



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, November 21, 2016

Day 49

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 29th Legislature

Second Session

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

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

Party standings:

New Democrat: 55 Wildrose: 22 Progressive Conservative: 8 Alberta Liberal: 1 Alberta Party: 1

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Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
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Dang	Taylor
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Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

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Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
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Kazim	

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

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Kazim	

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Clark	Malkinson
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Drysdale	Rosendahl
Hanson	Woollard
Kazim	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, November 21, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us bow our heads and reflect and pray, each in our own way. Let us remember those who served our province in earlier years and who have now passed on. As current MLAs it is important that we learn from the experience of those before us and use that information to establish better public policy in service of our citizens.

Hon. members, as is our custom, we pay tribute on the first day to members and former members of this Assembly who have passed away since we last met. With our admiration and respect there is gratitude to members of the families who shared the burdens of public office and public service.

Mr. John McKenzie Thompson
March 22, 1924, to November 1, 2016

The Speaker: John Thompson served as the Member for Cardston for three terms, from 1975 to 1986. Born in California, Mr. Thompson spent most of his life in Spring Coulee, Alberta, running the family farm. In 1943 Mr. Thompson returned to the United States to enlist in the U.S. army. He fought in the Battle of the Bulge and was awarded the Bronze Star for meritorious service. After the war he served as a school trustee for the Cardston divisional school board for eight years and then for 11 years as a Member of this Legislative Assembly.

Ms Bonnie Mary Sheila Laing
March 30, 1937, to November 11, 2016

The Speaker: Bonnie Laing served as the Member for Calgary-Bow from 1989 to 2001. Prior to her election Ms Laing was an elementary school teacher for 26 years. During her service as a member Ms Laing's leadership abilities resulted in her chairing the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission, the Calgary housing committee, the Calgary caucus, and the health system funding review committee. Ms Laing received the Alberta centennial medal in 2005.

In a moment of silent reflection I ask you to remember Mr. Thompson and Ms Laing as you may have known them.

Hon. members and ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. Robert Clark. I would invite all to participate in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!
 True patriot love in all thy sons command.
 Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,
 Il sait porter la croix!
 Ton histoire est une épopée
 Des plus brillants exploits.
 God keep our land glorious and free!
 O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
 O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

The Speaker: Thank you. Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and to all members of this Assembly 33 brilliant students from St. Alphonsus elementary and junior high school. They're accompanied by their teachers, Mrs. Sheila Crane and Miss Kailee Smith. I would ask them to please rise now and accept the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a group of employees from the Advanced Education ministry. As a former public servant myself I know that the public service is filled with talented and dedicated individuals, none more so than the people who work for the Ministry of Advanced Education. I ask that they please rise as I read their names. We have with us today Susan Latham, Eric Martin, Mary Ann Haylalapit, Kelly Wiens, and Sue Gadag. I ask that all members of the Assembly give them the traditional warm welcome.

The Speaker: Welcome.

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

Loyola: Yes, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of my hon. colleague for Edmonton-Decore I'd like to welcome the students and staff of St. Vladimir school. The teachers who are here today are Dan Slupek and Vanessa Sibilla. I ask that the students and staff of St. Vladimir please stand and be recognized by this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other school groups?

I would then recognize the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we mark the beginning of Restorative Justice Week in Canada, it gives me great pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two dedicated individuals who are here on behalf of Alberta's Restorative Justice Association. I'll ask that they rise as I say their names and remain standing to the end. Jan Moran is the treasurer with the board of directors and has been a member of the association for 10 years. Fernande Bergeron is the secretary of the board and has been with the association for three years. The association provides information, education, and awareness towards best practices in restorative justice in Alberta. I would ask that the Assembly give them the warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all the members of our Assembly representatives from the Canadian Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation. Earlier this fall I met with the teams and these folks, who are committed and passionate advocates who work every day to support Canadians living with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis. There's no cure for this devastating disease that causes scarring on the lungs and makes it more difficult to breath each and every day.

Thank you to our guests for your tireless efforts. I'd ask that you all please rise and receive the warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie, do you have a second group?

Loyola: Indeed I do, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. It is my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly the Committee on Political Action at AUPE. Farris Sobhani and fellow committee members Mike Dempsey, Bruce Macdonald, Danielle Nadeau McMillan, Dustin Abbott, Henry Wakoluk, Ed Mullin, Peter Snowdon, Bill West, and John Lomas are committed to social action and promoting meaningful democratic participation. I'd ask Farris and all members of the Committee on Political Action at AUPE to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal.

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly individuals from two amazing groups who are here today to celebrate Career Month in Alberta, the Career Development Association of Alberta, or CDAA, and Women Building Futures. Career Month is a chance for Albertans to encourage and celebrate lifelong learning, career development, and professional achievement. The CDAA is a professional association of 300 proud members dedicated to providing employment and career services to a broad range of organizations, including government, nonprofits, and indigenous agencies. I'm very pleased that the CDAA's executive director, Paula Wischoff Yerama, could join us today as we celebrate their important work. We also applaud the work of Women Building Futures to encourage and support women to enter apprenticeships and careers in nontraditional trades and occupations. We welcome Kathy Kimpton, who is the new CEO. I would ask my guests to please rise and remain standing to receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other guests? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Carson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the staff team of Workplaces, an exciting new small business in the Edmonton-Meadowlark constituency. I'm very proud to introduce Bruce Baker, president and founder; Mitch Cammidge, managing partner; and Jen Garrison, business development lead. I want to commend Workplaces on their commitment to innovation, strategic planning, and partnership. Their approach to improving operational efficiencies and standards in business management will certainly contribute to positive growth in our business sector. I would ask that they please rise to receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Are there any other guests? Red Deer-South.

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly individuals from three more amazing groups who are here today to celebrate Career Month. Today we have with us Julian Daly and

Eric Bishop from Boyle Street Community Services, Shirley McBride from the McBride Career Group, and Steve McGean from the Bredin Centre for Learning. I would now ask my guests to receive the warm traditional welcome of the Assembly by rising.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the House Mr. Nolan Raber and his wife, Kayanne. If they could stand and please receive the warm welcome of the House. They are from my fine constituency of Grande Prairie-Smoky.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Any other guests?

Mr. Loewen: One more, yes. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House Erika Schofield, who is our receptionist and assistant in the Wildrose office. We see her lovely face every time we walk in in the morning, and it's great to see her here today. If you could rise and please accept the warm welcome of the house.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ministerial Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Hon. Peter Eric James Prentice, PC, QC July 20, 1956, to October 13, 2016

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last month all Albertans were united in grief and remembrance after the untimely and unspeakably tragic passing of former Premier Jim Prentice. In this House, where Jim served briefly but very well, the remembrance continues. We hear his name often wherever colleagues gather. Today I add my voice to theirs and remember with sadness and with gratitude a remarkable Albertan and a remarkable leader. On a personal level I am grateful for the friendly, thoughtful advice he shared with me during the transition of government, and my gratitude is shared on a much broader level. The people of Alberta and Canada have much to be grateful for a life that lived for public service.

Indigenous people found in him a genuine and sincere champion. Banking and industry courted his agile and practical business mind. Environmentalists could relate to the man, who called himself a green Tory. As the federal minister of environment he oversaw the greatest expansion of our national park system in almost 100 years. He also was an advocate for new pipelines to bring Alberta's energy to the world because Jim Prentice believed that people are equally served by the protection of our environment and by the progress of responsible development.

Still others recognized his commitment to human dignity, saw his empathy turned into action, and experienced his graciousness firsthand. Through education, hard work, and a vocation for making a difference, Jim Prentice left the coal mines of Alberta for the floor of the House of Commons, to the boardrooms of the nation, and, ultimately, for room 307 of the Alberta Legislature as our 16th Premier. But wherever he was, Jim Prentice carried with him his love of Alberta and his vision of our province's potential. It is why he volunteered in his community, it's why he supported the Children's Cottage through the Jim Prentice-Stephen Ames golf tournament for kids, and why he helped found the Calgary Police Foundation.

Jim Prentice cared passionately about restoring a relationship of respect between the government of Alberta and our province's indigenous people, and he was determined as well to restore a professional public service for the benefit of all Albertans. I'm honoured to be able to carry both of these priorities forward. As Premier he also introduced the first version of Alberta's child benefit plan to reduce inequality. Here, too, we are honoured to have been able to build on this initiative.

When a dedicated public servant is cut down in the prime of his life, it is a reminder to us all that in the sometimes rough world of politics we must never lose sight of the humanity, the dedication, and the contribution of each of our colleagues. It is a charge to us all to carry forward the best of Premier Prentice's work, and that is exactly what all of us in this Legislature, I believe, are determined to do, Mr. Speaker. I believe that it is one of the best ways that we can pay a lasting tribute to the Premier we all knew as a friendly, thoughtful, and dedicated leader and dedicated public servant. I believe that seeing his legacy in action will be a continuing comfort to the Prentice family and indeed to all Albertans.

We also remember that his final flight was not made alone. Other families are grieving, and we share our thoughts and our condolences with them in their sorrow. I ask this House to remember all the victims of this tragedy, including the one we knew best, Jim Prentice: leader and friend, Premier and visionary, and always a proud Albertan.

Thank you.

Mr. Jean: I rise today to pay respect to the life and legacy of my former colleague Jim Prentice. Jim had a storied career in politics that took him from his home province of Alberta, that he loved so much, to Ottawa for seven years, but I know that his heart, even in Ottawa, was always here in Alberta. At the federal level it was an honour to serve with him in caucus and to run against him provincially in the 2015 election. I always respected that at his core it was his love for his province that called him to serve. Jim was also a good hockey player, and we spent more than a few Tuesday nights in Ottawa playing some very aggressive shinny.

What I respected the most, though, about Jim was the love that he had for his family, and that is the gaping hole that has been left behind with his sudden passing. Everyone in this House here today knows that a life in public service isn't meaningful without also having an excellent home life. That is what grounds you and reminds you of why we serve here. Jim never lost sight of that, and he never lost sight of being a great husband, a great father, an excellent grandfather, and a pillar of his community. He was so proud of his children and his grandchildren.

My heart aches for Jim's wife, Karen, his daughters and their two partners, and, of course, his two grandchildren. A sudden loss of any family member is never easy, but my prayer is that the memory you have of Jim provides you with comfort during this exceedingly difficult time.

I also want to take a moment to recognize the three other men that were lost in the plane crash and their families and their loved ones, who are also grieving from this sudden, tremendous loss in their lives.

1:50

In this Chamber and federally Jim demonstrated the nobility of public service. In the coming days, weeks, months, and years I will be guided by that legacy of civility and serving for the betterment of all Albertans.

Jim, we miss you, and we will continue to try our best to make our province, that you loved so much, even better tomorrow than it is today.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to seek unanimous consent from the House to provide an opportunity for a representative of the Progressive Conservative Party as well as the MLAs for Calgary-Mountain View and Calgary-Elbow to respond to the ministerial statement.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: The leader of the third party.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also want to thank the hon. Premier and the Leader of the Official Opposition for your touching tributes. I'm honoured to rise on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus and Progressive Conservatives across Alberta to remember the Hon. Jim Prentice. His death last month came as a terrible and incredible shock to all who knew him. Even today it's just a little bit hard to believe he's not here with us.

We've had a few weeks now to reflect upon the man that Jim was and the remarkable legacy that he left behind. From Jim's humble roots in the coal mines of the Crowsnest Pass to serving as Alberta's 16th Premier, Jim's values of faith, family, and public service guided every day of his life. While he may have spent his first 12 years in Ontario, it's well known that he quickly fell in love with Alberta when his family came here in search of a better life.

It was this love for our province and its people that fuelled his relentless pursuit of leaving everything he became involved with just a little bit better than he found it. Whether it was as Prime Minister Stephen Harper's right-hand man, minister of the environment that he cared so much about, minister of Indian affairs and northern development that he cared so much about, vice-president of the CIBC, or the 16th Premier of Alberta, Jim's drive was always aimed to make those things better than he found them. I believe that it was his innate ability to bring other people together for a common purpose that helped him achieve that very goal.

Mr. Speaker, I experienced this first-hand following the PC leadership campaign in 2014. Despite the fact that Jim and I were rivals in this contest, he invited me to be part of his cabinet after the votes were tallied because, to him, doing the best for Albertans meant putting political differences aside and working together. The Member for Calgary-West sometimes says that he is here as a direct result of Jim Prentice.

Mr. Speaker, Jim showed all of us that doing the right thing isn't always easy and isn't always popular, but that should never stop any of us from trying to do the right thing. He dedicated his life to trying, and in my humble opinion, Alberta has gained much from Jim's efforts.

Our thoughts continue to be with Jim's wife, Karen, their daughters, grandchildren, and the entire Prentice family, and the families of three others whose lives were lost at the same time as Jim lost his. Words cannot express how sorry we are for all of those families and their loved ones.

