.

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

2:30 **High School Completion**

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Graduation season is in the air as we have seen thousands of students flock to the grounds of this Legislature to revel with their peers. Given that this is also a time to celebrate the quality education this province provides to students and the commitments our government has made to future generations, to the Minister of Education: what part have you had in helping our students mark their graduation?

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. High school completion is a very important part of our K to 12 schools here in the province of Alberta. I've had an opportunity to go to a number of graduations. I certainly recommend that all members get a little glimpse of a much more hopeful and optimistic future by attending graduations in their own constituencies. I went to one, for example, for Anzac, which is about 45 kilometres south of Fort McMurray, that had to be here in Edmonton, to see the nine graduates there. They were full of that fervour and sense of hope and vigour for the future which we all need at this time.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we know that high school is imperative to supporting students' future goals, to the same minister: are more students completing high school, and what are the reasons for this?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Yes. Thank you for the question. Certainly, we've seen high school completion and graduation rates going up over these last five years. I learned quite an interesting point from a number of schools that I've been at recently, which is that the dual credit career and technology programs are aiding with both retaining high school students to complete within three years and also graduation rates and the choice to move to postsecondary. Mr. Speaker, I think these are programs that we all need to get behind in order to see our graduates succeed.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we must improve high school completion rates among our First Nations students, whose rates fall below the provincial average, to the same minister: what are you doing to support those students?

Mr. Eggen: Thank you very much, Member, for the question. Budget 2016 sets very ambitious targets to eliminate the education achievement gap. To that end, we've committed $28 million to close the gap between indigenous students and other students, adding to an existing grant of $48 million. As partners in First Nations education we will continue to work collaboratively with the federal government and First Nations across this province to close the gap between First Nations students and all other students here in the province. We're making progress, but we have a lot of hard work to do.

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

Crime Prevention in Rural Communities

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last month I asked the Justice minister about addressing rural crime. She spoke about getting supports in place to discourage potential criminals. Well, last week the crime wave continued: armed robberies in Holden and Amisk in broad daylight. My constituents want to feel safe in their communities, but in Amisk the armed robbery happened right across from a school, and families are worried. They want to know: what is the Justice minister actually doing to keep our communities safe right now?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, of course, all Albertans deserve to live in safe and resilient communities, which is one of the primary functions of my ministry. That's why I'm very proud to say that this province invests over half a billion dollars a year in policing, which is more generous than any of the provinces around us, to ensure that we have the right on-the-ground supports for municipalities going forward. Our police partners work very hard and do an excellent job in preventing crimes.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, I think that whether the member recognizes it or not, it's really critical to address those underlying drivers of crime like poverty, that lead people into these sorts of lifestyles, and that's what our government . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Taylor: Given that the people who robbed these banks had the same MO and were clearly committing premeditated crimes, weighing their prison times against RCMP response times in rural communities since our hard-working police officers are often spread very thin, and given that criminals convicted of armed robberies often have their prison sentences reduced, is the Justice minister willing to advocate for stiffer penalties for armed robbery as a way to keep our communities safe?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I certainly know it's the case that, you know, ensuring that we invest in front-line services, which this side of the House is committed to doing, is the first critical step in ensuring that police are available to respond to these incidents.

In terms of the sentence in this particular matter, Mr. Speaker, obviously, it's inappropriate for me to comment on any particular case. But as the hon. member should presumably be aware, the federal government does have jurisdiction over the Criminal Code, so if those are the updates you're looking for, I would suggest that you speak to your MP.

Mr. Taylor: I was asking you if you were willing to advocate for these people.

Given that our communities need real solutions and that immediate action should be part of a larger strategy to address the rising crime rates and given that initiatives such as crime watch programs and video surveillance can serve as effective deterrent measures in small towns, would the minister consider supporting

the expansion of rural crime watch programs into vulnerable communities to protect Alberta's families and to crack down on crime?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, of course, as I've said, we are very proud that this province invests more in front-line policing per capita than the provinces around us. We invest over half a billion dollars a year in ensuring that front-line services are available, and we didn't cut back on those funds as the members opposite would have advocated.

I think that in terms of, you know, moving forward, certainly, we are doing a review of the victims of crime program, and we have a number of grant programs available. We do work quite closely with community crime prevention programs. In fact, we fund them, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Economic Competitiveness

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta receives only the Canada health transfer and the Canada social transfer, of Canada's five transfer funds. Unlike earmarked health and social transfers, provinces can spend equalization funds however they choose, and they are subsidizing industry and businesses. We've heard a lot about diversifying the economy, and here in Alberta steel fabricators and industries are competing with companies from Ontario and Quebec. We add the carbon tax, unclear climate change regulations, and increased minimum wage, and industry becomes less competitive. To the economic development minister: what are you doing to help these companies become more competitive?

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. There are a number of initiatives that our government has embarked on to support our small to medium-sized businesses here in the province. In addition to two different tax credits that we've recently announced, which have worked in other jurisdictions and will now make Alberta even more competitive, I do want to point out the fact that Alberta continues to be the lowest taxed jurisdiction in the country, with no PST, no payroll tax, and no health care premiums.

Thank you.

Mr. Fraser: Given the fact that we've heard that the Ontario government may not see natural gas as a part of their future power generation and given that this government is implementing a carbon tax, which affects the transport and cost of equipment such as solar panels and wind turbines, which are not yet produced in Alberta, to the Energy minister: are you concerned that there will be a rush of investment in renewables in Ontario rather than in Alberta based on those factors, which would leave our energy grid short?

The Speaker: The minister of environment.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, our phase-in of renewables will be commensurate with the phase-out of coal-fired electricity. The AESO is right now examining how that competitive procurement process will proceed. However, I want to caution the member on this sort of negative, doom-and-gloom outlook. There is so much investment just waiting to invest in Alberta in energy efficiency, in microgeneration, in medium-sized enterprises of all kinds, in innovation and technology. This is a good time to . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Fraser: Minister, I'm glad to hear that. I mean, that's hope.

Given that we've actually heard from investors who are not opting out but are also not opting in to your renewables plan, there seem to be more questions than answers. I know it's easy to blame the Official Opposition for the doom and gloom and fearmongering, but, Minister, these are your policies creating part of the problem. Will your government adapt to the economic circumstances, address the fear and uncertainty that is clearly being stated by investors in natural gas and renewables, or will you stick by your plan, that could ultimately hurt Albertans not just today but for many generations to come? My hope is that there is room for movement here as you guys move forward.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. On this question of natural gas, of course, we have said that it will be 30 per cent renewables in terms of our energy grid over time, and it'll be 70 per cent natural gas. That's a good mix. It puts us in the middle of the pack with respect to what's happening in the rest of North America. All of this plan is very carefully thought out. It's been laid out since November for everyone to see. It is the product of very robust consultations, consultations that the Official Opposition did not participate in. But the rest of Albertans were only too happy to help us move this economy forward, diversify our economy, and create jobs.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

2:40 Indigenous Relations

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have heard from many First Nations citizens that they're dissatisfied with the consultation process historically in Alberta. Given that many First Nations feel that the current consultation policy does not meet the needs of their communities or respect First Nations' constitutionally protected treaty rights, to the Minister of Indigenous Relations: what action is this government taking to improve First Nations consultation in Alberta?

The Speaker: The Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Well, last week, we're very happy to say, royal assent was given to Bill 12, which repealed the previous government's Aboriginal Consultation Levy Act. One of the big problems, of course, with the previous bill, Bill 22, was that First Nations weren't adequately consulted at all, the irony of which has been remarked on many times in this House: a consultation without consultation. We look forward to working with the First Nations community to restore respect to the process.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to hear about the government's plans to revisit consultation. To the same

minister: what is this government doing to ensure the participation of First Nations in this important review?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Our approach will welcome and encourage the full participation of First Nations as well as the participation of industry and other stakeholders. I have of course met with First Nations all across the province and with industry stakeholders both here and in Calgary, representing Fort McMurray as well. We believe that that consultation will lead to something meaningful, which did not happen in the past. The budget in 2016 includes $750,000 for enhanced consultation. We look forward to working with the First Nations communities in the future.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that respectful dialogue is a central pillar of proper consultation and that this was clearly lacking in the previous legislation, what steps is our government taking to ensure that we avoid the problems created by Bill 22?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. We have already initiated a process where I have had an opportunity to meet with the grand chiefs of treaties 6, 7, and 8 and engage in the process of moving forward. We're taking to heart the words of Senator Murray Sinclair, who called the old bill a charade. As Senator Sinclair said, if consultation is to have meaning, it has to have consequence. That is what we are seeking to achieve. We're committed to the new legislation. We're committed to aligning it with the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. I look forward to updating the Assembly on progress in the future.

The Speaker: In 30 seconds we'll continue with Members' Statements.

Members' Statements
(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Feedlot Alley

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak of a very interesting area within the Little Bow riding known as Feedlot Alley. It is the nickname of an area that covers about 500 square kilometres and resides to the northeast of the city of Lethbridge. This area is known globally for its world-class livestock operations. The climate and topography of the region are conducive to intensive value-added feeding operations. The area is home to over 2.3 million cattle and 180,000 hogs. Over 60 per cent of all Canadian beef is produced in Feedlot Alley. Animals are fed here at home and processed here at home.

The advent of irrigation and the formation of the various irrigation districts combined with the construction of the Oldman River dam, which was completed in 1991, have helped to diversify agricultural operations in southern Alberta. Much of the grain and hay that feeds the beef in this region is raised under irrigation pivots close to the feedlots.

This small portion of the province is a haven to free enterprise. Every day of the week, 52 weeks a year there is a requirement for feed products. Producers of those feed products have a nearby market that is guaranteed. Because of the volume of barley that is required to feed such an enormous number of cattle, the cash price for barley in southern Alberta is set FOB Lethbridge, and barley markets that expand out from this area are all worked back to the Lethbridge price less freight. The highways in my riding have become the avenue of transportation for animals and feed to different feeding operations in the area as well as to the different livestock processing facilities.

Within this famous area has grown a respect for the environment and a commitment to food safety, animal care, and production of a quality product. Alberta beef is known throughout the civilized world, and I am proud as the Member of the Legislative Assembly that represents this area to give a feather in the cap to those that work year-round to raise this superior and unique product, that helps put Alberta on the map.

Introduction of Bills

Bill 21
Modernized Municipal Government Act

Ms Larivee: Mr. Speaker, I request leave to introduce Bill 21, the Modernized Municipal Government Act.

The Municipal Government Act, or MGA, creates the framework in which municipalities operate. It touches the lives of every single Albertan by setting a foundation for how the municipalities they live in are governed, funded, and developed.

Mr. Speaker, I am tabling this bill today so that hon. members and all Albertans have time to review the changes, ask questions, and provide their feedback on our proposed amendments. Municipal Affairs will be seeking input from Albertans over the next few months, during a tour of 20 communities across the province as well as through web-based consultation. We will then return to the Legislature with any amendments necessary to reflect the feedback we hear and for a fulsome debate in this Assembly.

I'm proud on behalf of all of Municipal Affairs to table Bill 21, the Modernized Municipal Government Act.

[Motion carried; Bill 21 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm tabling today the requisite number of copies of a fact sheet from the International Monetary Fund, which argues that "broad-based charges on greenhouse gases, such as a carbon tax, are the most effective instruments for encouraging cleaner fuels and less energy use." I encourage all members to read it.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Ms Gray, Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal, responses to questions raised by Mr. Hunter, Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner; Mr. McIver, Member for Calgary-Hays; and Dr. Swann, Member for Calgary-Mountain

View, in the May 2, 2016, Ministry of Labour 2016-17 main estimates debate.

2:50 **Orders of the Day**

Government Bills and Orders
Second Reading

Bill 20
Climate Leadership Implementation Act

[Debate adjourned May 31]

The Speaker: The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak against Bill 20 and the implementation of this terribly misguided carbon tax. There are a host of reasons to oppose such a bill, many of which have been well argued and discussed on this side of the House, but I'd like to focus my attention on three of the most flawed, faulty, and foul elements of this proposed legislation. Firstly, this tax is horribly regressive and punitive. Secondly, it chokes out economic growth at a time, particularly in southeastern Alberta, when we are already struggling. Thirdly, it catches a number of organizations in its sprawling web, organizations which this province depends on.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 20's taxation powers and targets are so misguided and repellent that the government cannot even bring itself to use the word "tax." I suspect they avoid it because they know how punishing this will be on Alberta families and communities. But let's call it what it is. Let's talk about the regressive nature of this tax. Let's talk about how badly this tax will hit people who cannot – who cannot – avoid it. The most obvious place to start is with this massive hike on natural gas. This is overwhelmingly the number one source of residential heating in Alberta, and in fact it is one of the cleanest, most efficient forms of doing so.

To establish some context, I'm going to provide some statistical figures. The average household, Mr. Speaker, according to the government's estimates, uses about a 120 gigajoules of natural gas per year. The current market price is right around $1 per gigajoule. The projected natural gas price for 2018, two winters from now, is approximately $2.50. Here's the kicker. The carbon tax begins at $1.01 per gigajoule, rising to $1.52 in 2018. Unfortunately, it is so. At current market prices we're talking about a 100 per cent increase in the cost of natural gas across all Alberta households. Even if natural gas prices recover somewhat as predicted by analysts, by the time that happens, the carbon tax will still represent a 60 per cent increase. Not 2 or 3 per cent but 60 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, lets go back to the average household using 120 gigajoules. They will be hit with $184 in new costs for gas usage alone when this tax comes into its full effect, not to mention that because natural gas is so efficient and so clean, many people have switched other appliances to it. Gas heat is very popular for cooking, especially in Cypress-Medicine Hat, in Medicine Hat. I understand that gas clothing dryers are becoming more popular, too. Paying more tax. In any case, here we have Alberta families that made smart choices, have tried to be economical and efficient for the betterment of their households, and what does the government do? It steps in to heavily tax it.