Our hearts break for the loss of a leader who had so very much left to give. Rest in peace, Jim.

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The passing of Jim Prentice and three others in the tragic airplane crash last month is a loss to us all. Jim's story is quintessentially Canadian, the blue-collar son of a hockey player who worked the mines to pay for law school, a lawyer who chose to direct his career towards the most challenging and perhaps least glamorous area of Canadian law, helping First Nations. Jim was a statesman whose principles

demanded his participation in the public sphere, both federal and provincial, and whose talent brought him to the highest levels. Above all, Jim was an Albertan who saw his province in need and returned to make peace where there was division and unrest.

Jim and I disagreed on many things – after all, he was a Conservative and I'm a Liberal – but our ridings overlapped, and on the occasions where we worked together, I saw what so many had. Jim was kind, earnest, hard working, intelligent. His constituents had no greater advocate than Jim.

For Jim's family he was a devoted father and husband rather than the great politician the rest of us knew, and his passing is certainly one of personal tragedy. Their home is a stone's throw from my own, and I know our community has mourned with the family. Words, of course, are insufficient, but please know that you, the family of Jim, are in our hearts, thoughts, and prayers.

The world is changing quickly, and there are tumultuous times ahead for Alberta and for all of Canada. Jim's passing has taken from us someone whose guidance, patience, and experience will be missed sorely. I believe, though, that his legacy as coal miner turned lawyer turned statesman will inspire in us all a belief that we're all in this together, and it is celebrating our differences, not trumpeting our similarities, which makes Jim Prentice's Canada strong and free.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Clark: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to rise to recognize the life and contribution of former Premier Jim Prentice. I want to first send my most heartfelt condolences to his wife, Karen, his daughters, his grandchildren as well as his family and legislative colleagues both in this House and in Ottawa. I also want to remember the three other families who lost loved ones in this terrible tragedy.

Jim's life was dedicated to serving the people of Alberta and Canada. He believed in the importance of political engagement, whether that was through volunteering in his community as a young man, seeking elected office, or working as a lawyer, where he turned his talents to helping people who needed his expertise. Throughout his legal career he fought for the rights of those around him, whether it was through land claims negotiations while working closely with First Nations, working with the Sikh community to build a gurdwara in northeast Calgary, or defending the rights of same-sex couples across Canada. Jim Prentice was a man who held the courage of his convictions. He was one of the few Conservatives to vote in favour of same-sex marriage in the face of strong opposition. He did so because he knew it was right.

He was more a traditional legislator than a true politician, which perhaps is the highest compliment that could be paid in a time of increasing polarization. He believed politics should be used to influence policy, not just win the day for the sake of power for power's sake.

Jim was also a mentor to many young people, and that mentorship continued after his political career because he knew he could help young people become the leaders of tomorrow to keep our province and our country strong.

Through his tireless efforts Jim Prentice left a legacy that will benefit Canadians for generations to come. He will never be forgotten.

The Speaker: Hon. members, on your collective behalf I have been in communication at various times over the last weeks with the Prentice family. As we all have appreciated in your comments today, they've experienced extraordinary grief. The family has

asked that I express to you their appreciation for the kind remarks they have received from all parts of the House. It meant very much to them. I indicated to them that at any point in the future when they have the strength to come back to this House, I would be facilitating that process. So from the family to all of you: thank you.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Deaths of Children in Kinship Care

Mr. Jean: Serenity was a shy girl with dark hair and big brown eyes. She was active and liked to climb and play. But after being placed in kinship care and despite the repeated warnings of Serenity's birth mom, Serenity died bruised, beaten, malnourished, and suffering from hypothermia at only four years old. She was a victim of a broken system, a system that has time and time again been promised to be reformed, to be fixed without any success. To the Premier: what are you going to do to ensure Serenity's story of suffering is never ever repeated in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

2:00

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member opposite for raising this matter. This is a very serious matter. There's not a soul who could have read the story that he describes and not been moved and deeply troubled by the experience of that child. I know that there are a lot of people who spent this weekend being very, very, very troubled by that story.

We are continuing to do the work that we think is necessary to improve the role of the provincial government in protecting all young people in the province. A lot of work has already happened since that particular tragedy took place, but it doesn't mean that it's done. It's not done; it's ongoing, and we all have to work together to bring about success.

Mr. Jean: The injustice of Serenity's final year wasn't laid out in the Child and Youth Advocate's report, it wasn't highlighted by the Justice department, and we have yet to see the medical examiner's report. The fact is that we know what we do today about Serenity because of an *Edmonton Journal* column. A system that operates in secrecy is going to continue to fail our children. To the Premier: where was the report from the medical examiner, where was the report from the Justice department, and why didn't the Child and Youth Advocate present the full picture of Serenity's life in care?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the member for those questions. Indeed, those were the questions that I asked myself when I read the report in the *Edmonton Journal*, but unfortunately what we are advised is that because the matter is still under active criminal investigation, the medical examiner was asked not to disclose or release the report. Hence, the OCYA went off and wrote the report that he did. Work continues on this matter, and we are committed to ensuring that the tragedies experienced not only by Serenity but by other children in the system are properly addressed.

Mr. Jean: While in opposition this Premier highlighted the fundamental job of protective services, and I quote from her: "We care for those who are least able to care for themselves." Serenity was not taken care of. Serenity was physically and sexually abused by those who were supposed to care for her. She was 18 pounds

when she died, and this happened in part because in the final 11 months of Serenity's life no workers checked in on her. To the Premier: what immediate steps and changes will be made to the system so that what happened to Serenity never happens again to another child in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, those are very appropriate questions. I'm advised that after that event occurred, indeed, work has already been ongoing to improve oversight of kinship care placements, to increase resources in that area. As you would know, our government put more money into that area in the last budget because we know that this is a big problem and that more work needs to be done. We will be vigilant, and I know that the people who work on the front lines try every day to keep children safe, and all Albertans need to be focused on that.

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

Electricity Power Purchase Agreements

Mr. MacIntyre: Thank you. When last we sat, the Leader of the Opposition asked the Premier an easy question, one that she should have answered with ease and confidence. She should have shown that she understands that when governments talk about using legislation to change 16-year-old contracts, investors get worried and avoid Alberta. So let me repeat the question: will the Premier assure investors that she won't turn Alberta into a banana republic that uses legislation to forcibly rewrite long-standing contracts?

Ms Notley: Well, I think, Mr. Speaker, that one thing we all do know is that if there is ever a situation where on one side corporations are looking for massive profits and on the other side stand the people of Alberta, we're pretty clear on where the folks on that side will land, and it will not be on behalf of the people of Alberta, which is what our government is doing. We are standing up for Albertans, we are standing up for Alberta consumers, and we will do all that is necessary to get the best outcome for them that we can.

Mr. MacIntyre: For over a week this Premier has been asked about the government's threats to use legislation to change the power purchase arrangements that exist between power companies. These PPAs have served Albertans well since 2000. Sometimes they're profitable; sometimes they run at a loss. All of them include a provision that if the government changes the law and intentionally makes a PPA unprofitable, the buyer can return it. Will the Premier commit to never using legislation to break long-standing negotiated contracts between companies?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, one thing I can say is that our government absolutely supports standard change-of-law clauses in contracts. Those are completely reasonable. That's not actually the matter that's at issue in this case, however. Nonetheless, as I've said before and will continue to say until the matter is resolved, we are going to do everything we can to stand up for Albertans.

Mr. MacIntyre: The government ripping up a long-standing contract between businesses is something that is completely unacceptable in a free economy. The PPA the government is suing over is a contract between Enmax and TransAlta and the Balancing Pool. The government is not even a party to this contract. Doesn't the Premier understand that when her government threatens to use law to change other people's contracts, she fundamentally threatens

all business and investment across Alberta? Why is she trying to drive away investors?

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, what's really important is that investors who are looking at putting their money into Alberta should know that they should be able to understand what the utilities, what the supports are for them. They should be able to go to transparent places – regulations, OICs, reports – and know: oh, this is exactly what it looks like. When it doesn't look that way, that also undermines investor confidence. We are working to improve investor confidence and also to support Alberta consumers.

The Speaker: Third main question.

Energy Policies

Mr. MacIntyre: Today we have another Trudeau announcing that he's going to stick his nose in Alberta's energy business yet again. Without consulting several of the provinces impacted, he unilaterally announced that he would accelerate the feds' own coal shutdown timeline to 2030. Of course, for an NDP government already committed to destroying jobs in our coal industry and disregarding technology advances, they don't seem all that concerned. Can the Premier explain to Albertans whose livelihoods will be destroyed why they are letting Ottawa mandate our policies?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, that is deeply ironic because the members opposite would like us to forgo our climate leadership plan so that Ottawa could write our policies for us. We're not doing that. We have a made-in-Alberta plan. We have a plan that's way ahead of Ottawa's. We have a plan that has worked with Alberta businesses, Alberta consumers, Alberta communities, that will work for Albertans because we take our job seriously, unlike the folks across the way.

Mr. MacIntyre: This NDP government's reckless agenda against our electricity sector is doing serious damage. They're threatening to rewrite legislation that governs our whole power industry. They've declared war on Alberta-owned power companies but somehow believe they can still bring in \$10 billion of new investment out of thin air, I guess, and they're shutting down our coal industry, happy to have Ottawa's blessing now. How can any Albertan possibly trust this government to manage our economy?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, economic leaders throughout the world are actually getting out of coal because they understand that it is not the future of economic growth, unlike the folks over there. That being said, we have worked closely with coal producers. We made a commitment when we said that we would phase out coal to work with them to ensure that capital was not left stranded. We are engaging in good-faith conversations with them because that's what you do in a responsible way when you make hard decisions in order to bring about necessary, long overdue change, and that's what we will do on behalf of all Albertans.

Mr. MacIntyre: Alberta has six coal plants that can operate efficiently well past 2030. There is no guarantee from this NDP government that we will be able to provide enough power to our grid without significant rate increases for consumers, businesses, and families. Alberta should be negotiating exemptions. Instead, the NDP are celebrating the shutdown of an industry that thousands of Albertans rely on for their livelihoods. The only thing the NDP doesn't celebrate, of course, is the idea that America is going to approve Keystone. Why won't the Premier negotiate exemptions

for Alberta instead of letting Ottawa dictate changes to our power grid?

Ms Notley: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite really doesn't understand his file. To be clear, the member opposite would have us do nothing so that Ottawa told us exactly what to do. Instead, what we've done is that we've worked with our stakeholders in Alberta and we've negotiated what works for Alberta because that's what a good government does.

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

2:10 Electricity Power Purchase Agreements (continued)

Mr. McIver: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. It was good to have a constituency week. It provided time, for example, for government cabinet ministers to talk to Albertans, and as a result I have some questions. We have learned, for example, that cabinet has already approved, in principle, legislation to retroactively change the PPA agreements from 16 years ago, and Albertans deserve to know the details. To the Premier. Since your cabinet is talking about approving this move, please share with this House and all Albertans today: what are the details of the upcoming PPA?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, the premise of the member opposite's question is absolutely false, and therefore I have really nothing more to offer.

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, perhaps we'll try this. We know that cabinet ministers have been talking some more, and we are pretty certain that the government has made a settlement on the PPAs with Capital Power. Since Alberta taxpayers and Alberta electricity customers will pay for this agreement, again to the Premier: please share with this House and all Albertans details of your agreement with Capital Power and how much it will cost Albertans.

Ms Notley: Again, Mr. Speaker, as I've said before, our government will work very hard to get the best outcome for Albertans and for Alberta consumers that we can, and when we are at that point that we believe we have reached the best outcome for Alberta consumers that we can get, we'll be happy to speak more on it.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We also know from cabinet members that the Balancing Pool for electricity is losing in the neighbourhood of \$70 million to \$90 million a month, and two out of the three Balancing Pool members have resigned due to inappropriate interference by this government. To the Premier: how much will Alberta electricity customers and taxpayers pay for your government's gross mismanagement of the PPA and the mess that the Balancing Pool is in now?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, first of all, I reject once again almost the whole premise of the member opposite's question. But what I will say is that, generally speaking, electricity in Alberta, the market, is in tough shape because of the deregulated energy only market system that the members opposite put in place as part of a risky ideological experiment which, quite frankly, is not working. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order, please.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Fentanyl Overdoses

Dr. Swann: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Despite frequent calls from public health experts and the opposition, the government has decided not to call a public health emergency in relation to the fentanyl crisis, stating that it's able to effectively fight the emergency without such powers. Last week in a joint statement released from Ottawa, B.C., under a declared public health emergency, committed to release monthly data tracking, one, illicit drug overdose deaths, two, the proportion of deaths where fentanyl is detected, and, three, nonfatal overdoses requiring emergency response. Given that the associate minister has said that she already has such data, will she now tell us the number of opioid overdoses reversed through naloxone . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Certainly, the information that the hon. member has listed is now available online on Alberta Health's website. We've committed to releasing quarterly reporting on the opioid crisis and other substances of misuse, and we're open and transparent with the public on the trend data. We feel it's really important to make sure that that data is accurate so that we're able to allocate our resources in the appropriate way because we cannot sacrifice the lives of Albertans for this PR exercise of more recently released numbers. We want those to be accurate numbers. Also, data . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Dr. Swann: To the associate minister again: are the number of naloxone reversals increasing or decreasing since the last report?