I spoke to one of my constituents this past weekend, who informed me that they had purchased and installed a high-efficiency furnace just a year or two ago. The old one had started to fail; there was no choice. The constituent is now asking me what he is supposed to do to avoid the tax. He has invested a very large amount of money into a clean, efficient, new technology, but alas, Mr. Speaker, he'll be hit all the same by the NDP's new tax. His gas use falls right into the 120-gigajoule-per-month range. He'll pay the $184 dollars per year no matter what he does. Or I guess he could turn off the furnace. How feasible is that in Alberta over the winter? It doesn't take much imagination to know that's not an alternative. This is why this tax is so regressive. It is planted firmly on people who cannot avoid it, on essential goods and services they cannot change. Heating your house in Alberta in December and January is not optional.

Perhaps one could argue that this should encourage my constituents, as the Premier said, to change their behaviour and invest in further efficiency upgrades, but the reality is that upgrades like windows and new insulation are massive one-time investments that result in marginal gains at best, that takes years to pay for themselves, if ever, massive one-time investments. After investing in something like a new hot water system or a furnace, not many people, Mr. Speaker, have tens of thousands of dollars more in liquid assets sitting around to put into their home.

I could go on more about the regressive and harshly punitive nature of this tax, whether from increased utilities or increased food costs or increased transportation costs, but I would like to move on to my second major objection; that is, that a tax of this scope and this breadth will absolutely suppress economic growth, opportunity, and prosperity at a time when things need a shot in the arm.

Mr. Speaker, I know there's a lot of glowing reference to the work of J.M. Keynes on the other side of the House, but taxing in the middle of a recession is downright anti-Keynesian. Even he agreed that taxation suppresses growth. As job losses mount and as we continue to see home values and average wages fall, this tax is likely throwing an anchor to somebody desperately treading water. The NDP government is taking a bad situation and making it much, much worse.

Already I'm starting to hear the projected impacts of the carbon tax on local businesses. We have asked the government many times to produce an economic impact assessment across all sectors, but the reality on the ground is that businesses are doing it themselves, and the news that I have heard is bleak indeed. Whether a big or small business, this tax will put a large burden on local companies in Cypress-Medicine Hat. Some of our good fertilizer and value-added companies have mentioned higher input costs, anticompetitive, that other jurisdictions don't have to pay, so they've looked at relocating, looked at producing less. They've looked at the production of these things going to more competitive, higher carbon jurisdictions.

Mr. Speaker, we have a great greenhouse and packaging and value-added food business in Cypress-Medicine Hat in Redcliff. The cost of transportation – you know, in the southeast corner there are not many of us down there. We need access to bigger markets. The cost of transporting these foods has to be borne by the consumer or in job losses. Way to go.

Finally, I have serious concerns about the impact that this will have on organizations, governmental and nongovernmental alike, that contribute greatly to our local communities. Mr. Speaker, I absolutely believe that it's volunteers that built our communities, that built our province. I absolutely believe that we need to encourage our volunteer community to be stronger or as strong as possible. This carbon tax is a step in the opposite direction.

Most obvious in a vast riding like mine is the issue of school boards and transportation costs, though. I've mentioned natural gas, and that will certainly play a huge part in costs to school boards, but

I think mostly of busing when I consider the impacts in Cypress-Medicine Hat. Many students in southeastern Alberta live on farms or ranches 10 to 20 miles away from schools and cities, and transportation forms a huge part of the expense for school boards.

3:00

I've had it estimated by my local rural school board that they are facing $275,000 in added costs through the NDP carbon tax just on gas, and of course I don't think this factors in all the hidden secondary costs on all the other products and services. Mr. Speaker, $275,000 in added costs right up front is staggering. How many teachers is that? Three? Four? How many teaching assistants? Four? Five? Good front-line workers are desperately needed and add value. Instead, we're paying tax. These are real social and human costs of this tax.

Furthermore, we have groups operating in my constituency that offer great benefit to the community, charities and nonprofits of all stripes. They will be taking a severe hit on their operating costs, and we all know that they're already operating on the razor's edge. Again, I love the not-for-profit sector, the volunteer sector. Sometimes I feel guilty. They're so efficient, they're so good that I think that as a society we take advantage of them, and now we're going to be punishing them. These organizations are as lean and streamlined as they could possibly be, especially, as they are today, operating on declining donations.

You know, Mr. Speaker, in Medicine Hat and Bow Island and Redcliff I bump into people with Meals on Wheels, people helping people get to the hospital to visit, and the United Way doing all their tremendous work. Of course, we just had the CFL alumni tournament in town again this last weekend. It's going to be harder and harder for these volunteers to be able to afford to do what needs to be done.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, due to the regressive, economically crippling, and overly broad nature of this carbon tax I will stand opposed, and I encourage every member of the House to listen to the people of Alberta, that will be paying this tax, and to do the same.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka. Under 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Orr: No.

The Speaker: Are there any questions for the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat under 29(2)(a)?

Hearing none, the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to this bill. The question is: how is the tax going to be administered and collected and used? Clearly, this tax is going to make everything more expensive for everyday Albertans. That's what my concern is. I'm aware of this fact. My constituents are very aware of this fact. Every newspaper seems to be aware of this fact. The only people who don't seem to be aware of this fact are the members opposite. They're insistent that their rebate will cover the costs for Albertans, yet it seems they're missing something again. Just like when they were a few billion dollars off in their budget, it required them to push back their balanced budget to 2018. Then they thought they could run right up to the 15 per cent debt limit without going over, but now they've realized that with their free-spending ways they can't do that either.

Let's just go over some of the numbers. The *Edmonton Journal* on May 25 published an article titled Alberta Families Will Pay More under Climate Change Bill's Carbon Tax. In that article the *Journal* quoted the NDP press release.

> A typical Alberta family will pay between $70 and $105 extra per year for consumer goods and services as a result of the province's new carbon tax, the NDP government said Tuesday in introducing its new climate legislation.
>
> It's the first time the government has put a figure on such "indirect" costs of the new levy, which will increase the price of transportation and heating fuel for most Albertans starting in January.

I'm only going to use three items – there are many more but just these three – that the NDP say will affect Albertans: heating, fuel, and the government's vague lowball estimate of indirect costs. I will show how far off their expectations are by examining the typical Albertan. I will not cover the multitude of other costs that will affect Albertans, which would put costs soaring to close to a thousand dollars or maybe more. Instead, I'm just going to use the typical cost to the typical Albertan to heat their home and fuel their car. I'll also use the lowball indirect cost that the NDP provided. Since it's difficult and controversial to debate indirect costs and since they haven't shown us how they got them, for this speech we'll just give them the benefit of the doubt on that and go with the numbers they provided.

I want to examine that $75 to $105 in indirect costs by adding it to the cost of, first of all, just transportation alone and see if we can stay under the rebates for a single or a couple. I will exclude heating for now, but don't worry; we'll come back to it.

The lease on a car is usually for 24,000 kilometres a year. Car companies choose that amount because they know it's the average kilometres that the average person drives. They also use that number of kilometres to estimate the value of the car at the end of the lease and, hopefully, still make some money when the lease expires. Now, the average vehicle in the last several years gets a fuel consumption pretty close to 10 litres per 100 kilometres. This is a combination of city and highway driving, an average for vehicles. The average for Alberta would be a little higher since we have a higher population of trucks and mid-size SUVs, but for calculations we'll stay with 10 litres per 100 kilometres. That'll do.

To do 100 kilometres with 10 litres means that one litre will go for 10 kilometres. If we take the typical distance travelled per vehicle at 24,000 kilometres a year, we come out to a vehicle that will be using 2,400 litres of fuel a year. Now, the gas price according to the carbon tax is going to increase 4 and a half cents per litre, so if we take the average amount of gas used by the average Albertan, the 2,400 kilometres, and multiply that by the 4.5 cents, it comes out to $108. Wow. We're over already. That's the amount of extra money it will cost to operate one vehicle that drives a typical lease allowance distance.

Now, referring back to the *Edmonton Journal* article, it says that the NDP quoted that the average household will incur $70 to $105 in indirect costs. If we take an average between the two, we get an average or midpoint or median of $87. If we take $87 and add that to the $108 we just calculated for fuel costs, we're already at $195. The rebate for a single person is only $200, which barely covers these costs.

We haven't even talked about heating costs for their house yet. Not only that, but before we get to the heating, let's finish with the fuel costs. That $108 is for one vehicle. But, honestly, how many Albertan families do you know that have only one car? Most people have two cars. The wife has a car. The husband has a car. In many cases kids have their own cars. The average family house in Alberta has a two-car garage. I wonder why. Why do houses come with

two-car garages instead of a one-car garage? Well, it's because the typical family in Alberta actually has two cars. That means we need to double our math. That means that two-car families driving a lease allotment are covering 48,000 kilometres. That means we're using 4,800 litres of fuel. That means that due to this carbon tax the typical family will spend an additional $216 on fuel a year. Add that to the average of $87 that was given, and you're up to $303. That's higher than the NDP estimate for a couple, and we have only accounted for fuel and lowballed indirect costs and no heat.

For those who say that they should only drive one car, the average Canadian family today, the Albertan family, is a two-wage family, a two-income-earning family. I'm sure I didn't hear from across the hall that they want the wives to stay home and not work anymore, so I don't know how they're supposed to get there if they're not allowed to have a car.

Of course, not everyone drives the average. Some people drive a lot more than the average. We live in Alberta, where everything is very spread apart. My riding is extremely spread out. There are people who live outside the city and drive in to work every single day. Even here in the city some people drive to and from St. Albert or from Leduc every day to work in Edmonton. There are trades workers who have to drive between each job and put hundreds of kilometres on their car every single day to get to work, unless they're not supposed to go to work.

3:10

There are countless people who live in my riding that can't just start walking down the country roads to the grocery store or taking their kids to the bus stop, which maybe, actually, is several miles away, or to any kind of social event or anything. They can't take nonexistent public transit from their acreage to get into the city. There are people who will be far above this $216 for gasoline who are actually quite average, everyday Albertans.

When these issues have been brought to the attention of the government, the answer was to buy a more fuel-efficient vehicle. Well, do you think my constituents are going to trade in their farm truck for a Prius? Do you think a Prius can tow a horse trailer? How many farm animals do you think you can fit in the back of a Prius? Not anywhere near enough to replace a work truck, I know that.

To recap, so far we are above the rebate amount for a family that doesn't even have any children, doesn't drive more than the average, doesn't heat their house. I took a look at some of the energy bills for houses around the 700-square-foot range, and their heating costs were fairly close to the estimates on page 96 of the budget. If the average family lives in a 700-square-foot house, we can use the $124 amount quoted in the budget. If we take the $1-per-gigajoule increase and add it to our $303 cost, we come out to – whoops – $427.

But let's not use the underestimated NDP numbers for heat. Let's get some average numbers since it's the average Albertan who is going to have to pay all this and who we're talking about. A CBC article published last year, in April, said that the average home price in Canada was $440,000. In Edmonton that gives you a 1,600-square-foot home with an attached garage. In Calgary you'd get a 1,321-square-foot condo with two bedrooms. The realty executives website says that the average square footage of a house in Sherwood Park is 1,688 square feet. The average square footage of a house in Red Deer is 1,100 square feet. See, we live more modestly in central Alberta according to Red Deer real estate professionals.

All the numbers point out that 700 square feet is not the average size for a house in Alberta. In fact, the numbers point out that the average is 50 to 100 per cent larger than that amount. In other words, I'd estimate that a typical family can expect about 50 per cent more to the cost of heating their house. That means that instead of $124 extra to heat the average Albertan house, we're looking at $186 extra.

If we add that $186 to our average fuel cost and our lowball indirect cost of $303, we come out at $489 extra that families will have to pay in 2017 as we phase in the carbon tax, not even the $338. Even taking their lowball indirect cost estimate, which they won't show us the math for, we're looking at 40 per cent more than the amount the NDP says this carbon tax will cost the average family.

That $489 does not include all the other extra costs that Albertans will face. Are property tax increases included? We've already heard from municipalities that they're going to have to just add it onto their taxes in order to pay their portion of the carbon tax. Are school bus fees included? School boards have already said that school buses are one of their biggest expenses. They're going to have to add that into their tax fee in order to pay the carbon tax. So now we're in a situation where people have to pay taxes for their own carbon footprint but are also going to have to pay it for the municipal government's footprint. They're also going to have to pay it for school fees. We've got taxes on top of taxes here.

There is just so much uncertainty around this for Albertans that I can't believe the government are just ramming it down our throats through the whole economy at a time when our economy is struggling. This carbon tax will hurt families when they're down and when they need help. Albertan families do not need the government dipping their hands into their pockets to fund their risky ideological spending sprees. This government needs to rein in spending instead of raising taxes on the backs of families.

Now, the reality is that this carbon tax is supposed to be a bill to change behaviour. That I accept and understand. My question is: how many of you have actually changed any behaviour yet? That I have yet to see any example of or any word of.

Let's talk about natural gas. What kind of behaviour changes are we expected to produce here? What kind of behaviour change is it that we want? Natural gas is what heats your house, so the only way that you can change your behaviour on that would be to turn down the thermostat. How far do we turn the thermostat down? What kind of an impact is that going to have on seniors, people with disabilities, families with small children? In fact, for people who are unemployed or people who are in serious economic straits, will they turn their furnace down so much that it becomes an issue of health impacts that will end up costing the health system? Has the government calculated that in? Oh, I know. They won't think there's anything to that.

Actually, I was doing a lot of research on it. It's interesting that the World Health Organization has done a number of significant studies over the years on the health impacts of low indoor temperatures. I have a copy of one here from the Europe office of the World Health Organization in Copenhagen. They've done a significant amount of study on the health impacts and the complications of lowering or having low temperatures in indoor living environments. It relates to acute respiratory diseases, that are among the leading causes of death in Europe. The fact is that these respiratory infections do actually take the lead among all communicable diseases in Europe.

There are significant environmental risk factors related to poor indoor climate. The improvement of the indoor climate of dwellings is recognized as an efficient means of secondary prevention of acute respiratory infection, especially in risk groups such as preschool children and the elderly. So here now we're supposed to change the behaviour of folks. We're taxing their natural gas, which is the essential service by which they're to heat their home, and now

we're going to be pushing them to turn their thermostats down to the point where we may be actually causing health impacts. It is considered useful to review the health impact of low indoor temperature and to recommend some lower limits to protect human health, especially of the very young and the elderly.