The Speaker: The hon. associate minister.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the opportunity to answer the rest of the question. As of September 30 over 6,400 naloxone kits have been distributed to Albertans, and the reported number of usages is over 400. We know that that is an underinflated number, however, because not everyone is reporting the usage of the kits. In the time frame that the member is asking about, for the first half of 2016 there were 3,752 emergency room visits relating to opioid overdoses that have been reversed.

Dr. Swann: And that's not an emergency?

Overdoses, in reporting from emergency departments, have now reached approximately 25 per cent of all emergency visits for drug use. Can the minister tell us whether they're increasing or decreasing?

The Speaker: The associate minister.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We have found that as this crisis is continuing, the number of visits is seeming to increase. We are continuing to keep tabs on those numbers, and we are working hard to ensure that treatment is making its way into the hands of people who need it. We are working with our partners in the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta to expand access to opioid dependency treatment, which is the best practice for treatment for people with opioid addictions. Additionally, we are working very diligently on the harm-reduction

file, including supervised consumption services across our province.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

Agricultural Environmental Programs

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Farmers agree that we all have a role to play in protecting our environment, but producers have told me that they are concerned about the impact of the upcoming carbon levy on their operating costs. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: what is the government doing to invest in agriculture and to help farmers, including those in Leduc-Beaumont, protect our environment, and keep these farms sustainable and our farming communities vibrant?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member for the question. Last month I was proud to announce \$10 million in funding to help producers reduce their emissions and become more efficient in the process. This includes an enhanced on-farm energy management program, that will cover up to 70 per cent of capital purchases, up to \$750,000; an on-farm solar program; an irrigation efficiency program; and an accelerating agricultural innovation program to help food processors become more efficient. But this is just the first step. We're committed to working with our producers to become even more efficient and competitive than they already are.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that past agricultural sustainability programs have proven to be in high demand, to the same minister: how many producers will this program help, and how quickly can producers begin accessing it?

Mr. Carlier: Mr. Speaker, it's important to note that these programs are already being delivered through the joint provincial framework known as Growing Forward 2. This gives us the ability to move forward quickly, more quickly than building programs from scratch. Producers are already familiar with these programs, so we're confident we can provide supports immediately. The number of producers accessing the program will depend on the applications. My department is committed to work with producers big or small, to process applications in a timely manner. We'll monitor the uptake as we move forward.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta's climate leadership plan provides a made-in-Alberta approach to deal with the threat of climate change, to the same minister: how will you ensure that Alberta producers remain competitive, efficient, and well positioned compared to other jurisdictions?

Mr. Carlier: Mr. Speaker, I've had the pleasure to talk with producer groups across the province: the Greenhouse Growers Association, the crop sector, chicken and pork producers, to name a few. They are supportive of our most recent commitment. They're also supportive of the carbon levy exemption on marked gas and diesel, but they understand that the recently announced funding is a first step forward and more is to come. By Alberta's moving forward, our producers will be a step ahead of producers in other provinces that choose to not act to address emissions that lead to climate change. We're committed to an ongoing dialogue, to work

with producers, and to address agriculture emissions. By doing so, we'll have a more competitive, efficient industry in the years . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Deaths and Injuries of Children in Care

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, a child in care deserves to be safe. What happened to four-year-old Serenity while in kinship care couldn't have been further from a safe place to grow up. While in kinship care Serenity withered away, and for the last 11 months of her life no one was even checking in on her while she was being beaten and starved. To the Premier: what are you doing to protect our kids in care?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. These are certainly heartbreaking losses, and our thoughts are with those who loved and knew these young people. We have taken the recommendations made by the Child and Youth Advocate very seriously, and we have accepted them in full. We will work with the advocate to make sure that these are implemented in letter and spirit, and we'll be able to avoid similar incidents happening in the future.

Thank you.

2:20

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, given that promises to reform our system and promises of transparency have not worked – the only reason we have additional details about Serenity's passing is because of a column by Paula Simons – and given that the advocate has detailed several recommendations over the past two years which could have saved Serenity's life, to the Premier: why are you not taking action on these reports?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. In all cases we make sure that we protect the identity of the family, the child, and their loved ones, and there's no exception to that. At the same time families can choose to grieve the way they like. As I said, we have accepted the recommendations made by the office of the Child and Youth Advocate, and we will make sure that systemic improvements are made so that similar incidents can be avoided in the future.

Thank you.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, the Child and Youth Advocate only investigates when something devastating has happened in our system. Given that we need to be fixing the system before it gets to the point where light is shed by the Child and Youth Advocate because of abuse, malnourishment, or death and given that there have been many others who have died in government care during this government's term, will the Human Services minister commit to adopting the advocate's recommendation and fix this broken system before we get another report?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. I can tell all Albertans and this House that we have accepted every recommendation the advocate made to this government, and we are taking action to make sure that his recommendations are implemented. For members' knowledge, I will add that we provide a death and serious injury report to the

advocate for every death and every serious injury, and as an independent officer he can choose to investigate whatever he deems fit.

Thank you very much.

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

Balancing Pool Board of Director Resignations

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Energy will recall that I rose in this House on November 3 to ask her if she was aware of any resignations in any of the agencies for which she's responsible. She rose to state, "I'm not aware of any resignations this week." Now, the Balancing Pool sent out a press release dated the very same day, November 3, indicating that two of its directors, including the chair, had tendered their resignations. I understand that they tendered their resignations to this government several days before their press release went out. Will the Minister of Energy clarify for the record when she and her office staff became aware of these resignations from the Balancing Pool?

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you for the question. At the time the hon. member asked me, I was not aware. Later that afternoon I received the letter of resignation.

Mr. Rodney: Given the understanding that the two Balancing Pool directors resigned several days before the Balancing Pool sent out a press release regarding their resignations and that the Balancing Pool was forced to send out their own press release because the government would not announce their resignations, will the minister explain to this House and to all Albertans why this government did not announce their resignations and why it left it up to the Balancing Pool itself to break the news instead?

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you for the question. As I mentioned, at the time of asking I was not aware of any letter. The letter: I'm not sure where it was sent first, but it did make its way to my office later that afternoon. That's all I know. The reasons given were that it was at the end of this month, and that's all I am aware of.

Mr. Rodney: Mr. Speaker, I wasn't just talking about the resignations; I was talking about the press release.

Given the understanding that the two Balancing Pool directors who tendered their resignations resigned because they were fed up with this government's political meddling in the affairs of the Balancing Pool, including the NDP's ill-advised PPA lawsuit, will the minister rise to explain how this government justifies its interference in the affairs of the Balancing Pool, an agency that's supposed to be free from political meddling, and can she tell Albertans if the only remaining member of the Balancing Pool has also tendered their resignation? If so, who, if anyone, is tending to the ever-important Balancing Pool here in the province of Alberta?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you for the question. In advance of any resignations we're aware of, we were out getting new applications in for the Balancing Pool and continue to do that. We do have an interim person in place right now until we get that person. If there is another resignation, I'm not aware of it, and I would question why the hon. member across knows this in advance of myself.

Member's Change in Caucus Affiliation

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, nearly two years ago some members of this House had choice words for those who crossed the floor from

opposition to government. For instance, the NDP leader said that both sides were, quote, guilty of betraying the people who voted for them. She also called it, quote, a betrayal of the parliamentary process and democracy itself while noting that they must have been doing a poor job in opposition if they had to join the government. Is the Premier now comfortable with betraying the voter as long as she is the one who benefits?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. In this specific case that the member is referring to, we've seen a party that has abandoned any sense of being a voice for practical, moderate policy in the province of Alberta. In turn, the people of Alberta are looking to the government – that is, an NDP government – when they have a choice between a rash, hateful, mean ideology and one that's inclusive and embracing and respectful. We see where people are moving.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, no. Voters in Calgary are left frustrated and deeply hurt that their voice in government has been misrepresented.

Given that we've seen the NDP government taking radical action against business and investment and seeing that piles of new taxes and regulations are crippling the Alberta economy, driving Calgary's unemployment past 10 per cent, and since NDP support is in free fall, can this government honestly say that they are honouring the voters by turning an opposition voice into just another booster of the damaging NDP world view? [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members, please.

The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Member for Calgary-North West has a long tradition of standing up for her constituents, and no matter what side of the house she's been on, she's been very pragmatic, focused on outcomes, and problem solving oriented. We've been able to accomplish a lot in a really thoughtful, pragmatic way when she was on the other side of the House, and I'm sure she will continue to serve the constituents of Calgary-North West with respect and honour. She is a welcome member of our caucus.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I've been reminded. As I look at the notes, I do hope your supplemental questions are with respect to government policy rather than any other matters.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On this side of the House we believe Albertans have the final say, not the politicians. Given that elected members should remain accountable to their constituents at all times and given that the Premier herself said that previous crossings to the government were a betrayal of accountability, will the Premier agree with the Wildrose that voters . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member. [interjections] Hon. member, I don't believe you hit the target in terms of government policy.

The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. No matter who leads the opposition, whether there be many parties or not, we know that a progressive, moderate choice that makes Alberta move forward as opposed to an extremist, reactionary choice that's hell-bent on dragging Alberta back into the last century is the direction that the province of Alberta is moving on, and we are proud of that. On this side of the House we believe that climate change is real, on this side of the House we believe that protecting health care and

education is of utmost importance, and on this side of the House we believe in diversifying our economy, having good, stable jobs, and supporting families.

Mr. Cooper: Point of order.

The Speaker: Noted. [interjections] Hon. members.
The Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

2:30

Carbon Levy

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP's ideological carbon tax will increase the economic burden on many aspects of the public and private sectors, not only from stalling growth but from prohibiting it. From postsecondary institutions to municipalities, all will suffer some kind of loss. I want to know if the NDP government has counted the cost for our postsecondary institutions. To the Minister of Advanced Education: can you please tell us how much this tax is costing universities and where you expect them to get the money from?

The Speaker: The Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you. I find it hilarious, actually, that the member opposite, who represents a party that wants to cut billions of dollars from every sector of the public service, including postsecondary, is asking me to provide the costs to postsecondary education of the carbon tax. As soon as he comes clean with his plans for postsecondary education, Mr. Speaker, we'll talk about where we're giving the money to them. [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members, all of the energy earned in the last 10 days is clearly demonstrating itself in the House today.

Mr. Taylor: I suppose that means that he doesn't have a clue or that he hasn't done an economic impact study.

Given that institutions are likely going to have to cut wages, staff hours, and invaluable courses due to the government's risky policies, to the Minister of Advanced Education: how does the government expect institutions to deal with the rising cost of inflation, a massive new carbon tax, a tuition freeze that many students and universities aren't on board with, and still deliver world-class education?

The Speaker: The Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that the students will remember in the next election that the members opposite are advocating for skyrocketing tuition increases, which, of course, students in this province are very much in favour of as well as their parents.

What we have committed to is predictable, sustainable funding for every university and college in this province, and we've delivered on that promise.

Mr. Taylor: No. Rate of inflation is what we're talking about.

Given that at the AAMD and C I heard that municipalities are very concerned about the carbon tax and will have to pass the buck on to taxpayers and given that municipalities are already having a hard time collecting taxes from about 10 per cent of the ratepayers because of work shortages and will have to raise taxes to accommodate for the carbon tax, how is the government going to ensure the viability of small communities like Forestburg, Killam, Hardisty, and Wainwright, who will be hard hit by these bad economic policies?

The Speaker: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can say very proudly that this year, at a time when our revenue was cut by 20 per cent, we had sustainable funding for municipalities, and I can state with virtual certainty that that would not have happened with any of the folks on the other side. We will continue to work with municipalities to ensure that we provide the supports they need to move forward, to find the efficiencies they need to help them be efficient going forward, but we're not apologetic for the fact that we are remaining the number one supporter of municipal funding, ensuring that they have the stable funds that they need, that they never would have . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Electricity Power Purchase Agreements

(continued)

Mr. Fraser: This past week the Progressive Conservative caucus, municipalities around the province, and private industry raised concerns about this NDP government considering retroactive legislation to nullify the PPA contracts, contracts that have been a benefit for Albertans for over 15 years. With all due respect, Premier, you need to stop dodging questions on this issue. You spent hundreds of thousands of dollars of public money trying to convince the court of public opinion, and then you've hired NDP outsiders who are anti-Alberta to fight Albertans. Premier, to date how much money have you wasted because of this ill-informed lawsuit?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You want to talk ill-informed? Talk about bringing in an 11th-hour, behind-the-scenes Enron clause and putting them to these agreements. Talk about ill-informed. Talk about cabinet making decisions not to disclose that through the typical public process, which would enable members of the public and the media to be aware of decisions that may or may not have been made. We're going to stand up for Albertans, and I am proud to do so.