Here we have a very ideological approach to climate change, which in fact is going to hurt mostly the people who are most vulnerable and who are most at risk. This was an unplanned, unthought through, and foolish . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any questions of the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Edmonton-South West.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on 29(2)(a) to briefly make some comments and get to a question for the hon. member across the way there. The hon. member spoke quite heavily about some of the health impacts that he perceived there may be or some of the health impacts he was worried about. Frankly, I think some of these concerns may be unfounded or, at the very least, absurd in some ways. I do want to comment that there are significant health impacts that we are going to see from the climate leadership strategy, and those are the health impacts we are going to see in the air and breathe in the air every day with the coal phase-out program so that we can have Albertans be healthy.

I would ask the hon. member what he thinks about those children who will have to live with asthma if we do not move with this program, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the hon. member what he would say to those families that have to live with the adverse effects of these lung and cardiovascular diseases for the duration of their entire lives.

Mr. Speaker, the hon. member also spoke quite a bit about how we were balancing the budget and doing climate implementation on the backs of families. I do want to re-emphasize that absolutely there is going to be a rebate that two-thirds of Albertans will see, and two-thirds is a majority of Albertans. I would like to ask the hon. member about these programs. Some of the funding that's not being used for these rebates is going to be used on things like $6.2 billion invested directly into the economy; $3.4 billion for large-scale renewable energy and bioenergy tech; $2.2 billion for green infrastructure, like transit; and $645 million for Energy Efficiency Alberta.

I'd like to ask the hon. member: which of these programs is not important? Which of these programs, like the Energy Efficiency corp. or the large-scale renewables programs that we are rolling out, and green infrastructure, like the transit that the hon. member was saying was insufficient, should we not fund? Which of these programs does he not want in his own constituency for his constituents? Mr. Speaker, I think some of these questions are very important around health and the economy and these infrastructure priorities and the spending priorities, that we do find that we need to be looking at in a very tangible way. I want the hon. member to maybe answer and see where we're going with this.

3:20

The Speaker: Hon. member, why don't you give him a chance to answer?

Mr. Orr: Thank you to the hon. member. Yeah. I don't argue that there are health impacts to our climate around us. The point of the matter is that the way this particular carbon tax and attempt is put together creates just as many problems as it attempts to solve. I would like to continue with an answer exactly to that issue.

This isn't my fancy dreaming this up. This is from the World Health Organization. "The effect on health of low indoor temperatures, especially in dwellings occupied by the elderly, the sick, the disabled and preschool children" is a risk. There are problems here when people are going to be forced to change their behaviour – and this is a bill meant to change behaviour – that is going to put people in situations where they will make risky choices that are in fact going to put them back in just as much a health risk as what they came out of. I mean, if the health risk is outdoors and you just push it indoors, what have you gained?

This was put together by a group of 10 specialists and public health environmental scientists. They have significant concerns with this. I'm not going to go into all of the inner details of it because it's extensive, but I will go to some of the conclusions. They say that, clearly, for certain groups, such as the sick, the handicapped, the very old, and the very young, a minimum air temperature of 20 degrees is recommended. So now if we create a carbon tax that in fact says to people, "You need to change your behaviour and use less of the very thing that heats your home," the only behaviour choice possible is to lower the temperature of your house, and the World Health Organization says that that is dangerous.

I'll read the next one for you. "Ambient air temperatures below 12° C are a health risk for groups such as the elderly, the sick, the handicapped and preschool children." Does this government not realize that they are targeting the most vulnerable people in our society by creating a regulatory regime that is going to push them to lower the temperature in their house as the only way to deal with creating a behavioural change, which is the whole point of all of this if we're going to change behaviour?

I'd like to read the next one.

> At air temperatures below 16° C, relative humidities above 65% impose additional hazards, particularly from respiratory and arthritic diseases and allergic reactions [exactly your issues] to moulds, fungi, house dust mites and allergens . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour today to rise and speak to the second reading on Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act. Again this reminds me of a time during the Cuban Missile Crisis. There was a particular general, General LeMay, who was advising President Kennedy at the time. As they were discussing and deliberating on the issue at hand, General LeMay said to the President: you're in quite a fix, aren't you, Mr. President? The President turned around, and he said: pardon me? He goes: you're in quite a fix, aren't you, Mr. President? And the President said: well, if you hadn't noticed, you're in it with me. I think it's very timely. For us in the Progressive Conservative caucus we absolutely do believe that climate change is real. We believe that humans definitely have an impact on that.

Now, most definitely we have to reconcile what normally would happen in climate change and the science of the impact of humans and what humans have on the climate. Without a doubt, I think any kind of logical thinking would say that for humans we can definitely improve our usage of fossil fuels and other combustibles, how we interact with the environment in terms of bettering the environment and trying to leave it somewhat better than when we found it, which likely won't be the case. At least we can reduce as much harm as, you know, we may cause to it, Mr. Speaker.

However, that being said, a number of the strategies under this plan as a whole are not necessarily reflected in the bill before us. The bill doesn't specifically outline how the 100-megatonne

emission cap on oil sand activity will work in practice. The bill doesn't necessarily touch on the methane reduction strategy. It doesn't cover all the aspects of the government's climate leadership plan, and it brings me back to the whole message of what I was talking about before. The environment: we are all part of that, we are in it together, and we have to figure out a path together.

I would go back. I should rephrase that. I guess we all should rephrase this. While the government may be implementing this plan, this is Albertans' climate leadership plan that they will be affected by, and we're seeing that in business and in industry, Mr. Speaker. It's important because we still need to feed families. We still need to grow business, and we still need to have a role not just in Canada but around the world. One way to do that is to have a strong economic foundation to stand on and, of course, along with that, a healthy record on the environment. I would remind the House that it was the governments of the past that actually introduced the price on carbon for industry a number of years ago. So there was a plan.

Let's take a look at the bill. The first part, the Climate Leadership Act – sorry, Mr. Speaker. Let me back up a little bit. One of the things, as we think about that, I talked about was the environment, and I talked about the economy. I believe and our caucus believes that you don't need to sacrifice one to have the other. I think that it would be important to be able to look at this bill in greater detail to understand the total effects of that on the economy, on industry, and what that looks like. I don't think that anybody here in this House can necessarily predict the future, but we can certainly try to create an algorithm of what we think it might be and be able to create an algorithm that: if this particular part of the plan is not working, what do we move to next?

The parts of the bill are the Climate Leadership Act, which basically enables the carbon tax. The second part of the bill is the Energy Efficiency Alberta Act, which creates another organization at an arm's length for energy-efficient programs and a few other things. The third is the amendments to the Climate Change and Emissions Management Act, my guess is so that it's more aligned with the government's climate leadership plan. So as we move off kind of on the first part of that plan, I guess, again, because we're all in this together, including Alberta families and municipalities, what is the impact this tax really will have for families and communities? We shouldn't assume that one-third of Albertans can afford it in the sense of, yes, maybe that's what is coming in, but we don't know what's going out in terms of supporting their elderly parents or helping kids they have in their families with disabilities and those sort of things, to make that assumption and to assume that for all municipalities this may not affect it. That's why I say that it's important to maybe have an algorithm and to take a look at: maybe now is not the time to institute a tax in its current form.

I do believe that having, you know, a revenue-neutral tax can work. I think we've seen it work in B.C. We know that there has been roughly a 19 per cent reduction, albeit a 19 per cent reduction in CO_2 emissions, albeit in heavy industry, but I think there are some merits. I do believe there are merits to this plan. But, again, is now the time to be taxing Alberta families when we're hurting so bad and when we need investment to stay? I'll talk about that in a little bit.

3:30

Then the second is that we talk about the energy efficiency strategy. Again, I think it is a good initiative, but we as members in this House collectively need to form an algorithm. I think that far too often – and many people in this House would recognize that – when we look at sectors of our government, ABCs as we would call them, perhaps they're not necessarily reaching the outcomes that we've asked them to reach. I think part of that is because perhaps we haven't determined or said to them that this is the outcome that we want to see, that this is the outcome that Albertans want to see, a timeline to meet those deadlines and to come back with sound information, particularly when something like this is so important. We're taxing Albertans, we're taxing industry, and as much as the government would say what they think it may be in terms of what they think it's going to cost, they can't promise that for every family. They can't promise that for every industry and every business. There will be an impact. For every action there will be a reaction. So we need to define those targets and those outcomes.

Third, we talked about changes to the climate change and emissions management fund. Will these changes prevent things like research and development from happening, the changes to this particular part, or will that help improve CO_2 emissions or NOx and SOx emissions? In fact, Mr. Speaker, just recently the federal energy minister has said that carbon capture is viable and a good plan to help reduce carbon emissions from coal-fired generation.

Mr. Speaker, I think it would definitely be important for the government to take a look at what's happening around the world. We are seeing in all jurisdictions the development of more coal-fired generation plants. I'm not talking about India, and I'm not talking about China. We're talking about Denmark, Germany, European countries that have already beat us to the punch on renewables, and some places – I believe it's Holland – are maybe stepping away from more of their wind generation.

Now, it's always interesting to me, Mr. Speaker. I've been a part of that, and I haven't always been not culpable. Let me put it that way. Being in government and now not being in government, I recognize sometimes where I probably should have been listening a little closer to certain things, and I'm happy, like I said before in previous members' statements, to stand on the ground that when I learn a lesson, I'm happy to own the lesson. But over here, when we talk about some of these things, that perhaps the decisions that this government is making today – I'm not here to blame the government. I'm not here to stop you from what you're doing, but perhaps we can encourage the government to look at other options.

Of all things, perhaps on this particular bill the government will look at amendments that are reasonable amendments, that don't change the plan's direction but, hopefully, improve it, and I hope that there is a robust debate on that and why and not just political speech one way or the other because this is what we believe to be the case. Now, I guess the other government members – and everybody is nose deep in reading and everything else. Fair enough. I've done that myself. But I guess the question is: what if we get it wrong? We're in a global economy now, an economy that's super competitive, and everybody wants to be the new Alberta, as it were.

Mr. Speaker, I look forward to hearing what some of the coming amendments might be from other members of the House. I thank you for your attention today and the House's attention. I think that there are many areas where we can improve, a collaboration, and nothing would please me more than to see the government get this right versus wrong, but of course they have to be open to the idea of improvements from this side of the House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Under 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Dang: Under 29(2)(a).

The Speaker: Edmonton-South West, please proceed.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise again under 29(2)(a) to make some brief comments and remarks on what the hon. member across the way said and maybe to ask some questions as well. I noticed he focused really heavily on three pieces, and one of the big pieces he said was: what if we get it wrong? What if we get it wrong? He started that off with some things about the economy-wide price on carbon, that it is not the right time right now, that right now is not good for that.

Mr. Speaker, I have to question: if not now, when? We know now because right now is the best opportunity for Alberta to be able to make those investments in renewable energy, investments in Energy Efficiency Alberta, and investments in different areas. I ask the hon. member across the way: if not now, when?

When we are looking at these things, we have to look at them and say that we've done a very exhaustive consultation on this with the climate leadership implementation plan. We've done a very exhaustive panel that has gone out and spoken to industry, spoken to communities, spoken to Albertans and, really, come back and compiled a very comprehensive list of people they've talked to and made very tangible recommendations that say that now absolutely is the right time to be phasing in an economy-wide price on carbon. We know that as a result of man-made climate change we need to use that as a tangible way to decrease those emissions that we are creating as people and as Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, I have to ask the hon. member across the way: when would be the time if not now? The very comprehensive panel has determined that now is the right time; the very comprehensive review has determined that now is the right time.

He also spoke quite extensively about the energy efficiency corp. and how the energy efficiency corp. wasn't going to accomplish anything or didn't have any tangible goals, Mr. Speaker. I challenge that. I challenge that and say that the energy efficiency corp. – if I can find my note on it here – absolutely is going to make a difference. We are the last province in the country, I believe, to not have an energy efficiency agency, and I think that is something that we need to shed as quickly as possible. I think that the hon. member would be remiss if he didn't support the creation of this organization because I think it is very important that we establish a program that delivers energy efficiency programming, raises awareness among Albertans about their energy consumption, and helps develop Alberta's energy efficiency services industry.

I think the hon. member might have some comments to make. I'd like to ask him: what would he like the structure of that to be, and what types of programming should we be seeing? We do know that Albertans of every stripe in the province do need to reduce their consumption. Perhaps the hon. member might have some insight into how we can do that or moving forward what might be . . .

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

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the hon. member. Well, it's true. I mean, in the beginning I did say that we're all in this together, and I do believe that there needs to be an economy-wide price on carbon. I did not say that we didn't. I just asked if now would be the right time. I'm not saying that you can't start now, but I'm saying that perhaps there is a scale. The way I say scale is that we can start now based on the way the economy is performing, and over time you can see increases, and that could be set by the expert panel based on the economy.

Again, we don't have to sacrifice the economy for the environment, or vice versa, but I think that there can be reasonable amendments and reasonable approaches to how we tackle that. We can all come up with that in this House. We all represent Albertans. We were all elected here, and that's such an honourable thing. You know, everybody here is proud to do that. We want to see good work on this. We want to see good work on the environment. We want to see good work on the economy.

Perhaps it's a scale of tax, right? Perhaps it's reducing some of the additional taxes even for those folks who have extra income to spend, because, you know, we want to drive the economy by spending. Those folks that can spend: we don't want to deter them. My guess is that the very folks that the NDP and this government champion – we seem to hear: teachers, nurses, and doctors. Well, guess what? Those folks are going to be paying additional carbon tax because they're going to be above that income. That's good, but we don't necessarily want it to be a penalty. Again, maybe it's a phase thing. So that's one of the things.

On the energy efficiency I'm not saying to not have the arm's-length body, but what I'm saying, based on past experience, is that sometimes in these agencies, because we are not clear on the outcomes or the targets we want set, again, which can happen here in this House, determined by all members – so we can all see this progress.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

3:40

Mr. Bilous: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise and speak to second reading of Bill 20. You know, I want to acknowledge the previous member and some of the comments he made. First of all, I appreciate the fact that he and his party recognize climate change is real. I also want to recognize that the member had some thoughtful comments to make on this bill, and I appreciate his interest in wanting to move on climate change. I appreciate that he has some concerns, so hopefully in the course of what I'm about to share, I can dispel some of his concerns.

I want to start off, Mr. Speaker, by saying first of all how proud I am of the work that the environment minister and the Premier have done on this historic bill. Quite frankly, I'll share with you a vision or an image that will stay in my mind for the rest of my life. That was last November, when our Premier and our Minister of Environment and Parks were on the stage to make the announcement of our historic climate leadership plan, joined by members of industry, CEOs of CNRL, of Shell, of Suncor, joined by indigenous leaders, who were also joined by representatives from world-leading environmental NGOs. It was historic in the sense that all of them shared a stage and had the same message, which is that this is absolutely the right way to move forward, that this is action that Alberta has been in need of for decades, and that this was really going to help jump Alberta to the front of the pack.

Frankly, Mr. Speaker, I have a few anecdotal stories to share with the House. In my travels and in my time as Economic Development and Trade minister the international attention that this piece of legislation and our government's historic climate leadership plan have brought to Alberta shouldn't be overlooked.

Quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, in my recent trade mission to China I can tell you that at every meeting with every official – and I met with both provincial and state officials – one of the top three issues that they are interested in and that China wants to take action on is climate and the environment. They were keenly interested to learn what we are doing here in Alberta. I can tell you, you know, that despite the fact that China is struggling still with emissions, from coal-fired electricity to heating and cooking with coal to other forms

of energy, they are starting to pivot and move toward a greener environment. Frankly, that's a trend that we are seeing world-wide.

As I mentioned, I think, once in this House, I think it was also an incredible moment when our Prime Minister was speaking with the President of the United States, who directly referenced our Premier and Alberta and Alberta's climate leadership plan as being a robust plan that makes Alberta a leader internationally when it comes to action on our climate. It shows that our government not only has a vision for where we want to go but is acting on it.

I find it interesting, you know, when some members and some folks try to pit the economy versus the environment. Frankly, Mr. Speaker – and for years I've been saying this, even when I was an opposition member sitting in the corner of the House – the environment and the economy are two sides of the same coin. They are not opposites of one another. They do and can work quite well together. With my ministry and with my lens of job creation and economic diversification, one of the things that excites me the most about this bill is the fact that we are investing in not only energy efficiency, which is going to create jobs, but we're also investing in innovation and in clean technology, which, quite frankly, is something that internationally countries and different jurisdictions are investing significantly in. I do think that Alberta has been a leader when it comes to some of the innovation around our oil and gas sector.

I think that this bill will give the right incentives for companies to reduce their emissions and, quite frankly, to reduce them through innovative technologies, through best practices. And they will be rewarded in the sense that when they drive down their emissions, they can in fact earn credits that they can then turn and sell. What it does is that it incents our industry to do better, but it also rewards those that are leaders. Those that decide that they want to drag their feet and do little to address it, whether it's greenhouse gases or methane emissions, well, they're going to have to pay for it because, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, we all pay for it. We pay for it through the air that we breathe, through the water that we drink, and through our environmental costs. This bill and this climate leadership plan does in fact incent those companies.

As well, Mr. Speaker, the environment minister has talked about a number of jurisdictions world-wide that are turning to a price on carbon because that is one of the ways that we are going to get meaningful action. I appreciate the previous speaker's comments about not now, but the challenge is: then when? You know, it makes me think of any new habit or new event that we want to do in our lives. It's very easy to put off, to put off, to put off for a better day. Well, you know what? There's no better day than today. Again, moving forward with this, I'm excited about the opportunities that we're going to have throughout our province.

I know some of the members opposite spoke about seniors and our most vulnerable and low-income Albertans. The environment minister has been very clear, but I'm happy to reiterate that two-thirds of Albertans will be receiving a rebate. So to talk about low-income seniors and how this is going to hurt their pockets: they are going to be rebated. This is not going to hurt their pockets. Outside of the rebate, again, we will be investing and reinvesting every dollar that's collected through this levy, whether it's into renewables, energy efficiency. There will be programs and opportunities for every Albertan to participate in should they so choose.

Again, you know, we are going to be driving the clean tech and innovations piece. I do want you to know, Mr. Speaker, that my counterpart the federal minister of innovation and science has through their budget signalled that innovation and investing in clean tech is a priority of our federal government. Now is absolutely the time to be investing in our province, and I can tell you that I will be working with my counterpart in Ottawa and the minister of environment to ensure that we are leveraging federal dollars for all of our initiatives around innovation and clean tech.

The other day our Premier signed a memorandum of understanding with the Premier of Ontario, looking for opportunities to collaborate on energy efficiency programs, on investing in clean tech and innovation. Mr. Speaker, that is how we are going to continue to not only move Alberta forward but how we're going to move Canada forward. It's become clear to me that investing in technologies and in people is absolutely critical.

You know, it's sad when members on the opposite side of the House want to do nothing and will reluctantly admit that there is an issue here that we need to address. What's frustrating is that when we look at, you know, our future generations and we look at our schools – and I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, being a teacher, that one of the number one issues that students bring up, that is near and dear to their hearts, is the environment and what we are doing to protect our environment, to ensure that when we pass it on to our kids and our grandkids, it is just as pristine as the way we found it. I can tell you that there are many, many school groups and many students across this province who are proud of the fact that their government is taking action, taking meaningful action, that is going to result in a far better and cleaner province for future generations.

3:50

If you would just indulge me for a second, Mr. Speaker. I'm just trying to find – here we go – a couple of other points that I wanted to make. Again, there were lots of concerns coming from the other side of the House as far as farmers, you know, getting their product to market. I recognize that market access is a challenge within our province. That's why I'm working diligently with the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and the Minister of Transportation to come up with some solutions to help ensure that we are getting our product to market. But I do want to clarify for our farmers and ranchers that the minister of environment has been very clear that there will be purple gas, that they will not be paying the carbon levy on, to ensure that we are not unnecessarily burdening our agricultural sector and our farmers.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker – and I think this is maybe one of the reasons the Minister of Energy is so excited about this climate leadership plan – is that inaction for many, many years has resulted in zero pipelines to tidewater. Alberta is landlocked. We need to get our product to tidewater. At the moment we have one buyer who sets the price. We have a significant differential where we're losing about $15 per barrel on oil we're selling to the United States. If we want to reduce that differential, if we want to open up new markets, we need to get pipelines both east and west. I can tell you that this is climate leadership plan, despite what the opposition says, that the rest of the world has taken notice of and is interested not only in investing in Alberta but is interested in working with Alberta.

Again, our Premier had some very positive conversations with the Premier of Ontario, and they are interested in moving our products. They recognize that, you know, a pipeline like Energy East does not just benefit Alberta; it benefits Ontarians, it benefit Quebecers, it benefits those in the Maritimes, the prairies, and because of the tens of thousands of jobs that would be created from that project, the billions of dollars in GDP, it will benefit all Canadians. I can tell you that the Minister of Energy and myself and the Premier, at every opportunity we have in speaking with our federal counterparts and our provincial counterparts both east and west, talk about market access and that Alberta is doing its part. We

need to co-operate with the rest of our country, so they see that we are taking meaningful action.

You know, I can't tell you, Mr. Speaker, how many times I stood in this House as a member of the fourth party, in opposition, frustrated to hear of the number of trips that the previous government took down to the States to try to promote pipelines, yet they refused to do anything about changing our reputation and the perception of Alberta. The rest of the world has been waiting for action. Well, they need not wait any longer because our government is taking meaningful action through this bill.

Mr. Speaker, as you probably well know, I could talk about this all day and all evening because it excites me quite a lot. But I just want to say that this bill is the right thing to do. It's the right thing not only for today and for tomorrow, but it's the right thing for our future generations. I am proud to support this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Under 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the hon. minister mentioned all of the representatives from big industry that stood with the Premier and the minister of environment on the stage when they made the announcement. I'm just wondering if they were all so happy to do that because of clause 3(2)(a). I'll just read it quickly here for you.

> 3(1) The purpose of this Act is to provide for a carbon levy on consumers of fuel to be effected through a series of payment and remittance obligations that apply to persons throughout the fuel supply chains.
>
> (2) The revenue from the carbon levy may only be used . . .

And I'll just read you the first one.

> (a) for initiatives related to reducing emissions of greenhouse gases or supporting Alberta's ability to adapt to climate change.

I'm just wondering if this means that the carbon tax paid by average Albertans will be paying to subsidize big industry in their research and development to implement initiatives to reduce emissions and if any of this money from this carbon tax will be going to big oil companies like Canadian Natural Resources, Shell, et cetera.

Also, if we're going to be supporting big industry and the implementation of initiatives to reduce emissions, if the coal industry reduces their emissions to the point where they're at acceptable levels like natural gas, will they back down on the job-killing plan to shut down all of our coal industry in the province?

Thanks.

The Speaker: The hon. minister of economic development.

Mr. Bilous: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I don't think it's beneficial to the debate that the member is trying to clearly drive a wedge between some of our largest employers in the energy sector and Albertans. Quite frankly, this price on carbon is economy-wide. We've been clear on this. It is not just industries or the producers that are going to be paying this price on carbon. It is absolutely everyone who is contributing to polluting our environment. In fact, again, that is, quite frankly, the most equitable way to price carbon, where you're not penalizing one industry. I mean, I can tell you that I would imagine that had we chosen to only put a price on the producers, the opposition would jump up and down and talk about how we are anti-oil and -gas. Well, you know what? We believe everyone has a part to play, everyone shares in the responsibility, and therefore everyone will pay for their carbon footprint.

Again, there are numerous examples that the minister of environment has shared as far as whether it's economists or environmentalists world-wide who have talked about how pricing carbon is one of the most effective ways to drive innovation and efficiency. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I've spoken with a number of economists who have said that that part is fantastic. We also need to ensure that we're investing not only in energy efficiency but in innovation, which is exactly what our government is doing. I'm quite proud of the fact that innovation fits under my ministry, but I'll be working very closely with the minister of environment and CCEMC and all of the organizations that are working toward that.

Toward the tail end there the member talked about coal. Well, Mr. Speaker, we have talked at length about phasing out coal-fired electricity because of its detrimental effects on our health. Again, I'll reiterate the fact that out of our 18 coal-producing facilities, 12 of which, due to federal regulations, are set to close pre-2030, starting in 2019 – we made a commitment, and I made a commitment both to this House and outside of this House that I will be working with all affected communities throughout the province of Alberta. We want to work with those communities, especially those that, because of our actions, are phasing out before their end-of-life date.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that there are many opportunities for Albertans, whether it's through retraining, whether it's through opportunities for facilities to possibly repurpose to natural gas, or looking at other opportunities for workers within this province.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that what we're not going to do is to continue to do nothing. Quite frankly, this is one of those issues that is not just going to go away. Through our actions not only are we developing a social licence, but we are opening up new opportunities. We are transitioning to 30 per cent renewables, which – I can tell you that there are many that are quite exciting.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The Member for Calgary-East.

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm really excited to get to stand and speak to Bill 20 today. I feel like I'm going to probably echo a lot of what the Minister of Economic Development and Trade has said, but I am just thrilled about this bill. It's a bill that firmly establishes Alberta as a leader in climate environmental policy. It's a bill that will develop our economy, and it will create jobs. It's a bill that will protect my children and all Alberta children from the negative health impacts of low air quality, a bill that will allow Alberta to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions, which is the right thing to do because they cause climate change, because it is real.

A lack of action by the previous government on climate change is actually one of the main reasons I got involved in politics in the first place. Had the previous government chosen to take firmer action on climate change, had the federal government chosen to take more action on climate change, I might not have felt the need to run for politics and I might not have ended up here in this House. I got involved as a millennial, as a person with a science degree, and as an educator. I was tired of living with governments at both the provincial and federal level who just didn't care. They did the minimum amount required. They regularly received the fossil of the year award at international climate change meetings, meetings that have been happening more or less on an annual basis since the early 1990s.

4:00

I had said earlier in this House that I had been waiting my whole life for this legislation. I may have been exaggerating. I think that, more accurately, my desire for governments to act on ensuring that

we have a clean environment started in about the fifth grade, when I first learned about the greenhouse effect and the depletion of the ozone layer. This, remarkably, is an area that we can draw on as a success story. The global scientific community noticed a problem in the ’90s with the depletion of the ozone layer. The international political community acted, and we were able to reduce CFCs and subsequently slow the thinning of the ozone layer. The world did not stand idle on this. They did not allow things to continue as per the status quo.

Now, this is what the Official Opposition would have us do on the issue of climate change. They would have us do nothing. They spend a lot of time talking about increased costs, additional taxes, and that these are bad things because, seemingly, this is all that they know to talk about. It prevents them from having to talk about the real issue here, the issue that is climate change. The real issue is ensuring that our children – mine, yours, the world’s children – have a planet to live on in the future.

I spent seven years of my life teaching, and if there’s one thing that I know to be true, it’s that kids know what’s important. When I talk to kids, they ask me what we’re doing to combat climate change. They recognize that climate change is the defining issue of our time and that if we don’t do something about it, they’re going to be in trouble when they grow up. I don’t want to have my kids ask me when I get older: “Mom, why didn’t you do anything? You were in a position where you could have done something, and you chose not to.”

The longer we bury our heads in the sand and the longer we ignore the reality of stronger storms, more extreme temperature swings, acidifying oceans, melting glaciers, limited freshwater supply – I could go on – the harder it will be for our children to fix if they can fix it at all. We’re not waiting. This government refuses to wait and see on the fundamental issue of our time. This government is moving Alberta forward.

This bill does several important things. It implements the carbon levy, which will provide incentives for people to reduce their emissions. My colleagues have tabled multiple articles that state that an economy-wide carbon price is well noted as the best way to reduce emissions.

It also puts rebates in place for two-thirds of Albertans that will help to offset costs. I’d just like to note that approximately 80 per cent of folks in my riding, Calgary-East, will receive this rebate. I have a lot of low-income seniors. I have a lot of folks who take public transit, who live in smaller homes, and these are people who are most likely going to have extra money in their pockets because of this rebate. They’re going to be able to spend that money in the local economy: at our local co-op, cafes, restaurants.