Mr. Fraser: Well, that's interesting because all those binders you bring into this House, you should be reading.

Given that power companies are reeling at the idea of retroactive legislation and given that the threat alone is driving electricity investor confidence to new lows, do you actually realize that you need these investors to fulfill your plan of 30 per cent by 2030? And how are you going to rebuild these partnerships that you've destroyed in just a year and a half?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to do my homework. I wish the member opposite would do his.

Instead of taking part of the profits that were very successful over the last several years and using that to offset current potential losses, the other sides of the PPAs want to pass those losses on to consumers. We can stand up for Albertans, or we can do what the members opposite are proposing, which is bury our heads in the sand and pass more bills on to Albertans. I'm going to stand up for Albertans, Mr. Speaker, and I wish the members opposite would pretend that they want to do so as well.

Mr. Fraser: Well, I understand my role here, but you didn't understand the impacts of your ideological policies, and Albertans

know that you've been backpedalling from the start. Now that you realize you're going to lose this court battle, you're just going to change the rules with retroactive legislation halfway through. Even a grade school child knows that this is wrong. It's clear that you have no intention of following through on this costly legal battle. Will you tear up the right contract today, Joseph Arvay's contract, and send home your NDP lawyer?

Ms Hoffman: We are committed to taking action on climate change. The world is calling on all of us to do our fair share, and the members opposite want to pretend that we're still living in the 20th century. Well, Mr. Speaker, we're going to move forward in a thoughtful way to curb emissions, to provide a secure electricity system to Albertans, and we will consider any tools required to do so. Of course, we would like to work with partners, and that's why we're setting up fair, responsible ways of moving forward in greening our electricity system instead of picking winners and losers like the third party did for decades.

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

Family Violence

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Violence in any form is unacceptable. It affects children, adults, seniors, and devastates communities. Constituents in Calgary-Bow want to know what is being done to ensure that people affected by violence have the supports they need. To the Minister of Human Services: what is the government doing to support survivors of family violence?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I would like to thank the member first for her leadership on the issue. Her safer spaces private member's bill enables survivors to end a lease without penalty and breaks down a real barrier for survivors of family violence. I would also like to acknowledge that members of this House passed this legislation unanimously. So Albertans should know that they can access these important supports through Alberta Works' centres in Human Services.

Thank you.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that we need to prevent family violence. Given recent reports that domestic violence is on the rise in parts of Alberta, to the same minister: what is our government doing to prevent family violence?

2:40

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to the member. Our government is committed to taking action to prevent family violence so that no one has to live in fear nor suffer silently as a survivor. We have taken many important steps: increasing FCSS funding by \$25 million, investing \$15 million in women's shelters, investing another \$8.9 million in family and community safety program grants to 53 programs across the province. We recently announced some more supports during this month to support the work across the province.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that November is Family Violence Prevention Month, to the same minister: how is the government raising awareness regarding family violence and prevention strategies to make sure we continue to be strong partners?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. I did outline some steps that the government has taken, but I recognize that we all have a role to play in preventing family violence. I am proud to acknowledge that Family Violence Prevention Month originated in Hinton, Alberta, 30 years ago. This year's theme is Reach Out, Speak Out, which encourages all Albertans to send a powerful message that these crimes have no place in our society, and our government is reaching out for partners to . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis is an irreversible, fatal disease that scars the lungs and greatly reduces quality of life. There is no cure for the permanent damage short of a lung transplant. Last month I met with members of the Canadian Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation. They presented a patient charter calling for improved access to community-based services, long-term chronic care, palliative care, and research towards a cure. Can the Minister of Health commit to addressing the concerns in the IPF patient charter and outline how this will be done?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Last month I also met with the Canadian Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation and had the opportunity to hear some of their stories. It is a devastating disease, and there are many struggles that are ongoing for patients with that disease. They told me about access to appropriate medications and specialized treatments that are necessary to components of fighting this disease, and we are moving forward on a number of their recommendations that align with that goal. We are also working to review the others that remain. I'm pleased that the specialized clinics that we do have here, both in Edmonton and Calgary, are world class. While it is devastating, there is no place better in the . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Minister. IPF greatly reduces oxygen uptake in the lungs, severely limiting the ability to walk, move, and even breathe. Given that current eligibility standards for financial aid for home oxygen are outdated and based on unrelated chronic diseases and since these inappropriate standards for IPF require patients to periodically retest for eligibility despite the disease being irreversible, degenerative, and exhausting, will the government end this wasteful and very unpleasant testing standard and work towards developing standards specific to pulmonary fibrosis?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the relevant and superimportant question, particularly for those living with this disease. Our government is going to continue to work with the Alberta Health Services clinical advisory

committee, the medical professionals in the field that make patient treatment decisions. Earlier this year, in consultation with lung disease specialists, amendments were made to the criteria to provide greater access to funding in the area of home oxygen, and that is certainly a step in the right direction. With regard to other recommendations my department is meeting with clinicians practising in this area and will continue to review the procedures and testing to find additional ways that we might be able to increase . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, also timely, November is Lung Month, and we have the opportunity to raise awareness for chronic lung illnesses. Given that chronic disease management is such a crucial component of the health system and given that inappropriate handling of chronic diseases can result in massive inefficiency and reduce quality of life as patients are moved in and out of hospitals, what is the government doing to ensure that people suffering from chronic respiratory disease get access to care in their home or in their community?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think we all agree that we want to ensure that Albertans get the right care in the right place at the right time, and this means providing services as close to home as possible.

For people suffering from chronic respiratory diseases we've made some improvements effective November 1 that I'm very pleased to update this House and all Albertans about, and that's listing both Esbriet and Ofev for public funding under the Alberta drug benefit list, ADBL, for patients who meet the criteria in need of those. We've also increased our investment in home care to \$611 million. That will help thousands of Albertans receive medical assistance in their homes, which the member speaks about.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Trade Mission to China and South Korea

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry recently returned from a two-week trade mission to China and South Korea. Alberta producers need the ability to expand to new markets and explore growth opportunities overseas. The minister had said that this trade mission would focus on opportunities for value-added food processing, agricultural products such as beef, pork, grains, and livestock genetics. To the minister: did you sign any new agreements that will expand markets for Alberta agricultural producers?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of agriculture.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Thank you for having me back. It was a very good trade mission. It was my first to China and my first to South Korea. We were able to meet with many producers and processors in China and also processors and industry leaders here from Alberta as well. We were able to sign several agreements on co-operation and memorandums of understanding in both the northern province and throughout China and in Korea as well. I'm looking forward to a very fruitful return for that trip.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that it is important for all Alberta producers to foster relationships that gain access to new markets and given that you said that you'd also focus on opportunities for lumber and pulp exports, to the minister: did you sign any new agreements that will help expand markets for Alberta's forest producers?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member for the question. I had the opportunity to meet with Canada Wood both in China and in South Korea, exploring opportunities to expand our markets there. There are some great opportunities. Even though the economy has taken a bit of a dip in China, it's still the second-largest economy in the world, and they need lumber. Their construction is still going at full blast, an opportunity to have lumber there. As well, Korea is recognizing the value and the durability of Canadian and Alberta lumber in particular, and those talks continue. I'm very happy with our fruitful discussions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that there were many scheduled meetings for your trade mission in China and South Korea and given that you said that contacts you spoke with were keen to buy Alberta products but they mentioned that trade barriers with Canada gave them pause to buy Alberta products, to the minister: what talks did you have with the Chinese government about these trade barriers, and what solutions did you generate?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the very thoughtful question. For the very first part of the mission I was able to accompany the federal agriculture minister on his discussions with Chinese officials, everybody recognizing that they want more of our product but working through those federal regulations to increase our trade to Asia and China and South Korea. Happy to work with our federal colleagues and provincial colleagues across the country to continue that work on making those regulatory changes to increase our trade in Asia.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

Building Codes and Efficiency Standards

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Recently the Minister of Municipal Affairs announced changes to the Alberta building code to harmonize with the national energy efficiency standards. Given that many people in Calgary-Northern Hills have mentioned that they want to green their homes by using things like LED lights, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: how is the government harmonizing the Alberta building code with the national energy efficiency standards?

The Speaker: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. These changes will save Albertans money and ensure that Alberta continues to be a leader in the fight against climate change and a competitor in the carbon-strained economy of the future. Building responsible and sustainable homes is not a trend. It is the future, and it is the right thing to do. These code changes support our climate leadership plan by reducing greenhouse gas emissions and creating more modern

and efficient homes and businesses. Climate change requires us to look at all policy from an environmental lens and to make decisions that not only move Alberta forward but also . . .

2:50

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

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you. Since these changes were announced, my constituents have asked how this will impact them. To the same minister: what efficiencies will these code changes target?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government has done more work in the last year than in the past six years to bring Alberta's code up to date. These code changes will promote and improve energy efficiency standards for windows, lighting, insulation, heating, ventilation, and air conditioning. These changes will ensure that the amount of energy used by homeowners and businesses will be permanently reduced and that the savings will continue into the future. This is good for the environment and good for everyone who has to pay for electricity.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given the current economic climate due to the drop in the price of oil, how will these changes save homeowners money and support efforts in confronting climate change?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you know, man-made climate change is real. We can either act now or be left behind. Ignoring climate change is not a solution. On this side of the House we refuse to engage in head-in-the-sand politics when it comes to action. We are adopting policies that promote energy efficiency while delivering long-term cost savings to Albertans. Albertans will see an approximate 20 per cent saving on their energy bills, while nationally the code updates will result in \$70 million in cost savings for building owners in 2016 by improving energy performance in over 24,000 . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The chair will recognize the Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Giving an eye to the clock, I wonder if I might seek the unanimous consent of the House to continue with the daily Routine past 3 o'clock.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The Member for Red Deer-South.

Career Month

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to acknowledge Canada's first-ever Career Month. Spearheaded nationally by the Canadian Council for Career Development and locally by the Career Development Association of Alberta, CDAA, Career Month highlights the role they play in assisting Canadians and Albertans to find their way to a suitable career and a stable career. As CDAA notes, career development is about direction, and in this fourth week

of November the focus is on government and agencies to ensure meaningful work for our citizens.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be a member of a government that understands the importance of intentional career development and one that sets a priority to ensure that all Albertans are future ready. This integrated approach to education and skills training will ensure that every Albertan has the skills they need to succeed in a changing economy. Valued partners like CDAA, McBride Career Group, Women Building Futures, Bredin Centre for Learning, and Boyle Street Community Services, to name just a few, offer Albertans education, training, apprenticeship, and mentorship opportunities every day, setting them on the path to a successful career.

In these challenging economic times, Mr. Speaker, it is more important than ever that Albertans can find the meaningful supports that they need to establish themselves in jobs that support themselves, their families, and pay the mortgage. In my area I'm proud of the work being done by the McBride Career Group, which just launched a construction pretrades training program, and the Bredin Centre for Learning, where they provide work skills training for all levels of residents, from new immigrants to the unemployed and underemployed in our region. Our government is creating new jobs and building an economy for the future.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills

Hon. Peter Eric James Prentice, PC, QC

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of the residents of Calgary-Foothills to pay homage to our former MLA, the Hon. Jim Prentice. Although I did not know Jim well personally, as his successor in the riding of Calgary-Foothills I have learned a lot about him over the past year.

Jim was widely respected for his loyalty. He was loyal to the PC Association of Alberta, he was loyal to the PC Party of Canada, he was loyal to the Conservative Party of Canada, and he was loyal to his many friends therein until the very end, friends forged over five decades of public service in and out of office, friends like Manmeet Bhullar, who was in many ways the son Jim never had. Jim was a great friend and family man to his wife and daughters and a legislator who will always be respected for his accomplishments in the political sphere.

He created the modern blueprint for engaging in respectful dialogue with Canada's First Nations. As minister of Indian and northern affairs he signed treaties with the Maa-nulth and Tsawwassen First Nations in British Columbia. He also negotiated the residential school settlement, which led to the apology from the Prime Minister. As environment minister he went camping with David Suzuki in traditional Haida territory. It's my understanding that Jim was writing a book about his experiences working with First Nations and the challenges of reconciling energy development and the environment in Canada.

Jim's life tragically ended before he could write his final chapter, but his legacy of peace and reconciliation will serve to remind us of his work for generations to come. For this he will never be forgotten. "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God."