Thirdly, what this bill does is that it creates Energy Efficiency Alberta, which will mean that we’re no longer the last jurisdiction in North America to have an energy efficiency strategy.

I talk to people every day who are thrilled that we are moving forward with this policy. I was at a conference in Calgary recently on community solar development, and I spoke with people who had moved back to Alberta from Vancouver specifically because of our policies, specifically because they saw an opportunity here in Alberta that didn’t exist elsewhere. They were going to be able to start a new business because of our government’s climate change policy. They have hope for the first time for an industry here to grow that’s outside of our traditional area of strength. I spoke to engineers who are starting residential solar companies, and lots of folks are interested in community solar development and, you know, residential solar development. They’re excited that the possibility exists to be able to do something about having a cleaner future.

The Official Opposition continues to talk about companies running away because of this policy, but I’m going to have to disagree with them. This plan will help to create a modern and diversified economy. It’s going to reinvest $6.2 billion directly right here in Alberta: $3.4 billion for large-scale renewable energy, bioenergy, and technology; $2.2 billion for green infrastructure, more transit; and $645 million for Energy Efficiency Alberta, which will deliver a variety of energy efficiency and microgeneration plans. I mean, together this is expected to create at least 3,000 new jobs. To deny that this plan will have any positive impact on the economy is its own kind of risky ideology.

You know, I have a friend who runs a company called urban green energy. He grew up with me, graduated high school, and he saw the opportunity in renewables and was able to start a company that makes little wind generators. They’ve installed them all over the world. They’ve installed them on the Eiffel Tower, football stadiums, Whole Foods in Brooklyn. By all accounts he’s been very successful in renewables.

I’ve also heard the other side talk about a social licence as being a thing that we’ve created, that doesn’t actually exist, but there are various occasions when I’ve heard positive results on this climate change policy from folks you might not expect. I sat next to the former Leader of the Official Opposition at an event not long ago, and she told me that the response she has received from business leaders and folks across Canada has been very positive, that they feel that this policy will help in getting our product to tidewater.

I’ve spoken with legislators from the United States, with Congressman Jeff Morris from Washington, who’s done some amazing work on solar in his state, and Senator Arnie Roblan from Oregon. These are two gentlemen who represent a large swath of the west coast, which is an area that’s very susceptible to climate change, and they’re acutely aware of the need to act on it. They also both have pipelines that end in their ridings, pipelines that come from Alberta and end in Washington and in Oregon, and they’re aware of the economic benefits they bring, the jobs that these pipelines provide. So they’re very pragmatic on the need to balance economic benefits of fossil fuels with the needs of the environment, and they were both very positive and very excited to talk to us about our climate leadership plan.

The Leach report notes that “Alberta’s fossil fuel resources will have lower value if we cannot develop them with lower emissions impact,” that we need to develop processes which allow for value-added conversion to noncombustion products, which is something that we’re doing through our petrochemical diversification program. For too long in this province and in this country we have put the environment at odds with the economy. I’ve heard the other parties state that this isn’t something that we have to do, but when they were presented with the option to grow the economy and to help the environment, they didn’t do it. They didn’t recognize that the economy and the environment are fundamentally intertwined and that a global movement is in place to move to a carbon-constrained future. It’s vital that we have a plan to move Alberta into that future, and this is that plan. I am so proud to support it, and I would urge all other members in the House to do so as well.

I’ve enjoyed listening to the debate so far. I believe that we have made good progress on Bill 20, so I would move to adjourn debate at this time.

[Motion to adjourn debate lost]

The Speaker: Are there any questions under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Calgary-East?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise in support of Bill 20, a bill that I believe marks a historic step forward for our province. Now, we've heard a lot of criticisms since the introduction of our climate leadership plan. I'd just like to make one thing clear. A carbon levy is good public policy.

As noted by Dr. Andrew Leach, who chaired our Climate Change Advisory Panel, a wide consensus of economists around the world supports implementing a price on carbon. In the words of Canada's Ecofiscal Commission, a nonpartisan commission of economists whose advisory board includes such radical socialists as Preston Manning, former Alberta Finance minister Jim Dinning, economist Jack Mintz, who members opposite have called on for his nonpartisan expertise – they're all part of this group, and they state:

> Carbon pricing makes economic sense for Canadian provinces. It reduces [greenhouse gas] emissions at the lowest possible cost . . . help[s] position Canada to better compete in carbon-constrained international markets by sparking low-carbon innovation [and] by representing a transparent and credible climate policy, and one known to be effective, [that] may help to secure . . . market access for our abundant and valuable natural resources.

There is no argument. All experts agree that placing a price on carbon is the best way to reduce emissions.

4:10

Now, it's important to note that in doing so, it is not the imposition of a new cost; it's the removal of a subsidy. For years economies around the world have failed to take into account the environmental and health impacts of business operations. The costs generated by these activities have instead been borne by all orders of government, who have simply absorbed the direct and indirect costs generated by the burning of fossil fuels. The costs realized through a price on carbon are not new ones that are being imposed from outside the economic system. They're costs that have always been there. The price on carbon simply makes them explicit and transparent as part of the cost of consumption. This provides an economic incentive to reduce those same costs by reducing the amount of carbon produced.

I apologize for the basic carbon tax 101, Mr. Speaker, but it seems to be something that's needed for some members of this House.

Currently there are about 40 countries and over 20 states, cities, and regions that have all stepped up to put a price on carbon, and now with this bill Alberta will lead Canada in joining this forward-thinking coalition. Our climate leadership plan was put together based on the advice provided by Dr. Andrew Leach and our Climate Change Advisory Panel. It has the support of industry, environmental advocates, municipal and federal partners, economists, health professionals, and investors. As recommended by economists, every dollar that is raised through this levy will be fully recycled.

Now, I was surprised earlier today to hear the Member for Calgary-Elbow state that he had never heard the term "revenue recycling." A quick Google search shows that this is, in fact, the common term that's used when discussing how government should make use of the funds raised through carbon pricing. Canada's Ecofiscal Commission released a report specifically on this issue entitled Choose Wisely: Options and Trade-offs in Recycling Carbon Pricing Revenues.

They make four recommendations on how governments should recycle carbon revenues. First, they suggest that governments should use revenue recycling to address fairness and competitiveness concerns surrounding carbon pricing. Second, they suggest that governments should clearly define their objectives for revenue recycling. What is it that they intend to do? What purposes do they intend to achieve? Third, they recommend that governments should use a range of approaches when recycling revenue. They feel that it's important that we have a variety of options and utilize many different levers to address the various issues that surround the issue of both climate change and the effects of putting a price on carbon. They note that each approach comes with particular strengths and weaknesses and that no one approach on its own can meet or address all of the important factors involved, which include things like maintaining household fairness, supporting business competitiveness, and also improving economic and environmental performance.

In this they note that governments have six main options for how they recycle carbon revenues: first, direct rebates to households and consumers; second, reductions in personal and corporate income tax; third, investments in low-carbon technology; fourth, investments in infrastructure; fifth, reduction of public debt; and then lastly, transitional support to industry. Now, interestingly, in this report they actually go through and look at various provinces across Canada, and they make some recommendations on how those different options should be prioritized. In the province of Alberta they placed a high priority on household transfers, on investments in low-carbon technology, and on transitional support to industry. They placed a low priority on cuts to personal and corporate income tax, perhaps recognizing that Alberta, of course, still remains the lowest tax jurisdiction in Canada.

An Hon. Member: You're welcome.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you. A tradition we're proud to continue.

They also place a low priority on reduction of public debt. They place a moderate priority on investments in infrastructure. Lastly, then, they recommend that all revenue recycling priorities should be monitored and adjusted over time.

Mr. Speaker, our plan meets all of these criteria. It calls for us to recycle $6.2 billion in revenues directly back into the economy through several channels and clearly outlines our objectives in doing so. Our plan calls for us to recycle $6.2 billion back into the economy. We're investing $3.4 billion in large-scale renewable energy, bioenergy, and technology. This, as has been noted by my colleagues ahead of me, will help to create jobs in the province of Alberta while moving us to a more secure energy system that will cause fewer problems and difficulties in terms of health. We're investing $2.2 billion in green infrastructure like transit, and we're investing an additional $645 million in Energy Efficiency Alberta.

At long last, Mr. Speaker, as has been noted by some of the members ahead of me, we are finally bringing an energy efficiency program to the province of Alberta. On that point, I'd like to note that I hear members opposite that are expressing all kinds of concerns about the effects this may have on businesses, the effects it may have on nonprofit groups and communities, on our schools, our hospitals. We're taking bold action. Alberta is a province that's known for bold action. We are a province of innovators. We are a province of people who step up and face a challenge. Through Energy Efficiency Alberta we will be standing alongside all of our

community partners. We're not abandoning them. We are going to work with them to help them find the efficiencies that members of the opposition seem to believe are everywhere to be found except when it comes to climate change or in trying to reduce the use of carbon.

We will work with our partners in communities. We will work with them. We will help them. We will provide programs that support them to help achieve the energy efficiency that we need and that will assist them ultimately, Mr. Speaker, to reduce their costs and to pay less than they currently pay.

With that, I think we're going to have more opportunity to further this debate. I'd like at this point, then, to make a motion to adjourn debate.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion to adjourn debate carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:18 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Piquette
Bilous	Hoffman	Renaud
Ceci	Kazim	Rodney
Clark	Littlewood	Rosendahl
Connolly	Loyola	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Luff	Schreiner
Dach	Malkinson	Shepherd
Dang	McCuaig-Boyd	Sigurdson
Drever	McKitrick	Starke
Eggen	Miller	Swann
Fitzpatrick	Miranda	Turner
Fraser	Nielsen	Westhead
Ganley	Payne	Woollard
Goehring	Phillips	

Against the motion:

Drysdale	Hanson	Orr
Ellis	Loewen	Stier
Gotfried		

Totals: For – 41 Against – 7

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Speaker: The Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Bilous: Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask for unanimous consent to revert to introductions.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests
(reversion)

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to my colleagues for this opportunity. Given that we have two guests in the audience that I've worked with over a number of years, I thought I'd take the time to introduce them. They're above the opposition members, facing the government side, and they are Mary Martin and Dave Coburn. Mary is the chair of the Calgary Catholic school board. Dave was the chair of the Edmonton public school board when I first became a trustee. They're both strong advocates for children and comprehensive school health. Please rise. Please join me in welcoming them.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Government Motions

Medical Assistance in Dying

17. Ms Payne moved:
    Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to implement measures to regulate medical assistance in dying consistent with the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada in Carter versus Canada (Attorney General) and any legislative measures approved by the Parliament of Canada to ensure that Albertans can benefit from the orderly implementation of this court decision so that:
    (a) Albertans may exercise their rights to access medical assistance in dying;
    (b) appropriate safeguards be put in place to protect vulnerable Albertans;
    (c) conscience rights are respected while ensuring the right of patients to access this service;
    (d) the practice of medical assistance in dying is closely monitored and measures regulating medical assistance in dying are reviewed within one year.

The Speaker: The Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Supreme Court of Canada has decided that existing federal criminal law violated the rights of Canadians to avail themselves of medical assistance in dying. This coming Monday that ruling comes into effect. For that reason, it is important that we move forward with our regulations. The federal government has the primary responsibility for legislation in this area, and we intend for our regulations to fit within their legislative framework, which isn't yet set and actually may be subject to court challenges.

In the meantime Alberta needs to be prepared. Today I am rising to introduce a motion that outlines the principles that will guide our government as we move forward on providing medical assistance in dying. Our government will seek to ensure that Albertans may exercise their rights to access medical assistance in dying, that appropriate safeguards are put in place to protect vulnerable Albertans, that conscience rights are respected while ensuring the rights of patients to access medical assistance in dying, that the practice of medical assistance in dying is closely monitored, and that measures regulating medical assistance in dying are reviewed.

There has been much debate at the federal level on this important and deeply emotional topic. Our government has undertaken significant consultation with the public to get their feedback related to medical assistance in dying. We are ahead of other jurisdictions in terms of the consultations we've undertaken. Through these consultations Albertans clearly told us that they generally support medical assistance in dying but expect strong safeguards to protect the vulnerable and ensure the safety of patients and health care providers.

We heard from more than 15,000 Albertans, and they told us that just slightly more than half supports eligibility for those under 18 as long as they are mature and competent enough to understand the request. All agreed that for a request to be valid, the person must have made the application while still cognitively competent enough

to make the request. All submissions agreed that special cautions are needed for those with mental health and addictions issues. These are just a few examples of what we heard about this complex issue when we talked with Albertans.

Our government also completed extensive consultation with the medical community and other key stakeholders. Further, Alberta is the only province outside Quebec where our Legislature will have the opportunity to provide feedback on this deeply personal and difficult issue. That's what we're doing by putting forward this motion in the House to outline the principles that are framing our regulations. We will also be making the draft regulations public so that the opposition can provide input in this House on those regulations if they wish to do so. Our draft regulations are in line with the Carter decision. We look forward to a respectful debate with our colleagues on an issue of such importance to Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, we know that medical assistance in dying will be a practice and a process that will evolve over time. Our responsibility in this matter is actually quite small and specifically relates to the framework for medical providers and patients. We are committed to supporting the rights of patients who wish to use their right to access medical assistance in dying as laid out in the Carter decision.

At the same time we are interested in enabling this in the way that is the least polarizing and intrusive. We are not taking a heavy hand in enforcement. We do reserve the right to change our approach if it becomes unmanageable and patients wishing to access this right cannot do so, but we are moving forward in a way that is as respectful as it can be to all people in Alberta. This framework will allow enough flexibility to adapt to issues as they arise and to ensure a seamless transition once the federal legislation is passed. It will ensure that Alberta takes a responsible approach to providing access to those who qualify in this new area of law and medicine while protecting health care workers, patients, and vulnerable Albertans.

I invite my colleagues to begin this important conversation today and to work with us to make sure that the framework is in place to support Albertans who make this choice starting June 6. I look forward to tabling the draft regulations in the House.

Thank you.