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

Hon. Peter Eric James Prentice, PC, QC

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Two years ago I was a sergeant with the Calgary Police Service, working hard and standing up for what is right. Premier Prentice, who only knew me through

reputation, recognized a kindred can-do spirit in me and urged me to run for public office. It was a leap of faith for me to jump from the police service into politics, but Premier Prentice had made a similar move when he unselfishly left a prestigious corporate role to serve the people of Alberta.

I'm not reinventing the wheel as I go about my work as a member of this Legislature. I am following his lead in setting up a public service for a higher calling. Today I fully appreciate the gift that is the privilege of serving Albertans, and that was his gift to me. Premier Prentice not only inspired those around him, but he also cared about you as a person. He became a father figure to me in that even after I was no longer working directly with him, I still wanted him to be proud of me.

Prior to his passing I saw Jim and Karen at an official function. Karen took a moment to tell me how proud they were of my success with Bill 205. Jim will never know how much those words meant to me because while we had plans to get together, that, sadly, will never occur now. If any of you have that special person in your life, I do urge you to take that opportunity, maybe even today, to let them know how much they mean to you.

We all have so much to thank this man for: his strong moral guidance, his incredible work ethic, his compassion, and his bravery in telling us truths that we did not want to hear such as warning Albertans about the pending economic challenges, which have since come to pass. Premier Prentice has had a strong influence on Canada and Alberta, and that influence will continue for generations to come. His family, former colleagues, and friends will ensure that his spirit lives on.

Thank you, Premier Prentice. Sir, I promise you that I will keep fighting and standing up for what is right.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Hon. Peter Eric James Prentice, PC, QC

Mr. Rodney: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to honour our dear friend and esteemed past Premier, the Hon. Jim Prentice. Jim built inspirational, personal, professional, and political legacies in Calgary, Alberta, Canada, and well beyond. He loved his family so much, and it's such a shame that their time together was cut short.

3:00

As minister of Indian affairs and northern development as well as industry and environment, stakeholders were consistently amazed at how generous Jim was at sharing his experience and expertise. After personifying fierce commitment to public service, Jim could have extended his time working at the highest levels of corporate Canada, but he gave it all up to serve the people of the province he loved so much.

Mr. Speaker, I have never met a person like Jim Prentice before. He was equally at home in a coal mine and in a farmer's field, on Bay Street, on Wall Street, in the Legislature, in the Parliament, the State Department, and at a hockey rink. In true Canadian fashion I can tell you that some of the most treasured memories I have with Jim occurred on the ice, where he was strong, smooth, strategic, prepared for everything, and one step ahead just like he was at virtually everything else in life. When *Maclean's* magazine asked Jim to describe his role in Prime Minister Stephen Harper's government, he said: "I always do what I'm asked to do. The penalty kill. Dig out the puck on the power play. Muck in the corner, or take a hard hit."

Jim wanted every one of us in the PC caucus to deliver the best for Albertans because they trusted us to represent their views, interests, and priorities, and we simply could not let them down. Jim was a leader of unquestionable dignity, and those closest to him respected, admired, and loved him. Mr. Speaker, I will never forget the last long talk that I had with him, that happened to be after the untimely death of our beloved friend Manmeet Bhullar.

Alberta lost a true champion who we will dearly miss, and I encourage us all to continue to build the best Alberta possible together because that is exactly what Jim Prentice would have hoped for and what all Albertans indeed do deserve.

Thank you.

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

Calgary Football Team Achievements

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take this opportunity to celebrate two Calgary football teams who will be bringing their Alberta pride and intensity to Ontario to compete for the highest honour in their leagues. This weekend the Calgary Stampeders will compete in the 104th Grey Cup, and the University of Calgary Dinos will compete in the 52nd Vanier Cup.

The Stampeders, led by first-year head coach Dave Dickenson, had a dominant 42 to 15 win over the BC Lions and ex-Calgary head coach Wally Buono. The weather was perfect for football in front of a sold-out Calgary crowd who helped propel the Stamps forward. They now move forward to face the Ottawa Redblacks, quarterbacked by former Calgary QB Henry Burris. The Stampeders, with a few Alberta boys on their roster, are favoured to win, but they still need our support as they try to bring home their second Grey Cup in three years.

Not to be outdone, on a team stacked with Albertan-born talent, hometown boys veteran quarterback Jimmy Underdahl and running back Jeshrun Antwi both helped the Dinos rout the X-Men 50 to 24 on Saturday. This comes on the heels of victory against the defending Vanier Cup champions, the UBC Thunderbirds, coached by former Dinos head coach Blake Nill. They now face Laval Rouge et Or in the Vanier Cup for the third time in seven years. While they lost in 2010 and 2013, I know that they can avenge those losses and bring the Vanier Cup home to celebrate the University of Calgary's 50th anniversary.

The Dinos will play this Saturday in Hamilton, and the Stampeders will take the field the following day in Toronto. Mr. Speaker, I'll be cheering them on this weekend and hope that they can have the support of all members of this Legislature to bring home this Calgary pride. Go, Stamps, go. Go, Dinos, go.

Carbon Policies

Mr. Schneider: Mr. Speaker, I've been a farmer for most of my life. Rural Alberta is in my blood. I also served as a councillor in a rural municipality for six years. I've attended about 12 Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties conventions during my tenure. That being said, I just want to talk about the last AAMD and C conference, that was held right here in Edmonton last Thursday.

It was a little chilly outside of the Shaw Conference Centre, but, Mr. Speaker, it was ice cold inside during the ministerial forum. In my dozen or so conventions I have never heard the government booed. I have always seen audiences at least offer polite applause after an answer from a minister. Well, it was clear on Thursday that this government has definitely not clicked with rural Alberta. As a matter of fact, one gentleman from a municipality stood up and

asked a question of the delegates. He asked: who here thinks that shutting down coal-fired power plants in Alberta is the right thing to do? He looked around, and he saw one hand. He then asked: who here thinks that this is the worst decision in Alberta history? Virtually every other hand in the building went up. This gentleman then said to the ministers: we just want you to listen to Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, this was very telling for me. Most rural municipalities in Alberta were represented during this convention. Right in front of the ministers that represent this government, 99 per cent of the convention showed them that they don't agree with the direction that this government has taken with regard to the premature shutdown of coal plants or the carbon tax that will be levied on their municipalities on January 1. In fact, during the convention 93 per cent of the delegates voted in favour of exempting municipalities from the carbon tax. It's unbelievable that this government claims that those representatives of our rural Albertans are their partners.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

A point of order is noted.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The Minister of Infrastructure and Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to give oral notice of a motion for tomorrow's Order Paper, the motion being as follows:

Be it resolved that:

1. The 2015 annual report of the Alberta Property Rights Advocate office be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship for the purpose of conducting a review of the recommendations outlined in the report;
2. The committee may, without leave of the Assembly, sit during a period when the Assembly is adjourned or prorogued;
3. In accordance with section 5(5) of the Property Rights Advocate Act the committee shall report back to the Assembly within 60 days of the report being referred to it if the Assembly is then sitting or, if it is not then sitting, within 15 days after the commencement of the next sitting.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, thank you. I rise today to provide notice that at the appropriate time I'll move the following motion:

Pursuant to Standing Order 30 be it resolved that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the systemic problems identified with kinship care and the safety policies governing it, the issues of secrecy still present in the child intervention system and the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General, and the serious concerns raised about whether the recommendations made by the Child and Youth Advocate are being fully implemented.

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have a number of items to table today. First, I rise to table the requisite number of copies of the Horse Racing Alberta 2015 annual report. Over the past year Horse Racing Alberta has reported a number of positive

results throughout the province. In March of this year our government renewed a 10-year agreement with Horse Racing Alberta to ensure that this important industry will continue to thrive across this great province and continue supporting the more than 7,000 Albertans who work in the horse-racing industry. Thank you.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, with regard to Motion for a Return 1 I am also pleased to table the requisite number of copies in response to a motion for a return from the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. These are ministerial orders issued by the Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance between January 1, 2014, and December 31, 2015, as the member requested.

3:10

Mr. Speaker, with regard to results-based budgeting in accordance with section 3 of the Results-based Budgeting Act I'm also pleased to table the required number of copies of the fifth annual results-based budgeting report. This report provides a summary of the RBB process, describes the lines of businesses, and highlights some of the findings on the work that has been completed to date.

Mr. Speaker, with regard to the Alberta Securities Commission I am pleased to table their 2016 annual report. The commission is doing excellent work, and our government is pleased to once again confirm our commitment to an Alberta regulator that is responsive to the needs of our local market. I should take a moment to once again congratulate Mr. Stan Magidson, the new CEO of ASC, who is showing tremendous leadership in his new position.

Lastly, Motion for a Return 31. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to table the requisite number of copies in response to a motion for a return from the Member for Strathmore-Brooks. The member requested responses received from Albertans through our online survey for Budget 2015. The government received over 2,900 responses from Albertans, and I'd like to thank, of course, all of them for their feedback. I should say that our government worked hard to deliver a budget that protected front-line services while continuing to maintain our province's position as the lowest taxed jurisdiction in the country.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. These are all the reports.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I am pleased to table five copies of the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Alberta's 2015-16 annual report pursuant to section 63(1) of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, section 95(1) of the Health Information Act, and section 44(1) of the Personal Information Protection Act.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Mr. Carlier, Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, pursuant to the Farm Implement Act the Farmers' Advocate office 2015-16 annual report; pursuant to the Livestock Identification and Commerce Act and the Stray Animals Act the Livestock Identification Services Ltd. report to the minister and summary of activities, reporting period April 1, 2015, to March 31, 2016; pursuant to the Agriculture Financial Services Act the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation annual report 2015-16.

On behalf of the hon. Mr. Eggen, Minister of Education, return to order of the Assembly Motion for a Return 13, asked for by Mr. Cooper on May 2, 2016, copies of all ministerial orders issued by the Ministry of Education between January 1, 2014, and December 31, 2015.

Also, responses to five written questions asked for by Mr. Smith on May 2, 2016: Written Question 2, what is the government's

projected estimate of the cost to implement full-day kindergarten in Alberta; Written Question 3, how much has the government spent on the student learning assessment pilot projects for the fiscal years 2010-11 to 2014-15 and from April 1, 2015, to February 29, 2016, and what are the details of what the money was spent on; Written Question 5, for the fiscal years from 2010-11 to 2014-15 and from April 1, 2015, to February 29, 2016, what was the cost to the government to develop and implement the provincial approach to student information initiative; Written Question 7, in Alberta how many English as a second language students were registered in the 2014-15 school year, and how many of those students will continue beyond the five years that are totally funded by school boards; Written Question 8, in the public, separate, and francophone school systems in Alberta what was the total amount of funds collected through fees, fundraising, donations, and gifts in each of the fiscal years from 2010-11 to 2014-15?

Pursuant to the Teaching Profession Act the Alberta Teachers' Association 2015 annual report.

On behalf of the hon. Mr. Sabir, Minister of Human Services, return to order of the Assembly Motion for a Return 6, asked for by Mr. Cooper on May 2, 2016, copies of all ministerial orders issued by the Ministry of Human Services between January 1, 2014, and December 31, 2015.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I believe there were two points of order raised today. Three? Okay.

The first one from the House leader for the Official Opposition.

Point of Order

Parliamentary Language

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will raise three points of order today, one on behalf of my hon. colleague from Cardston-Taber-Warner.

The first one is with respect to language likely to create disorder, 23(h), (i), (j), and (k). During question period today the Minister of Health made a number of very wild accusations. Without the benefit of the Blues, I believe her language was something to the effect of hateful and violent with respect to what the opposition was. One thing I am one hundred per cent sure of, Mr. Speaker, is that the hon. member used the language: the opposition is hell-bent. I'm certain that you will find this language unparliamentary, and I would ask that she apologize and withdraw.

The Speaker: The House leader for the government.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, the Opposition House Leader has cited two different instances in the same point of order, and I would propose to deal with them a little bit differently.

In the first instance, the language "hell-bent." Mr. Speaker, *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, talks this way about unparliamentary language. It says:

Since the Speaker must rule on the basis of the context in which the language was used, points of order raised in regard to questionable language must be raised as soon as possible . . .

It goes on to say:

In dealing with unparliamentary language, the Speaker takes into account the tone, manner and intention of the Member speaking; the person to whom the words at issue were directed; the degree of provocation; and, most importantly, whether or not the remarks created disorder in the Chamber. Thus, language deemed unparliamentary one day may not necessarily be deemed unparliamentary the following day. The codification of unparliamentary language has proven impractical as it is the

context in which words or phrases are used that the Chair must consider when deciding whether or not they should be withdrawn.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I've taken the liberty of getting some definitions of "hell-bent." The hon. Deputy Premier used that in the context of what she deemed the opposition was trying to accomplish. In *Merriam-Webster* it says, "Very determined to do something especially when the results might be bad . . . stubbornly and often recklessly determined or intent." *Oxford* says, "Determined to achieve something at all costs," and dictionary.com says, "1. stubbornly or recklessly determined; 2. going at terrific speed," and so on.