4:40

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

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, thank you very, very much. I guess I want to start by saying that I heard the associate minister talk about the opportunity to have Albertans fully, fully involved in this, the most important of areas: end of life, family, you know, areas that are crucial and sometimes very hard to talk about. So I hope that the NDP government means what they say when they talk about listening to Albertans, when they talk about allowing the opposition to do our outreach to all Albertans as well and to ensure that everyone, all faiths, all ideas, good front-line health workers, family, and community builders, all legitimately get heard.

Yeah. I heard that a few minutes ago from the associate minister, and I'm grateful. I heard that at 10 after 3 in our prebriefing upstairs, and I'm grateful that that was said. But, Mr. Speaker, I'm concerned, and I want Albertans to know that, you know, like, yeah, we knew that June 6 was set by the federal government a long time ago. Of course, we don't know what the framework is. This has started off in a way, though, that hasn't made it easy for the opposition to be involved, and that is this government's fault. We were given the first draft on Friday. That was changed yesterday, and at 3 o'clock today I was told about a meeting at 3 o'clock. So I hurriedly went to it, and, yeah, the information and what was shared were a start, but by a quarter to 4 a different NDP minister was knocking on the door, wanting the room. The meeting was over, with so many questions unanswered. Okay.

Associate Minister, this is a start. This is a framework for all Albertans – all Albertans – from all communities, all faiths, all ideas to be heard. Mr. Speaker, we haven't started that way, so I hope that we finish that way. I hope that we truly, truly mean that this is going to be, you know, one of the key areas that we can get Albertans involved in. In my four years as an MLA very fortunate and grateful to represent Cypress-Medicine Hat, about assisted dying – it's called other things – I have had countless people e-mail me and call me. Albertans want to be involved in this because we have ideas, because we're loving and caring, because it's one of the most important parts of life, and it's one of most unknown. It comes down to protecting the vulnerable. It comes down to protecting the conscience rights of top-notch front-line health workers. My assistant said it to me this way: the closer you get to this, the harder this is.

Let's make sure that everyone has a chance to be heard. Let's make sure that everyone has a chance to be respected. Mr. Speaker, I think we're off to a bad start, though. You know, here we are talking about regulations as opposed to legislation. Would Albertans be better serviced, would the voice of Albertans be heard better if we, the 87 of us in this House, the 87 representatives of 4.3 million Albertans, had the opportunity, in a full and fulsome and respectful way, to debate all the things, the assisted dying legislation and the regulations that the province is going to put in, and what all that is about? I think yes. I appreciate that it was a very short, quick meeting that had to end, but there were some things that weren't in the regulations that the government released to Albertans at 4 o'clock and to me at 10 after 3 that greatly concern me. The words "mental health" weren't in there. Yeah, there's maybe a mechanism through a committee of doctors in a referral motion but maybe not.

Oh, my goodness, a cooling-off period. Once people are in that terrible, terrible situation where they think that this is the best option for them, I guess – we've talked to many experts and stakeholders that we've reached out to that talk about a 14-day or longer waiting period. I don't see that anywhere in here.

Back to my opening remarks, it's incumbent on you across the floor to make sure that these ideas are heard and listened to and are actually – actually – done in a way that protects Albertans. It's not in here. Again, that argues to me that we need legislation, where we can all stand up in second reading, Committee of the Whole, and third reading and give it a full, robust discussion.

I didn't see the word "terminal" before one can go through the process and the mechanisms, and I was told that that was because of the Carter court case and some of the implications around that. I think the word, instead, was "irremediable." I don't know, guys. Colleagues, I think Albertans need a chance to understand what all this means. I think we need a chance to ensure that people are protected.

You know, it's difficult to speak on behalf of my constituents as well, the people who elected me to the House to represent them and their concerns, when I've only just been provided the relevant materials mere minutes ago.

I want to talk about protecting the vulnerable, and I'll be frank. That concerns me greatly, but I have no idea. You know, as a four-year MLA, before that as a businessperson, a rancher, a real estate person, and, most importantly, as a father, as a husband, I don't even know what the word "vulnerable" really means when it comes to something this important and who qualifies and who doesn't, but I'll tell you, Mr. Speaker, that 4.3 million Albertans do. Many, many experts out there will be able to help us frame that in a way

that I think only legislation can do, only the opportunity to have this on the floor of the Legislature for a considerable period of time.

Mr. Speaker, we have to have a full and robust and understanding talk about conscience rights. As I said, my assistant talks about how the closer you get to this, the harder it is, and he's absolutely right. What do conscience rights mean? Does it mean that if you don't want to be involved in the process, you only have to refer? Should a person not have the right or the obligation to refer even if it's just to a committee or a provider of assisted death, euthanasia, assisted suicide. My God, what is the right thing to call it?

Mrs. Aheer: Medical assistance in dying.

Mr. Barnes: Medical assistance in dying. Okay. Thank you.

Let's see what 4.3 million Albertans think the obligation should be on good health care providers. I personally think that they should have the right and the opportunity for full and complete conscience rights. I'm only one of 4.3 million Albertans. Let's take the time to hear from them. Let's take the time to do it right.

4:50

In closing, you know, our time in here: a lot of it is about respect. It's respect for Albertans. It's respect for getting these laws as good as we can. I mean, I think the first thing to realize about being in here is all the unintended consequences, how often our good intentions go south. That's why it's important, Mr. Speaker, to ensure that our conscience rights are protected, that all vulnerabilities of people and aspects are protected, that all options are protected. I think the best way to do that is a full legislative process, not a regulation process as undertaken by well-meaning, qualified bureaucrats. This may be the most important thing even with the overriding court jurisdiction and the overriding federal legislation. Getting this right for the day-to-day Albertan, for the health care professional, for our communities and our families may be the most important thing that we do here.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much.

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

Mr. Rodney: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What I'm about to say comes with the greatest of respect personally, professionally, and politically. I trust that it will be taken in the way in which it is given. That said, I must say that I believe it is shocking that with fewer than 72 hours left in the spring session as scheduled, the NDP has tabled crucial documents directly related to the life and death of Albertans and dedicated a mere six hours to the most important decision of any person's life.

However, with humility, it may be said that in certain ways I've been preparing this speech for a long, long time in that my introduction to public speaking was in grade 7, when I was asked to deliver a speech to 555 junior high school classmates at a joint public and Catholic high school, and the topic was nothing less than the importance of the Hippocratic oath, for the medical profession to do good and do no harm.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to read the entire oath into the record, but since the government is granting limited time to this debate, I will refer to two excerpts only. The first:

> I will use treatment to help the sick according to my ability and judgment, but never with a view to injury and wrong-doing. Neither will I administer a poison to anybody when asked to do so, nor will I suggest such a course.

Secondly:

> Into whatsoever houses I enter, I will enter to help the sick, and I will abstain from all intentional wrong-doing and harm, especially from abusing the bodies of man or woman.

Mr. Speaker, quoting the Hippocratic oath in that public-speaking experience led to a couple of related degrees and a master's as well as a few decades in the school of hard knocks, which leads us to this day. When I couple experiences like these with reliable and trusted research, I'm actually quite calm and confident with what I am about to share with you here and now.

I'll start with this: Alberta's Overdue Assisted Dying Debate Is Too Little, Too Late. Not my words, Mr. Speaker. This is the dramatic headline from an article by Paula Simons in today's *Edmonton Journal* on the website. She uses phrases like "jaw-dropping" in reference to answers recently provided by the Health minister with respect to assisted dying.

She goes on:

> It's a telling comment, not just because of its seeming insensitivity, but because it underlines just how ill-prepared Alberta is . . .
>
> We are about to embark on a social, scientific and ethical experiment that redefines power relations between patients, doctors and the law. It's a tectonic cultural shift that may change, forever, the way we define self-determination, personal liberty and quality of life. Yet legally and politically, we're just not ready for this transition . . .
>
> But this debate? This is too little, too late . . .
>
> [The government] had a chance to show real moral and political leadership . . .
>
> Instead, we're getting some vague, rushed symbolic debate of "high-level" principles, principles that will allegedly guide regulations that have already been drafted.
>
> After that . . . it may take . . . another two to three weeks to get those regulations to the cabinet table, to be debated and passed by order-in-council. Assuming C-14, which doesn't even conform with the Carter rule, fails to get through the Senate before then, we'll be left in regulatory limbo.

Again, not my words. This is from the article in the *Edmonton Journal*.

Mr. Speaker, if that does not give members pause, perhaps this headline will: Experts Warn against Rushing Assisted Dying Bill through Parliament, by Colette Derworiz of the *Calgary Herald* from just yesterday.

> Experts gathered at the University of Calgary for Congress 2016 . . . suggested the law shouldn't be rushed, during a panel called The future of end-of-life decision making in Canada.

Their words:

> "It's unconscionable that the federal government is looking to put in a bill that will have to be challenged," said Jocelyn Downie . . . a professor of health-care ethics and law at the University of Dalhousie.

Mr. Speaker, the same applies to this provincial motion. It fails the fine people of our province, and I understand why Albertans will be outraged. It is unacceptable that the NDP is just now contemplating its plan for creating critically important parameters around medically assisted dying. This government has known for a year that creating parameters around assisted dying ultimately would fall to it, yet here we are, mere days before the Supreme Court deadline and at the very end of our spring session, cobbling together regulations for this most serious of acts. It's shocking. I dare say that if our former government tried to do something like this, the current government, perhaps the Official Opposition, other parties, and all Albertans would be screaming about this from the rooftops.

Let me be clear, Mr. Speaker, if I haven't been already. Whether or not the Supreme Court's decision takes effect after June 6 is a question that has already been answered. I am not debating that whatsoever. Instead, the issue at hand is whether or not the appropriate safeguards are in place to protect vulnerable Albertans;

to ensure that health professionals who have a conscientious objection to participating in any way with assisted death are respected and protected; to respect faith-based care facilities, which may have concerns with the practice; and to respect indigenous communities, which may need special assistance in dealing with spiritual concerns. Obviously, that's a partial list. Albertans may have many more concerns. Those are just some of the issues that Alberta needs to grapple with as it develops measures for implementing medical assistance in dying.

What about mental health support for families who will go through this extremely highly emotional and potentially psychologically damaging experience with their loved ones? What about ensuring that similar supports are available for doctors, nurse practitioners as well as nurses, pharmacists, and professional caregivers? There are many other outstanding issues such as: without national legislation in place, will Alberta's regulations more closely align with the federal government's plan for a more restricted and conservative approach, which offers greater protection to vulnerable Albertans? The federal legislation also proposes to restrict assistance in dying to those for whom death is reasonably foreseeable.

5:00

On the other hand, Alberta's regulations could run closer to the Supreme Court's liberal approach, which opens up assisted dying to mature minors, people whose mental illness causes them extreme anguish, and other Canadians who live with severe discomfort from a physical condition. The discrepancy is extremely troubling.

We cannot take these questions lightly, and we must take the time to answer these questions. A rushed debate in this House with the end result giving cabinet permission to make the final decision behind closed doors and then releasing it to Albertans as a fait accompli is unconscionable.

There are more hard questions, and I say this with respect, but it's true. This new cabinet does not have a great deal of experience. It's simply a matter of time. Other questions they will have to ask and answer include: what about whether patients can administer lethal drugs themselves or whether a physician has to perform this procedure? What about access to medically assisted dying outside of our large cities? The rural dynamic is completely different. A patient may have trouble finding two doctors in a small community to approve a request. Does this set up a double standard within the province of Alberta?

What about doctors who would prefer to see palliative care improved for their patients rather than having to offer them this choice? If their patient seeks a referral to a doctor who will perform the procedure, will they have to provide that referral? My heart is troubled when I think about this next question: does that make them complicit in their final act, and is this fair to them? These are extremely important questions, that Albertans are just starting to think about. So, colleagues, please: why shut this conversation down so quickly? Why limit it to just us, here and now, in this House?

Mr. Speaker, this government has already drafted these regulations. There is no way it could have started from scratch a year after it received notice that it was going to have to develop them let alone days before they are to be approved. So today this may be the most important question: why did the government choose to release the draft regulations for all Albertans to see and ponder and discuss only this afternoon? There can be no reason not to have made them public and to seek input on what was tabled today before today.

Yes, there was a panel. They didn't present these. We're not talking about a proposed text for a directive, a ministerial order, an order in council. We're talking about people's lives. We're talking about the loved ones of those Albertans facing an emotionally difficult experience. We're talking about professionals entering a new world of health care, if you want to call it that.

As legislators we understand the task at hand. It relates to determining the parameters of delivering this service to Albertans. What we in the Progressive Conservative caucus cannot accept is that this government left it so late that we are now pressured to offer cabinet carte blanche to ensure that they are done right and on time. Again, with great respect, Mr. Speaker, for many, many reasons, that I've been hearing about for a year, I do not think that Albertans – I'm going to phrase this very kindly – have had the time to build the trust in this government to make decisions like this for them at this time. I trust I'm being fair in that comment. So I ask again with great respect: will you please let all Albertans have some time to digest this? It's only fair.

Isn't it true, colleagues, that a short time ago no one referred to this as assisted dying? It was euthanasia or mercy killing. At the very least, our society needs some time to figure this out. To emphasize a reason for this, I quote a surprising source from a recent article in the *Ottawa Citizen*. The quote begins:

> While the Liberal government says time is of the essence in passing its assisted-dying legislation, former prime minister Paul Martin says what Canada needs is "a good bill," and that debate on the proposed law should not be "bound by arbitrary timelines."
>
> "I am like a lot of Canadians," Martin said.

That was on Thursday.

> "I think it's a very, very difficult subject. And if I just look at myself, I'm still just thinking it through. I think it's important we get it right, and that we don't be bound by arbitrary timelines."

That's the former Liberal Prime Minister of this country.

This goes far beyond any party lines, colleagues. Mr. Speaker, this is good advice for the federal Liberals, the provincial NDP, all Canadians, and all Albertans. I acknowledge that Alberta is legally required to develop regulations surrounding medical assistance in dying; however, I completely disagree with giving cabinet sole authority to develop the final regulations in secret and without fulsome debate in our province and in our Assembly.

As such, I cannot support the motion. Getting this wrong can be catastrophic for our society. I implore all members of our House: do the right thing and vote with . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Under 29(2)(a), the Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to engage through 29(2)(a) and to ask questions and also respond to some of the questions that were asked. First, I want to say that while the member complains about the debate starting today, I share his frustration that we are at the point where we're starting within the House today the discussions around this. Part of my frustration is caused by some of what's happened through the federal government in terms of delays. They themselves are debating their legislation this afternoon, but certainly their Senate process hasn't unfolded yet.

It certainly was my plan A that we take the time following Carter, which was decided under the previous government, actually. There was a timeline set by the Supreme Court on that, and then the extension, and then the federal legislation for ours to flow. Because the "what" is not to be debated in this House. The "what" has been decided by the Supreme Court, and most of the questionable points that have been raised already so far are, again, federal jurisdiction

around the "what," around criminal charges and so forth. The "how" is the provision of the health care service.

Certainly, there have been many discussions. I'm very pleased that the associate minister along with the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud and the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View were part of a committee that gathered feedback and met with many stakeholders throughout Alberta. There were over 15,000 Albertans who shared their feedback and did engage in a dialogue and discussion around this. As a response to those 15,000 submissions as well as the targeted stakeholder meetings there was a report created that was released publicly last week. It's the What We Heard report. It is 100 per cent sure that this is a very personal and very difficult discussion and decision, but the Supreme Court has made it very clear that the decision rests with the individual.

In terms of my questions, I guess, one of the questions that I would like to ask the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed is: did he engage in the last nearly 18 months since the Supreme Court decision with some of his stakeholders, constituents, and so forth either when he was on the government side or the opposition side to gather their feedback? Has he had a chance to review the What We Heard report, which I think is a very thoughtful synopsis of where Albertans stand on these issues today?

Clearly, we wanted to make sure that we had opportunity for debate. Yes, I wish we were in a position where the federal legislation had passed two months ago and we had two months in this House, if we needed it, to have that discussion. But the federal legislation is only being considered, finally, this afternoon. The Senate still has to do its process.

Certainly, I'm proud of the fact that we are having a public debate. Quebec and Alberta are the only two jurisdictions to actually have had a public debate before the June 6 scheduled deadline. I think we should be proud of that.

5:10

I think we should take this opportunity to talk about how the provision of the health care service is best to be delivered in Alberta, honouring that this is a very personal issue. We need to protect the vulnerable. We need to protect conscience rights, which means that nobody will be required to provide this service, only those that put their hands up. But I'm very proud that we have over 80 physicians included in every single zone across this province who have put their hands up saying that they are absolutely willing to be partners in supporting the individuals who do make this choice. They are not pushing this choice. Certainly, in terms of palliative care and home care that was in our platform, and those are areas that we intend to move forward on as well, Mr. Speaker.

I'm happy to hear the remarks from the Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

Mr. Rodney: And I'm so happy to respond. Sadly, time dictates that I have 70 seconds to answer these questions on life-and-death issues.

The "what" I'm not debating for a second. I made that clear in my remarks. The "how" is what I have a problem with. Yes, there were 15,000 people that responded to an online survey. With great respect, Madam Minister, they did not have hard copies of this. If they did, we would have a completely different conversation.

Yes, I have engaged many constituents not just over the past year but over my lifetime. I can say that honestly. Again, though, we didn't have these. This is the issue.

Have I had a chance to review the What We Heard report? Yes. It was tabled a short time ago. Again, that is based on what we see here. We need to move forward on this, and the fact is that there has not been time for this Assembly to even read these documents let alone for the public in Alberta to.

I have great sympathy for the fact that you're in this situation, but I believe that you have put yourself in this situation. If these had been drafted a long, long time ago, as you could have – you knew that this day was coming – then we would have a different conversation here. I honestly, with great respect, wish that we did have that time.

With that, I believe that we're out of time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, a very critical piece of legislation, in this case in the form of a motion, which was a surprise. But given the realities that we've faced in the last couple of years, in fact, I would echo some of what the minister has said. The previous government knew that this was coming three years ago. I raised it with a couple of former ministers of Health. They didn't want to touch it. They wanted to wait. The Supreme Court made a decision 18 months ago. Still no sign of action from the government of the day. What we're left with is a federal government that has not done its job in terms of making a timely decision and a provincial government that is also late in making the decision.

The reality is that Monday Alberta is going to change with the rest of Canada, and we're all going to be – as the minister says, the "what" is clear, that doctor-assisted dying will be a reality. The question is: are we going to have enough guidelines and regulations in place that both the physicians and the patients and their families can be confident that they know what to do, who to contact, how to go through the process and have confidence that if something goes wrong, there will be a process for accountability for the something that might go wrong?

What doctors have been doing for all of history is making decisions with their patients about whether assisting them with medical interventions is improving their dying or enhancing their living. That is a decision that every doctor has been making for eons. Do we intervene? In what way do we intervene? That is a discussion with every patient that is coming to those difficult, difficult end-of-life times. So this is really a question of prolonging living or prolonging the dying process and adding to the suffering of a person that has actually made a conscientious decision to stop the suffering or to stop living, in fact.

I was pleased to see these guidelines today, the regulations. That's the part that I think has created a lot of consternation. I, too, would love to have seen these last week or last month. We got them today.

Let me just say that the proposal that will amend the College of Physicians & Surgeons' standard of practice looks comprehensive in many respects. It deals with the essentials of who can give permission, who can give consent, what qualifications the physician must have. Again, it doesn't indicate a nurse practitioner, and there was a national discussion that nurse practitioners could also be involved with this. That's something we'll have to address at some point in the future. But the essence of these guidelines will require a physician – two physicians, in fact – to certify that the person is of sound mind and making a decision conscientiously.

The period of time for reflection isn't indicated here, but I can tell you that any physician that I've talked to wants to have a period of time when everything can be reviewed so the family and the individual and the appropriate health professionals can assure themselves that this is not something that is being made lightly and

that there are proper opportunities for the person to reverse their decision.

Issues like a medical examiner being involved in these unnatural deaths – any unnatural deaths are supposed to be referred to the medical examiner to make sure that it wasn't murder. Those are part and parcel of the regulations.

An annual review is identified in the regulations, which, again, gives me some assurance that the review committee after a year will look at the process and receive complaints from family members who say that it went poorly or that it went well but it could be improved. As in all cases of legislation and policy all of us want to see improvements over time.

What we know is that the majority of Canadians and Albertans want this support, and they want to have a clear path to get to the destination, which in rare cases will be physician-assisted dying. It may or may not be necessary in this document to specify whether the doctor has to be present at the time of death or whether just the family can be present and the medication self-administered. I don't see anything here to say whether the doctor's presence is required.

The other area that is so critical – I think others have brought this up – is protecting the vulnerable. Who are the vulnerable? They're people who could be coerced, that could be undermined by those in family or in close association who are after their money or after their estate or want to be relieved of the burden of caring for them. There has to be some real, rigorous attempts by the health care team to assess whether there's any degree of coercion on this individual to make a decision that they don't really want, that they're not really wanting doctor-assisted dying. That has to be properly reviewed and assessed.

From everything I've read, you know, people in palliative care – most of us will end up in palliative care in the last weeks or months of life. It's a very small proportion, perhaps 4 per cent, of those who are suffering and in the process of dying that actually avail themselves in the areas where they can in the world. Only about 4 per cent of those in terminal stages want assistance in dying. So this is not going to be, I would venture, a very common event, but it's something that we have to accommodate not only because of the Supreme Court but because, I think, the majority of Albertans and Canadians have said: we want more control over the nature and the timing of our death.

The final thing I want to say, I guess – and I will be supporting this motion, recognizing that there may be some gaps, there may be some improvements we can make, and that this will be an ongoing process of review. The final thing I want to say is that this can never be an excuse for weak palliative care. We have pockets in this province where there is almost no access to palliative care. We have an unequal system around the province and around the country. I think it's fair to say that there will unequal access to palliative care and there will be unequal access to physician-assisted dying. We have to make this as equitable as we can.

In the first instance we have to have top-of-the-line palliative care, which will prevent many requests for doctor-assisted dying. There's no question that if people are suffering mentally or physically or massive indignities because they can't get the proper nursing support for their bodily functions or they become so dependent and are not getting the supports that they need, then they will be more likely to ask for a quick death.

5:20

Having said that, there are clearly ways that we can support excellent palliative care. There are dedicated professionals whom I know are in palliative care and will not be involved in physician-assisted dying. Their role, their training, their focus is entirely on relieving suffering and helping people to die with dignity as much as possible but with all the supports that are possible now through the medical system. It is in fact rare that people would suffer in pain given the current drug regimes that we have. It's rare that people would not have the basic technical and material supports that they need, but it still happens.

I guess I would welcome the palliative care society, palliative care physicians and nurses, to weigh in on this and make sure that we as legislators, the Health minister particularly, know where the problems are in palliative care and that we do everything possible to ensure that people are not making this choice because it's a default from inadequate palliative care.

Dr. Starke: Experienced everywhere else.

Dr. Swann: Yeah. Exactly. It is an experience that all of Canada and all of the world struggles with.

With those comments, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat and look forward to hearing other perspectives on this.

The Speaker: Are there any questions of the hon. member under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to ask the hon. member: as the longest serving member here this evening in the Chamber how often has he seen the government give opposition members a technical briefing and a copy of draft regulations on a government motion in his experience?

Dr. Swann: This is unusual. Along with many of my colleagues we appreciate the fact that we can see some of these regulations and start to iron out some of the differences and have some debate, inadequate debate as it is. Possibly it will be inadequate no matter how long we spend at it. But to be fair, I guess we can debate this just as long as we choose.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Under 29(2)(a)?

The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Dr. Turner: I'm speaking to the motion, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

Dr. Turner: Thank you very much. The Supreme Court of Canada has decided that existing criminal law violates the right of Canadians to avail themselves of medical assistance in dying. By this coming Monday that ruling comes into effect. For that reason, it's very important that we move forward with our regulations now.

In its February 6, 2015, ruling, Carter versus Canada, the Supreme Court of Canada unanimously declared unconstitutional the Criminal Code prohibitions on physician-assisted dying as violating the individual's right to life, liberty, and security of person. We are committed to supporting the rights of patients who wish to use their right to access medical assistance in dying, as laid out in the Carter decision, while at the same time we're interested in enabling this in the way that is least polarizing and least intrusive. We're not taking a heavy hand to enforcement, and we must protect the vulnerable populations. This motion supports physicians who will be providing this service and supports patients who wish to exercise their right to medical assistance in dying. This is a deeply personal decision, and we will ensure that patients and their families are supported in getting the information they need.

In an effort to design a regulatory framework that meets the needs of Albertans and health care professionals, our government created

an MLA consultation panel to gather input from Albertans. I was on that as well as the Member for Calgary-Mountain View and the Associate Minister of Health. We collected feedback through online surveys, written submissions, and meetings with stakeholders while recognizing that medical assistance in dying is an important, sensitive, and very emotional issue for Albertans. As was said, the consultation included an online survey with over 15,000 responses and a request for submissions from stakeholder groups and community advocates, some of whom also met with the committee. Consultation varied across the spectrum of stakeholders, including medical professionals, religious groups, First Nations, legal professionals, and the general public.

The work was completed over the past year, and it was done so that Albertans had options and directions regardless of the outcome of the federal bill. Consequently, in creating Alberta's regulatory framework, our government will also collaborate with other provinces, territories, and the federal government. The public and organizational feedback and submissions will be considered, and we'll be engaging with Alberta Health Services, the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta, and others to develop the standards, measures, policies, and practices that meet the needs of Albertans and Albertan health care professionals.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Any questions for the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud under 29(2)(a)?

Dr. Swann: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I wonder if the hon. member could clarify for me one of the elements of the proposed standards, which I had hoped to raise and forgot. Subsection (4) under point 3 in the proposed text for order in council suggests that

> a regulated member [a physician] who receives an oral or written request from a patient for medical assistance in dying and who declines for reasons of conscience or religion to provide or to aid in providing medical assistance in dying must ensure that reasonable access to the Alberta Health Services care coordination service is provided to the patient without delay.

What is the care co-ordination service referred to here? Are you aware if there is an existing care co-ordination service, or is it just the 811 number that people dial to find a doctor who will participate? Are you aware of a care co-ordination service?

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. This is not the 811 Health Link number. This is, to my understanding, something that Alberta Health Services is developing to ensure that all Albertans have – in whatever part of the province that they live, whatever circumstances they are in, in whatever form of institution or in their home – access to this service when it becomes appropriate under regulation.

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

Dr. Swann: One of the issues that we must discuss at some point, I guess – the conscience rights of physicians is clear. If a physician is not prepared on the basis of conscience to participate, they should not be forced to. However, all publicly funded institutions, it seems to me, should be providing the service that the government of Alberta has provided on the basis of equality across the province. Can the member make some statement himself about how he feels about that issue and how we might have that discussion here and give some direction to the minister about how we as a Legislature feel publicly funded institutions should address the question of participation in physician-assisted dying?

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. I'm really not prepared to talk about the substance of your question. I would actually refer you to the standards of the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta, which deals with this situation quite clearly.

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

The hon. Member for Calgary-South East. I have your name here.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour, once again, to rise and speak to this. You know, it's oftentimes that we see in this House the best things of your elected officials. We can refer to things like the fire, and we can refer to things like the flood, where people come together because people's lives are immediately put at risk. We care deeply about our constituents most of all and this province and the reputation of the democratic process in choosing your elected official to speak on your behalf on the matters that are near and dear to your heart. You saw some of the emotion, my colleague from Calgary-Lougheed, and I think anybody in this House who doesn't think that this is an emotional debate – it would be interesting to hear why you would think it's not an emotional debate. Now, I hope, with the new minister that was named in terms of democratic renewal, that this is not the democratic renewal that you'll be imposing on this province for years to come, when we receive something like this, in a matter of hours to debate some crucial elements to these regulations.