3:20

Now, Mr. Speaker, in that context I don't believe that it's either unparliamentary or satisfies the requirements of 23(h), (i), or (j), and I would argue that it is not a point of order. Moreover, that particular term has been used in this House many times with no point of order being called or sustained by the chair. Not to single out our two newest roommates in the House, but the hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore used the term on April 20, and the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View used it on December 4, 2013. There are many other instances. I don't mean to particularly single them out. I'm arguing that there is absolutely nothing unparliamentary or contrary to the rules with respect to that.

In terms of the other language that the hon. House leader for the Official Opposition has raised . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member.

Mr. Mason: Yes.

The Speaker: Could I just clarify? I have records that we had two points of order. The first one was yours with respect to the exchange between the Minister of Health and Cypress-Medicine Hat. Then I saw one later from the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Cooper: And I called an additional one after your interjection with the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat immediately following his question as well.

The Speaker: For my sake, if no one else's, could we deal with the first point of order on the exchange with respect to the Minister of Health and Cypress-Medicine Hat?

Mr. Cooper: Yeah. That's the understanding that I'm currently under, that we are dealing with that right now.

The Speaker: Good.

Mr. Mason: I'm at a loss to understand what the issue is, Mr. Speaker. I'm dealing specifically with that point of order, which included two pieces of language, one of which, I've just argued, is not unparliamentary and does not violate the standing orders.

Point of Order

Parliamentary Language

Mr. Mason: The second one: the Deputy Premier used the language "violent" and "hateful" if I recall correctly. Is that what the Opposition House Leader suggested? Mr. Speaker, there's no question that as we've seen political developments in this province unfold on social media and other areas, including at meetings, there has been violent and hateful language used.

Mr. Nixon: Yeah. She said that about us.

The Speaker: Please proceed.

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. With respect to that, there's no question that that type of language has unfortunately become part of the daily experience of politicians of this province, including members of this House and, in particular, with respect to members who are female, and I think it's very unfortunate. However, in terms of . . . [interjections] Do you guys mind? Okay. Are we ready to go?

The Speaker: Hon. members. [interjections]

Hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View, could we let the Government House Leader proceed? Thank you.

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. However, with respect to use of those adjectives with regard to members opposite, I think that it may be argued that the Deputy Premier exceeded the norms of what is normally acceptable in this House, and on her behalf I would like to withdraw the expression and apologize.

The Speaker: Are we dealing – which one?

Point of Order

Explanation of Speaker's Ruling

Mr. Cooper: The second point of order.

Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today during question period – I rise on Standing Order 13(2), “The Speaker shall explain the reasons for any decision on the request of a Member.” During the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat's question – he was speaking about a policy, if you will, around electoral recall. I just wanted to highlight chapter 11, page 504 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, when it speaks specifically – it doesn't speak only about government policy but about matters concerning “internal party matters, or party or election expenses.” Clearly, the member was not asking about a matter of party policies; he was asking about government policy and was it the government policy to support recall or not. Clearly, it's not their policy, but I would just ask if you might be able to provide some additional comments on: why the interjection when he wasn't asking about party matters? He was clearly asking about government matters.

The Speaker: I do have a copy of the Blues. I trust that we are dealing with the same matter. The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat:

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On this side of the House we believe Albertans have the final say, not the politicians. Given that elected members should remain accountable to their constituents at all times and given that the Premier herself said that the previous crossings to the government were a betrayal of accountability, will the Premier agree with the Wildrose that voters . . .

I interjected as Speaker and said:

I don't believe you hit the target in terms of government policy.

You were asking for an opinion, my opinion, and that's why I ruled on the matter and why I consider the matter to be closed.

Is there a third one?

Point of Order

Language Creating Disorder

Mr. Cooper: Yeah. This is the last one, Mr. Speaker, from me. During Members' Statements my hon. colleague from Little Bow was speaking about a very chilly reception that members of the government received from AAMD and C. I'm rising specifically on Standing Order 23(j), “uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder.”

Mr. Speaker, I don't have the benefit of the Blues, as you do, but during that, the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood heckled: perhaps they should have used eugenics. [interjections] Everyone on this side of the House heard him use the word “eugenics.” We all know that that is an extremely unparliamentary accusation to make. The science of eugenics: improving a human population by controlling breeding to increase the occurrence of desirable characteristics. I would like to give the member the opportunity to rise and let this House know that that is not a reference he was making to all members of rural Alberta.

Mr. Mason: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate that the hon. Official Opposition House Leader didn't have the advantage of the Blues. I haven't either, but I did take the liberty of asking the hon. member in question to let me know what happened, and he sent a note to me. It was in response to a member's statement, an interjection to the effect that – the member's statement was that getting off coal was the worst policy in the history of this province. The hon. member then said: is it worse than eugenics? That is the context. Now, the hon. member was interjecting during a member's statement, which he ought not to have been doing, and for that I apologize on the member's behalf.

The Speaker: Again, context, the situation: I noticed noise from this side of the House when the hon. Member for Little Bow was speaking. Clearly, in fact, today I reminded members again – I'm not exactly sure who it was on that side – that the practice of this House is that for two minutes you give the opportunity to the member to speak. Most of the time this House has respected that practice. If it was the Member for Calgary-Hawkwood who made the noise – I did not hear the specific comment – you were clearly out of order in terms of making a comment at the time the Speaker was hearing.

3:30

I also want to go back to the other point because I think these points tie together. I did hear an exchange with some – and, thank you, Government House Leader, for the apology from the Deputy Premier. The language that was used does escalate this House, and I just want to, for another time, remind all of the members of this House that if you want to move forward with good legislation, you need to listen to each other and respect each other. I would hope that it begins to change here.

I believe we move to the notice of motion.

Emergency Debate

Deaths of Children in Care

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to propose a motion under Standing Order 30. I should note before I begin that written notice was provided to the Speaker in accordance with Standing Order 30(1) and has met the conditions of Standing Order 30(7). The motion reads as follows:

Pursuant to Standing Order 30 be it resolved that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the systemic problems identified with kinship care and the safety policies governing it, the issues of secrecy still present in the child intervention system and the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General, and the serious concerns raised about whether the recommendations made by the Child and Youth Advocate are being fully implemented.

Mr. Speaker, this issue meets the conditions of Standing Order 30(7).

(7) A motion under this Standing Order is subject to the following conditions:

- (a) the matter proposed for discussion must relate to a genuine emergency, calling for immediate and urgent consideration.

What could be more urgent than the death of children in care? Last Friday the office of the Child and Youth Advocate released a devastating report. While we will focus predominantly on one child, it was on the deaths of two children in care. Then over the weekend we read in the media additional details that had been found out by a reporter. Her name was Serenity, and she was just 19 pounds when she died. The system failed her, and we need to do everything that we can to make sure it never happens in Alberta again, and that can start right now.

- (b) not more than one such motion may be proceeded with on the same day;
- (c) not more than one matter may be discussed on the same motion;
- (d) the motion must not revive discussion on a matter that has been discussed in the same session pursuant to this Standing Order;
- (e) the motion must not be based on a question of privilege;
- (f) the discussion under the motion must not raise a question that, according to the Standing Orders, can only be debated on a motion on notice.

Beauchesne's 387, on page 113, says the following:

The Standing Order is clear that the question be specific and must require urgent consideration. It must deal with a matter within the administrative competence of the Government and there must be no other reasonable opportunity for debate.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, this issue is not before this House in any form of bill debate, and the most reasonable opportunity for debate is today.

I'll continue with the quote from page 113.

But... decisions based on these conditions are bound to be subjective and few clear cut decisions can be made. In making his ruling, the Speaker may, on occasion, take into account the general wish of the House to have a debate.

Mr. Speaker, when you make your decision today as to whether or not this matter should proceed, I encourage you to consider that this very important matter is, yes, urgent, and I would consider it to be an emergency, but even if it's not an emergency, I would suggest to you that you consider the last point, when it says, "In making his ruling, the Speaker may, on occasion, take into account the general wish of the House to have a debate." I know this for sure, that on this side of the House it is our wish that we have this debate. I would suggest that if you reached out to the Member for St. Albert, perhaps the Member for Calgary-North West, or any parent in this House, it would be their wish as well.

House of Commons Procedure and Practice says the following on page 695:

However, in one exceptional circumstance, an application was approved for an emergency debate on "the sudden and unexpected revelation of events which [had] taken place in the past, in that they might precipitate a course of conduct which, if allowed to continue unchecked, would certainly classify itself as an emergency and a matter of urgent consideration".

Mr. Speaker, if any of the recommendations, if any of the secrecy that surrounds this issue continues and is allowed to continue unchecked, clearly it is an emergency and a matter of urgent consideration.

Mr. Speaker, let me be clear. This topic did come up in question period today, but I would suggest to you that a 35-second question and answer certainly do not do justice to an issue of such

importance. This House, the media, and, most importantly, Albertans, who have been touched by this most horrific tragedy, deserve a full and robust discussion, and we cannot shy away from debating hard topics such as this one. It would be a disservice to our constituents, who elected us, if we did.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that it is my job to communicate the importance of the need for the debate in my remarks, but very briefly here are some of the facts. The office of the Child and Youth Advocate has continually highlighted some major problems with the lack of care and oversight of the kinship program. Serenity was just 19 pounds when she died. Media reports over the weekend indicate that she was both physically and sexually abused, yet some of those facts were left out of the Child and Youth Advocate's report, which brings us to one of the major questions on the need for debate today. Why is it that the department is not doing more to ensure that the information that the Child and Youth Advocate needs is shared with his office? Secrecy around this issue serves no one.

Secondly, it is the ongoing and continued systemic breakdown of the kinship care program. The Child and Youth Advocate made a number of recommendations, including the implementation of a home study tool specific for kinship care. This House deserves to be able to speak about this important and urgent matter.

On November 25, 2013, three years ago almost to the day, a very similar issue was raised in this Assembly, yet we still see these tragedies happen. Now, I'm sure you know, Mr. Speaker, that on that day in November three years ago an emergency debate was not granted. We still, from three years ago, continue to see more deaths of children in care. I know of the death of a child in care, a foster family in the constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, yet the Child and Youth Advocate has yet to report on it. This is a continued and ongoing problem that deserves the attention of this House. Today is the day to start work to ensure that this never happens again.

3:40

Let's look back to three years ago, when the emergency debate was requested by the Official Opposition on a very similar topic. Back then the Government House Leader provided remarks, that I hope we don't hear today, that included excuses as to why this debate ought not proceed.

I will gently remind the House of remarks that were made on that day on pages 3057 and 3058 of *Hansard*, November 25, 2013.

That is why the people of Alberta expect this Assembly to take this issue... seriously, because [it's] fundamental to what we do in this Assembly. We care for those who are least able to care for themselves; you know, fire, police, taking care of those who cannot [take care of] themselves. It is fundamental to what we do in this Assembly. So if we don't take this matter seriously and we don't treat the gaps which have been revealed basically this morning to most of us, if we don't take those matters seriously, then, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that we are not taking the role of this Assembly seriously either.

Mr. Speaker, those were the words of the Premier three years ago almost to the day.

I hope that all members of this House will speak about this very important need and that we will be able to unravel some of the circumstances that arose in the lead-up to this report and to this very, very, very tragic situation that is before us.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to rise and respond to the comments and the arguments that have

been made by the hon. Official Opposition House Leader. As legislators we are all committed to protecting the most vulnerable amongst us. That is, in our view, an important role of government but not just of government, of the entire community. It is an obligation of civil society as a whole. I think that in this Legislature we're in a good position to work together from time to time and to work across the aisle in order to deal with some of the more difficult and challenging and intractable problems that exist. Certainly, the question of children in government care, whether it's in kinship care or directly in government care or foster care, is something that is critical to, I think, all Albertans, and it's something that I think we all need to collectively put our attention towards.

Our government has been working very hard on this file, and we have made progress, but, Mr. Speaker, more progress clearly needs to be made. The heart-wrenching stories that we've heard, most recently on the weekend in connection with the tragic death in care of Serenity, I think, have pulled on the heartstrings of all of us and all Albertans. I think that we should take the opportunity to talk about it. We should take the opportunity to talk about what can be done, what ideas we might have, how the government could better improve its response, and I think we're open to hearing the thoughts of all of our colleagues with respect to that matter.

So, Mr. Speaker, I support the request of the hon. Opposition House Leader for a Standing Order 30 emergency debate. I think that if children suffering in our care is not an emergency, is not something of the greatest possible priority, then what is? With the greatest respect, I concur with the arguments made by the Official Opposition House Leader and want to indicate that the government would welcome spending this afternoon on this most critical matter.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there any other members who'd like to speak to this matter?

I am prepared to rule on the request for leave on a motion to proceed under Standing Order 30(2). The Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills has met the requirement for at least two hours' notice. It was provided to my office at 10:57 this morning. The motion:

Pursuant to Standing Order 30 be it resolved that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the systemic problems identified with kinship care and the safety policies governing it, the issues of secrecy still present in the child intervention system and the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General, and the serious concerns raised about whether the recommendations made by the Child and Youth Advocate are being fully implemented.

The relevant parliamentary authorities on these subjects are pages 689 to 696 of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, and *Beauchesne*, paragraphs 387 to 390. To the hon. House leaders who have spoken, I see and sense that there is a strong willingness on all sides of the Assembly to debate the matter. On page 695 of the *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*: "The Speaker may take into account the general wish of the House to have an emergency debate and grant a request for an emergency debate."

I find that the request for leave is in order. The rules governing the procedure once the chair finds the request for leave to be in order are as follows. Standing Order 30(3) requires that the question be put to a vote of the Assembly. If there are objections to the question, then the chair will ask those members who support the motion to rise. If 15 or more members rise, the debate will proceed, and each member who wishes to speak will have 10 minutes to do so until all who wish to speak have done so or until the normal hour

of adjournment. If at least five members rise but fewer than 15, the question whether the member has leave to move adjournment of the ordinary business is put immediately and, if necessary, is determined by division. If fewer than five members rise, the debate will not proceed.

Now the question. Shall the debate on the matter proceed? All in favour, please say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Speaker: Opposed, say no. I'm hearing unanimous consent to proceed with the matter.

The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd just like to begin by saying thank you to the Government House Leader and government members for having the courage of their convictions to proceed with such an important matter.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, I have a significant level of involvement, or I should say that I have had a significant level of involvement with the department. Let me be clear this afternoon that this discussion today isn't just a blame-game, point-fingers, find-the-culprits discussion around who did it, what happened, and when, although all of those things are extremely important. Today ought to be a step in the direction of ensuring that this doesn't happen again.

Mr. Speaker, you know that I myself have three children, and one of those children is very close to the age of Serenity. For some reason my wife and I were granted an incredible honour and blessing to be able to provide for Peyton what for some reason people who were closest to her at her birth were unable to.

3:50

Mr. Speaker, this weekend, after reading Paula Simons' multiple stories – and I know that some of my colleagues will be able to quote from them – I was just struck at what it was to be three, and when I picked her up and cuddled my kids, just the heartbreaking ache that came over me, so much so that while chatting with my spouse about the debate today and the possibility of it happening, my nine-year-old was asking: "Well, what are you going to be talking about, daddy? Points of order?" And I said, "Well, son, I'm sure that we'll talk about points of order," and my wife said: "You know what, bud? There are some things that mom and dad talk about that we want to wait until you're a little bit older to know" because the details that were released this weekend in the story are devastating.

Mr. Speaker, the Child and Youth Advocate seemingly did his very best. He did his best with the information that he had available to him or at least what we believe he had available to him. It is critically important that we provide every resource available to the Child and Youth Advocate in the future to ensure that he has all of the information that is required to report accurately on what's happened.

Mr. Speaker, while the work of the Child and Youth Advocate is of critical importance, it saddens me to know that there are circumstances that happen in this province that require his presence. It saddens me to know that since he began investigating this report, there have been additional deaths of children in care. We are going to read another report just like this, where a foster family begged the department to intervene, where a foster family, who are constituents of mine, lobbied on behalf of the children that were placed in their care, but their concerns fell on deaf ears, and the children that were in their care were placed back in the care of family or kinship care, and tragedy struck again.

Mr. Speaker, we have seen over a long period of time the ongoing problems around the deaths of children in care. Let me be clear, Mr. Speaker. Where possible, it is my heart's desire for every child that is in the department to be able to go home to a loving family that can provide the care for them. But more important than my heart's desire or the desire of the department or the desire of a bureaucrat in Edmonton or wherever they may be, more important than my desire for them to have that home, it is for them to be safe, to not be put in harm's way. That is not what we have seen on numerous occasions.

Mr. Speaker, for 11 months Serenity was in kinship care with no oversight. The Child and Youth Advocate reports that multiple stakeholders advocated to the department for intervention. These are the exact sort of challenges that must be stopped today. Additional safeguards with respect to kinship care need to be addressed. We must and we have to do better.

Mr. Speaker, this isn't just about Serenity. This is about another child who was nine months old. The very complex needs of an infant were not taken into consideration when the department made decisions based upon a family unit. Every single child inside a family unit is unique and important, and we saw a nine-month-old who will never see its first birthday because of a decision made by a system that was broken, that placed the needs of the group ahead of the needs of an individual.

Mr. Speaker, it's my heart-cry today that as we move forward together as an Assembly, this government will take proactive steps. I know that we heard the Minister of Human Services today speak that they have accepted the recommendations, but what we need to know are regular and consistent updates in this House on how progress is being made. I don't mean talking points; I mean actual progress. I mean actual results of the way that we're addressing the kinship care program, the way that we're dealing with the sensitive issues around cultural sensitivities, kinship, our desire for families to be together, yet that very most important, primary need and desire of safety of the children who've been placed in our care.

Mr. Speaker, it's my hope that this won't just be a bunch of politicians talking about this for one day. I make a commitment today to children in care that I will advocate on their behalf, that I will work diligently to ensure that the government continues to make the steps in the right direction so that the issues of Serenity and the nine-month-old and the child that has close personal connection to my family from Three Hills, that these things do not ever happen again.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak to this, having been through the 2014 round-table under former minister Manmeet Bhullar and heard some of the same kind of stories that are so tragic and so preventable at some level. At another level our human condition, our human systems, are sometimes unable to change, unable to move to the next level for a variety of reasons, whether it's lack of staffing, lack of training, lack of recognition of risk level, and prioritizing some of these very, very complex, very, very troubled families and individuals that are dealing with these placements and new relationships.

In some cases I applaud the former government for trying to move towards a kinship model for First Nations because it's very clear now that about two-thirds of the children in care are First Nations. We needed and still need to find a new way to address the problem of children in care coming from very troubled, broken families, generations of residential schools and the trauma that those families have experienced, their inability to parent, their lack

of parenting training, their lack of parenting models, and in some cases mental health and addiction problems.

All of this was reviewed to some extent on January 28 and 29, 2014, with 13 experts, 91 in-room participants, 475 online participants across the province for two days reviewing some of the issues around the deaths in care and the process of reviewing deaths in care and the importance of reporting consistently on deaths in care and the importance of consent of the parent, parent family, the custodial family, and even, if it was an older child, consent of the child to be publicly reported and identified.

4:00

So very sensitive issues around public disclosure yet so profoundly neglected prior to 2014, when these numbers weren't even adequately identified, they weren't publicly reported, and parents were told not to speak in public about the death of a child because of various sensitivities in law and other things that discriminated against their ability to inform all of us and to expose a system that wasn't transparent, wasn't accountable, and wasn't making the changes that were needed, indeed consistent, comprehensive reviews of every death, which was part of what this round-table called for.

It also identified the lack of an orientation to prevention, an orientation around identification of caregivers, custodians, families that weren't quite qualified, weren't quite up to the standard that we would hope but that would be then identified as higher risk and monitored more closely. So an attitude of prevention was identified as lacking in the department. Another area of deficiency was identified as a lack of culturally appropriate knowledge and expertise in the department to deal in this case, obviously, with First Nations issues.

All of that identified there, and overlying the whole picture a departmental culture of fear and blame and shame. Front-line workers, who burned out quickly, felt overwhelmed by the demands of the work they did and had too many cases to try to deal with, too much distance to travel, and, in many cases, quietly, on the side, indicated that they spent over 50 per cent of their time filling out forms on a computer, leaving them much less time to actually work with parents, work with children, work with caregivers, custodians, adoptive and foster parents. Very complex, very demanding work often resulting in a media event like this, a death, an example of abuse and suffering potentially preventable but for many different reasons either wasn't identified or wasn't acted upon. In many cases some of the family members felt that they couldn't speak about it. That much, I hope, has changed.

It's timely that we have this discussion because I don't know what's changed. I look forward to hearing the minister say what has changed since that round-table in 2014 in the death review process, the public-reporting process, the focus on prevention, and addressing the culture inside your department, sir, of blame and shame and the real sensitivities at the front line of feeling like they are the problem, the front-line caseworkers, who don't last long, from the report. There's a high turnover of these folks on the front lines because of the suffering they see, the trauma they themselves experience when trying to deal with these very troubled families and very difficult situations.

So I myself would like to know more about what has actually changed since that round-table. Certainly, I don't feel like there's been more public communication about these. Maybe there has been. Is there consistent and timely reporting on some of the goals that were established at that round-table?

All Albertans but especially those who are fostering and sponsoring children and custodians need to know that they are being supported more appropriately, that we are identifying trends,

and that we are identifying in the department those who are a little higher risk than others and giving them extra attention, extra visits, extra support, extra training, whatever it is they need, or, on the other hand, saying: "No. You're simply not up to the task here. We're going to have to re-place this child. Even though there are advantages to being in a kinship relationship because you're in a First Nations culture and you can benefit from that, you do not have the skills, you do not have the attitudes, and you do not have the ability to do what is necessary to keep this child healthy and growing and developing in a healthy way."

It may well be that we are now doing death reviews in a much more consistent and appropriate way. We are reporting on the numbers, but the next level of change has to be within the culture of Human Services so that there is a more supportive and understanding training environment for these young social workers who are so traumatized and so quickly leave the work. Are they given more time to do their work? Are they given the training to know how to deal more effectively with some of these extremely difficult families and when to call it: "Enough. We can't tolerate this anymore. There's too much risk here. We are going to intervene. We're going to be blamed for intervening, and we're going to be blamed if we don't intervene."

That's the catch-22 that these folks have to deal with, anger and frustration whether they intervene or whether they don't intervene. There are people who are very, very upset with decisions that this department makes in every child's case just because of the nature of this tremendously important role that this department has taken on.

What constitutes a serious injury? This is another question. Part of the round-table was that not just deaths should be reviewed but that any serious injury should be reviewed to see whether this is the breaking point. "This is an indication that we cannot leave this child here any longer. They say it's accidental, but what's the evidence that it was an accidental or deliberate injury to this child?" What constitutes a serious injury? How well are you identifying those indicators of serious risk?

As I mentioned, a death in care typically involves a broader range of people than other child deaths. It may include birth families, siblings, other children at home, child intervention workers, kinship caregivers, communities, and agencies. That takes a tremendous amount of time in a department that is time-challenged, resource-challenged, and indeed mostly has young graduate social workers working there because once they can find other work, they don't necessarily want to do this kind of work. It is tremendously challenging work.

It was felt in this round-table that current investigations lacked, again, the prevention mandate and placed extraordinary pressure on the front-line child intervention workers, discouraged honest communication, and diminished the grieving and healing process that many needed to carry out.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Minister of Human Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity. I would like to begin by thanking the Opposition House Leader for bringing forward this motion and for his passionate remarks this afternoon and for his advocacy around issues respecting foster children and foster homes.

Mr. Speaker, there is nothing more heartbreaking in this world than the death of a child, and being Minister of Human Services, I can tell you that there's no day more difficult than when you receive the notice of a death. While we are all here as elected representatives

of our communities, this makes us think about our own families and our own loved ones, and I can say that we want all children to be safe, to be fed, to be loved, and to have the opportunities that our province can provide so that they can reach their full potential. The death of any loved one brings grief and great loss, and when a child dies before she or he had a chance to fully experience life, it is a tragedy that defies words.

We owe to this little girl the time to reflect on her death. As the Premier indicated earlier, this is an open matter and still being looked into, but we can certainly discuss what we need to change in our system to prevent similar tragedies from happening again. We can talk about the issue today because that's an issue which is very near and dear to everyone in this House and that everyone cares about. This is an issue that transcends party politics.

4:10

This heartbreaking loss has made it clear that the child intervention system must be improved to better protect children and youth who receive services or who are in our care. The system certainly has fallen tragically short for far too long for far too many children. We are beginning work on how we can improve the transition for children in care so that they have permanent and loving homes.

The issues involving these children are complex. It begins with addressing poverty of families, an issue that has been ignored for too long, with real and tragic consequences for children. That is why we introduced a number of new measures to directly address poverty, including a new child benefit that provides real money for low-income families and those who can't afford the costs of raising children.