5:30

I can speak as a front-line advanced care paramedic working in different regions of this province where we see the effects of mental health and how they play out. We can speak to it and, Mr. Speaker, I can say this: we can go back and blame everybody along the way, but this is your time. This is your watch. We watch it with you, but ultimately you'll make the decision. Now, there are front-line care providers out there that make the decision every day with do-not-resuscitate orders. Imagine a do-not-resuscitate order when you're there with that family – and some of my colleagues across the way in here have seen that – if you don't think that that has an impact on your mental health and the mental health of families and that it doesn't matter and if you think that those types of regulations and rules don't matter to families to make sure that they're properly implemented.

We are talking about now, in this era, something that you have done some good work on with other colleagues from across the aisle, like the hon. colleague from Calgary-Mountain View, on mental health. I can't imagine that we would live in a province where we would say and are saying that mental health is an incurable disease. Would we say that? I can tell you and based on personal experience that there are people out there today who want to end their suffering and their pain. What do we want to do, especially if they are our loved ones? We want to reach out and do everything we possibly can to help them, and this motion and these regulations play a big role in that. But now we are limited in that debate. It is not a matter of who is to blame; the time is now. These regulations will go on forever.

I'm discouraged by that, Mr. Speaker. I just can't imagine. But, yes, at the same time, I've been there and have watched the person pass away in front of my eyes with the loved ones around them, and it is not easy. It is not something easy to watch. It is not easy to watch somebody who is suffering in pain because of an illness that can't be cured, to watch them take the last breath of their life, to watch the light of their spirit pass away.

Here we are, and again I don't know if it's lack of experience. You know, I spoke to a group earlier today about kind of what we do in government and how the challenge of a leader is to understand, and it starts with knowledge. With knowledge, hopefully, you gain some wisdom, and with wisdom, hopefully, you have understanding. But we are bypassing some of those things to ultimately understand every aspect of how this will affect Albertans' lives and future generations to come.

Again, we need to make sure that we're doing everything we can before we get to that point. This, in my mind, limits that ability. We can change that. You can change that. Just like we've seen in the floods and previous disasters and times of crisis, we can come together. We can make it better, but we have to have an understanding of how you feel, how I feel, how families feel. Our constituents expect us to fight for these very things. Quite frankly, the federal government can do what the federal government will do, but I'll stand up for Albertans. I'll stand up for my constituents even in the face of federal law because we need to make it right for Alberta, for my children, for your children. This is important, and it reaches beyond regulations. It reaches into people's faith and their spirit and their soul. Six hours of debate on this issue: I think we can do better. I think we should do better.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Any questions under 29(2)(a)? Member for Calgary-Lougheed, under 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Rodney: Yes. It is under 29(2)(a). I want to thank my hon. colleague for his service not only in this Chamber but out there in the real world as an incredible leader and as a first responder. I don't know if in his time – part of this will be a comment, hon. member. I remember as a kid reading the book *Death Be Not Proud*. If you've read the book, you know it's about a young man, a very young man, in fact a boy, who had inoperable cancer. Everyone around that young boy was lamenting, moaning, sobbing. It was the worst thing ever. They wondered if the right answer was to ease his pain by taking it away. That little boy actually wrote what became a book about the incredible things that he learned through the experience of pain and suffering. He taught the people around him invaluable lessons that they will never ever forget.

A short time ago, this month as a matter of fact, a dear friend was in a terrible accident and was paralyzed from the waist down. The first days were very, very difficult. I think many people would not have blamed him if he had asked for this in those first few days. We've had incredible conversations in the last number of weeks now, and we've talked about people like Rick Hansen. We could talk about a gentleman that occupied that chair right there, the Hon. Kent Hehr. We all have dozens of examples of people who have done amazing things after getting through that time of incredible mental, physical, emotional, spiritual, cultural pain. Do we end things early, or do we allow the opportunity for people to deal with this? Do we get better as a society in assisting people through this time rather than ending this time?

The hon. member has been in the right place at the right time to save countless lives. In a couple of my professions I've had that opportunity as well, something I'll never ever stop thanking God for. I've also been there too late and picked up dead bodies and pieces of bodies. These are crucial realities that we face. Is there enough experience in this room to deal with issues like these without going to Albertans to consult with them?

The hon. Ed Stelmach introduced something called constituency week. The reason for that was so that people could get out from under the dome. The hon. Ralph Klein referred to it as dome disease. So deal with the policy as we must when trusted to do that, when it's incumbent upon us, but take what is an idea and deal directly with Albertans to find out if they think that we're on the right track or not, to be held accountable. I guess a question I'd have for the hon. member is: do we rush this through with less than 72 hours left in the spring session? What is the path forward in the time that we have left? I ask the hon. member with respect.

5:40

Mr. Fraser: Thank you for the question. You know, I looked at some of the people who were consulted on this very issue, and I notice the College of Physicians & Surgeons, the college of registered nurses, and the College of Pharmacists. One of the people left out, Mr. Speaker, was the College of Paramedics. We do know that there are general practitioners out there. We're called to those offices all the time when something goes wrong. There's nothing to that. In terms of that, we see that this process is flawed just in that very piece, particularly when you think about rural Alberta because if something goes wrong in a rural physician's office on this issue, who is going to get called? Paramedics. So they need to be consulted.

Further to that, we know that the government has been doing some good work on the Health Professions Act regarding paramedics. That would also be an important thing to pass along with these regulations to ensure that that regulatory body can deal with it because ultimately, like the member said . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I begin, I want to speak about the seriousness and just how incredibly important this debate ahead of us is. I want to just take a moment to reiterate some comments around the Legislature that we've heard already today about how disappointing it is, about how we got here. It seems that there's been one misstep after another, and while the government may have been trying to do the right thing, it appears, or I get inside of me a real concern, that this issue isn't getting the respect that it deserved.

You know, we have members from the government asking about technical briefings and how often it ever happened in the Legislature in the past. We're talking about a technical briefing that happened less than 30 minutes prior to the start of the debate, a briefing that the minister had to leave so she could go do a press conference on the regulations. So while I hope to take the government at their word that they are trying to reach out, all of their actions are not communicating respect. They're communicating rushed, poorly thought out lack of respect on such an important issue that is so personal to so many in the Assembly. I have to be honest. I didn't think that I would be rising to speak about this issue in this way.

Listen, I have heard a lot on this issue from constituents of the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, who elected me here – and I take pride and am humbled by that – to represent their concerns. I have chatted with them about the issue, but they don't know any of the parameters of the debate that's currently before us. That's because the information wasn't made available. The very first we had heard about this particular motion was in the middle of last week. Then we had the opportunity to see a draft of the motion on Friday, and then that motion changed over the weekend. This is a significant issue, and how we respond to some of the Supreme Court ruling and the federal legislation is of critical importance to so many who will be potentially accessing this service. The opinions are wide on how that should or should

not happen. But there are so many important things that we ought to consider that we shouldn't enter into this hastily, and we should enter into it respectfully.

This is an issue of magnitude, and the fact is that we've only just received this information on the specific regulations and the ministerial directives. I haven't had any chance to speak to constituents or stakeholders about some of the potential challenges. I want to try and do my best to share with the House some of the personal experiences and perspectives that some of those people have shared with me. I'm glad to at least have the opportunity, so I will thank the government. As mentioned, not every jurisdiction debated the issue at all, so I am thankful for that, and I'm humbled because the issue is of such significance for what's ahead. It's an issue that affects all Albertans. It affects all families and indeed society as a whole.

Since the debate began to unfold in the public sphere, I've heard from countless people expressing powerful and heartfelt opinions about this very issue and the impact that it will have. One thing that's become more clear to me as I've encountered so many personal stories and opinions about this topic is that it evokes personal convictions and deeply held beliefs. There are so many complexities and nuances to this decision that each deserves to be heard and explored. The gravity, the scope of the changes coming from the Supreme Court and the federal Parliament: it is essential that as legislators we do our best to get this right and represent all Albertans.

I think it's also important to note that every member of this House has likely agonized over the weight of what we have here to decide because even if an individual is speaking in favour of such an important motion, they also know full well that there are wide swaths of opinion inside their own constituency. Such open and free debate is perhaps the most important thing we can offer Albertans on this topic. We owe the province a transparent conversation that fully explores all facets of the issue because this is a matter of personal conviction and conscience.

I'd like to express my personal desire to see those conscience rights protected for health care professionals. I've spoken to so many physicians and health practitioners with moral and ethical objections, and certainly those need to be respected. I understand that there was recently a poll commissioned by the Canadian Medical Association that showed 63 per cent would personally refuse to perform the procedures themselves, and even more recently 29 per cent of those doctors surveyed by the CMA said that they also don't believe in referring. What we saw literally at 3 o'clock today is significant confusion inside the regulations about whether or not there is a requirement to refer. If in fact there is, are the conscience rights of that individual being compromised?

There are so many challenges around the administration of this choice that Albertans can make. I had the opportunity just recently to speak to a doctor who is a chronic pain specialist, and he spoke specifically about how there's no spot in any textbook that teaches you how to perform this act as part of care. So the question surrounds: are we, through the administration of this legislation, going to be creating new sets of standards for our health care providers, those that choose to engage in this? What are we doing to assist those that choose to provide the service, and how are we ensuring that it is done in the most appropriate ways possible? There are certainly going to be a lot more questions than answers, particularly given the parameters of how this debate has been set out.

5:50

We cannot ignore the input from our quality front-line practitioners, who work in the medical field day in and day out and see things with their very own eyes. I have to say on a personal note that I have spoken with doctors and health professionals who have told me that they cannot in any good conscience be part of any of this process.

I also had the opportunity just recently to speak to some professionals and community leaders in the area of palliative care. They are good, honest, hard-working health care workers who are anxious and worried and fearful about how they may or may not have to be involved in the process. When it comes to this process of palliative care, the Member for Calgary-Mountain View spoke about the challenges that we face in palliative care around this province. I can tell you that in the constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills there are, fortunately, groups of volunteers and individuals who are working in this field and taking on some of the burden of palliative care from the province. That's because they believe in that.

We need to ensure that those who are facing such an important decision also have the other options available to them so that this doesn't appear to be or doesn't become the only choice or feel like the only choice that Albertans have. Access to good palliative care and doctors and nurses who have good palliative care training as well as providing the tools that are necessary to our chronic pain doctors: sometimes in rural Alberta there isn't that opportunity, so it seems that assisted death is their only option. That is deeply, deeply concerning.

There are so many challenges, Mr. Speaker, and we've already come to the total amount of time that I will personally have to represent the constituents of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. The amount of time that any member of this Assembly can speak to a government motion is 15 minutes. We are nearing the end of that time, and I didn't even have the opportunity to speak more in depth about the palliative care aspect and the grief counselling that goes along with that. Palliative care workers have spoken to me about the fact that people that have lost loved ones say that they just wish they had one more day. How does that interface with a family member's choice and the rights of all involved in the process?

Unfortunately, we've seen the government make some decisions around this motion, which isn't a piece of legislation. If it was legislation, the debate would have been able to be much more robust and fulsome. I get that there are timelines and issues that are imposed by other jurisdictions, but June 6 comes on June 6 every single year. To try to rush this into just a few hours – you know, those palliative care individuals and doctors weren't even able to see the wording of the motion prior to providing comment to myself and to many of our colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, you need to know that this is an important issue that, it appears, is not going to get the respect that Albertans deserve on the issue. I believe that the government was trying to do the right thing by bringing it here in front of the Legislature, but all of the process other than that commitment has been flawed. I have to say that it's disappointing because there's a great group of constituents inside the constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills that are passionate about this issue on both sides of the debate. I haven't even had the opportunity to speak to some of those folks. I personally might not share their opinions, but I would love to be able to bring their opinions here to the Chamber on their behalf. But there isn't the amount of time that there ought to be.

I look forward to hearing my colleagues and members from the government speak about this issue, to seeing if there's a way that it can be unwound so that it can be treated in a way that puts the needs of Albertans ahead of the needs of the government.

The Speaker: Questions under 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Rodney: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe that the hon. House leader of the Official Opposition may have been in here at 3 o'clock, when the briefing occurred. I know that his colleague rushed in just after it started because he had just found out about the briefing, which had been on and off and back on again. I wonder if this hon. colleague knows that at that time we were presented with three documents: proposed text – again, it was stressed that this was proposed – for a ministerial order on a medical assistance in dying regulatory review committee; a second document, proposed text for a directive on medical assistance in dying care co-ordination service, June 2016; and proposed text for an order in council to amend the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta standards of practice on medical assistance in dying.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know if you're aware of this or not, but only one of my colleagues has received these documents. I ask this hon. member: did you receive these documents tabled here today? Did all of your colleagues? It is this that we're actually referring to, that Albertans wouldn't even have seen. That's question one. Have you received the documents that have been supposedly tabled today?

Secondly, you asked for – well, there is a need for more time to discuss palliative care and grief counselling. With great respect I'd ask: what are your thoughts on those three topics – the documents, palliative care, grief counselling – and whatever else you'd like to cover, hon. member?

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleague for the question. You know, I haven't seen those documents at all. I personally haven't. With respect, I know that my colleague from Cypress-Medicine Hat has received those documents. I do know that those documents were not tabled in the Chamber during the daily Routine today. I do find it a bit surprising, certainly, that that took place.

I know that the discussion around regulations and their presence here today will be a robust one because, you know, in the government it is rare for them to provide regulations. It's possible – and I'll take the government at their word on this one as well – that they say "draft" because there is the opportunity for feedback here in this place and then an opportunity to have those regulations changed.

Having said those fair statements, I think it is also fair and true that if that was the intention of the government, then there's no reason why we needed to do this on this timeline. So that is a significant concern, and again it runs the risk of this lack of respect for an issue that is so critically important, an issue that really reaches into the hearts and minds and souls of Albertans. In fact, I didn't even realize that there were three documents. I thought that there was only one document. To be in a situation where we're speaking on behalf of our constituents on information that's been shared inside the Chamber – how can we possibly debate this type of motion when there are lots of details around this issue?

When it comes to palliative care . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but it is 6 p.m.

The House will stand adjourned until 7:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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For inquiries contact:
Managing Editor
Alberta Hansard
3rd Floor, 9820 – 107 St
EDMONTON, AB T5K 1E7
Telephone: 780.427.1875

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