This tragedy happened on a First Nations reserve. As a nation we must address the widespread poverty, addiction, and inter-generational trauma of the devastating and ongoing legacy of residential schools prevalent on those reserves. These are issues that are facing indigenous reserves and families across this province and across Canada. Any change must be done in consultation with First Nation leadership, and it is up to all provinces, in particular, that we do that in partnership with community partners, in business communities, and with the federal government so that we get this right.

The child intervention system has been a priority for our government and an issue our members have long advocated for. With the benefit of having colleagues who have worked on the front line within the system, our government has taken the opportunity to take real action to support young people who come into our care. While we do know that the system won't be fixed overnight, we are steadfast in our commitment to taking action as quickly as practicable to make improvements. We know that this starts with ensuring that the child intervention program and those who have oversight of the system such as the office of the Child and Youth Advocate have the resources and capacity they need to continue to do their work.

This is why even in challenging fiscal times we have added more money into the child intervention system and we approved through an all-party committee the resources for the office of the Child and Youth Advocate less than six months into the government. In total we have increased \$37 million to support the work of the child intervention system.

Every time that a tragedy occurs, we do look into the circumstances and make improvements. Of course, every tragedy, every issue is difficult and different. For instance, in the province we have 1,700 children in kinship care homes. I do recognize that one death is too many, but at the same time there are 1,700 children who do

receive services in safe, caring, and loving homes in kinship care in our province.

At the heart of the work that we do to support families lies the caring and intelligent front-line workers that devote their lives and time to the issues facing indigenous communities and issues facing Albertan families. Often these workers are asked to do too much with too little, and we know that their work and dedication is at the heart of how we can improve support for youth and families. We need to provide them with the needed supports and resources to do their job efficiently.

Let me be clear. We have much work ahead of us, and the stakes couldn't be higher. Every single member of this government, this caucus, is committed to this cause, and we will be working closely with families, workers, communities, business leaders, and many others to make these improvements. While this is a problem that touches everyone in this province and touches every province in this country, we know that Alberta must take leadership to improve our system for the safety and well-being of young people.

With respect to the comments from the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, since that round-table I think there was progress made as well, and the department does provide every death and serious injury report publicly on a quarterly basis, and we do share that with the office of the Child and Youth Advocate so he can look into the systemic issues and suggest improvements. In this case we have received that report. We take the advocate's recommendations very seriously, and we have accepted the recommendations that the office of the Child and Youth Advocate made. We also provide public responses, that are available on the Human Services website, as to how we go about implementing those recommendations.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

Mr. Rodney: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to start with just a few thank yous, one to you for allowing this to occur. I would like to thank the hon. House leader for the Official Opposition for making this motion in the first place. It is apparent not just on this day but in the past and I'm sure in the future that his dedication to our future generations is something that's beyond reproach. I know that's shared by yours truly as a fellow dad and by, I dare say, every member of this House. It's part of the reason that we're here.

I'd like to thank the hon. Government House Leader for also agreeing to this debate. He didn't have to, but he did. I would like to thank the Minister of Human Services for rising just moments ago and explaining what is happening with his ministry now. Let's face it, sir, with the greatest of respect, this is something that hasn't just faced you; it's faced previous ministers, and every minister that will come after you will also have to deal with this, sadly, as long as there's the human condition. It's incumbent upon us, it's our honour, and it's our obligation to deal with this as best as possible. I wish you and everyone in your department Godspeed.

I also look forward to hearing from every other minister in this government, and I'll tell you why, Mr. Speaker. It's because this is an issue that affects every single department that this government is charged with. Again, I look forward to hearing from the other ministers and the Premier on this as well as the folks who serve as private members.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Speaker, I am so sad that we are speaking about this here today. Oh, now it's Madam Speaker. Welcome to the chair.

4:20

I'm so sad that we're speaking about this today because it's too late for Serenity. When I first heard about this, I was bordering on being physically sick. But I can tell you that I am so glad that we're talking about this today because it's not too late for other young Albertans. Madam Speaker, I think just about how every one of us has a ribbon on today for National Child Day, and just yesterday I tweeted out for Universal Children's Day "Children are more important than anything else in our world! Today is Universal Children's Day." I could have written so much more, but it's a tweet. I could have said: every day should be children's day. But I had room for a link to their rights from the United Nations as well as to our Legislature.

You know, we're all wearing these here today, but also on our desks here today was the report, the annual report 2015-2016 from the office of the Child and Youth Advocate here in Alberta. I would like to salute them and thank them for doing incredible things. I'll just do a short list of 10 categories. I want to point out, first of all: did you know, Madam Speaker, that in the last year alone a total of 2,535 young people were served by this office? That's seven a day. No wonder we're speaking about this. This is urgent, not just right now but every hour.

You know, these folks advocate for young people; they connect with experts to better serve younger children; they contribute to systemic advocacy, which is absolutely critical; they speak up about issues affecting young people; they connect people with knowledge; they advocate on children's mental health; they engage with youth in the justice system; they connect with community organizations; they focus on sexual and gender minority youth; and they identify issues at the regional and agency level. Madam Speaker, on page 20 there are no fewer than seven different quotations from youth about how invaluable these services have been for them. I dare say that in many cases it's actually saved their lives.

I know this, tragically, from first-hand experience as well. A few careers ago, before this one, I was honoured to serve as an educator and administrator for over 13 years in three countries, from kindergarten to university. I started out in the West Indies, went over to Nepal, two of the poorest countries on Earth. You know, times are tough here, but – holy smokes – if you compare it to what's happened in those absolutely impoverished regions and the consequences that incredible poverty wreak, it was heartbreaking.

But the heartbreak isn't just overseas; it's within our own borders as well. I've been so sad to see so many terrible things. You know, my first job in Alberta was in Calgary, right after the Calgary Olympics. I was hired as a special educator for what they called the skills enhancement program. That was a code word for a holding tank for kids that could not fit anywhere else or people had since cast aside. It included children with severe learning disabilities, children who simply could not speak English, children who had nowhere else to go. I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that there were a number of con artists in serious trouble with the law – very serious trouble with the law – in our classroom. There were prostitutes in our classroom. There were drug traffickers in our classroom. These children were in junior high.

That being said, there were some incredible success stories because of what they did and because I was fortunate enough to have a little bit of luck in partnering with a bunch of wonderful people in the community, often without the parents or in spite of them. God bless them. You know, in senior high school, they actually created a position called youth ministry co-ordinator. For some reason they asked me to help out there in the classroom, in private counselling sessions, and in the community. The abuse that

I saw was of every kind. You know all the categories, ladies and gentlemen. I won't go through the list. Yes, there were success stories. We reached a lot of kids and helped a lot of them. But for some of them they were too far gone, and the results were catastrophic.

I guess I'm pointing out, Madam Speaker, that wherever we are, whatever the age, this is happening. It's happened in the past, it's happening now, and it's going to happen in the future. We need to not only talk about this; we need to continue to do more, different, and new things.

You know, when it came time to be in government, I was so honoured to be the chair of the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission and also the associate minister of wellness. We started some great programs that helped a lot of people with healthy eating and active living and helped a lot of folks with education and treatment when it came to addictions and mental illness. Back then it was crystal meth. Now it's fentanyl. It's other things.

This is often life and death for folks. It really is. You turn to appendix A in the aforementioned report: 16-year-old Sam, nine-year-old Bonita, six-week-old Nicole, eight-year-old Ella, 17-year-old Catherine, two-year-old Teanna, 17-year-old Makayla, 10-month-old Lily; 14-year-old Asinay, 15-year-old Sage, 18-year-old Cedar, 15-year-old Morley, 15-year-old Kari, 15-year-old Victoria, and 18-year-old Jacob. We had our little friend last week. I shudder to think who it might be today, tomorrow, next week, next month, next year. Who knows what will happen next? Who knows when? Who knows what they will undergo? Madam Speaker, it is a life-and-death issue, and if even one death or even serious injury can be avoided because of what happens here today, this was time that was extremely well spent.

With the few seconds I have left, as PC House leader, MLA for Calgary-Lougheed, an Albertan, and just as a dad I urge everyone in this Chamber, every minister, and every Albertan to do everything possible to make sure that we have the skills to be the best parents we could possibly be so we could pass on the best life lessons that we can to our children so they can experience success of every kind, which, really, is not only the opportunity but the right of every child, not only within our borders but within Canada and beyond.

God bless Alberta, and God bless our little Albertans. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. First off, I would like to thank my colleague for bringing this motion forward. This is something that's been haunting me for quite a while, well over a year, when I started to receive reports from the office of the Child and Youth Advocate. Certainly, I think that for all of us this has been a really tough weekend, reading the report of Serenity and others.

One of the things that I was really hoping to achieve from the emergency debate here today was actually some answers from this government as to what is actually changing. It was really disheartening, Madam Speaker, to hear today, after the government was given notice of our intentions to hold an emergency debate, that the Premier and the Minister of Human Services were not prepared in any way, shape, or form to answer any of the questions about the systemic problems in our child intervention system. I was also disheartened to hear the minister just speak a few moments ago and actually use the words: I think there are some changes being made from the committee that was formed many years ago.

I want nothing more, Madam Speaker, than actual changes to be made within this system, and I will do whatever it takes. If it takes me screaming and yelling at the top of my lungs, then that is what

I will do until something moves, until something changes. This is, I can assure you, a topic that will not be left alone.

4:30

More money is not always the answer in a system. Actually, this government is fortunate enough to have a body that provides recommendations to the government on how to change the system, recommendations that we've been given over and over and over again. Yet nothing has changed. Absolutely nothing. We already know of deaths of children in care under this government's watch. Those reports will come, and if they're the same systemic problems that have come from the reports that we've received in the last year and a half, this government should be removed. I don't say this to play political games. I really don't. I really don't. I do it so that somebody wakes up and pays attention. I'm sick and tired of hearing: well, we are just going to fund this, and everything is going to be fine. There are reports here that clearly define problems in this system, and nobody is doing a thing about it. These are children. If it's not true, like the other side says, then somebody please stand up and tell me what is happening. More money is not the solution. We know that.

The Human Services' plan clearly states that their ideology is an unlimited number of reunification attempts. We see time and time again that this is not what is best for the safety of the child, yet we continue to go down this path. Can we take a look at that? That is one of the problems I see, and we need to seriously address this. Seriously address this.

We have cultural sensitivities that we need to address in our kinship care program, and I understand that. In many cases it does work, and this is the best thing for the child, but when the safety of the child is at risk, that is first and nothing else.

Serenity was living just under an hour away from Edmonton, yet no one would offer an hour of their time to drive out there and check on her. Beaten, starved, raped, four years old: just one of the cases. This is just one of many. This is a fail, an absolute fail.

I truly would like to know what progress has been made on the recommendations that have come out of previous reports, and if there's something that I can do, whatever it is, to help fix this problem, please let me know. I'm sure that everyone in this House is more than interested to fix these problems. This isn't politics; this is children's lives. Madam Speaker, I want to state here today that I will promise that I will do whatever I can to help change the systemic problems in our foster care and our kinship system.

I've had many conversations with foster parents who are reprimanded when they stand up for the children that are in their care. They're told that they are not the parents and they have no right to be. Yet when our government's ideology is to keep placing our children back with their parents who have abused them in the first place and we do this over and over and over again, that's a fail. I've actually seen this first-hand. I have a family near and dear to my heart that continually goes through the heartbreak of watching a child that they love come back from a visit with their birth parents in a traumatic state, yet the workers don't or the system doesn't care. How is that okay? How do we allow this to happen? We need to stop and go back to putting children first.

This is an emergency. This is a problem, and we need to stop ignoring it or stop just saying things and make some progress. Let's do this. Let's work together. That is my goal. I know that's the goal of my colleagues here for sure. I'm pretty sure that it is for the government. Let's get to work here, guys. Let's send this to our internal committee. Let's actually implement some of the recommendations listed in these reports that keep coming out on children who have died. Not next week. Today. We can do some of this stuff today. We could do it immediately. We can stop trying to

be politically correct when we should actually be loving and caring in a situation where our children really, actually do matter and they are put first.

I know that sometimes you can disconnect yourself from the problems, from the deaths of the children in these reports because they're not yours, but they are. When they are in government care, this is all of our responsibility, and if this Legislative Assembly can't address these problems, we shouldn't be here. Over and over and over again: Ella, August 2015, eight years old; Nicole, June 2015, only six weeks old; Teanna, two years old, November 2015; Makayla, 17 years old, December 2015; Lily, 10 months old, March 2016; Onessa, 17 years old, October 2016; Netasinim, 15 years old, October 2016.

I urge this Assembly to get it together, to figure out what the best course of action here is, to put our children first. Our children in care deserve better. They were removed from their homes because they were not in safe situations, and we're placing them in other unsafe situations. For what purpose? Some of these children are removed from loving homes while in care, but for ideology's sake we move them somewhere else when we are shown that that didn't work in that particular case. Roll it back. Not every case is the exact same answer. There are unique situations. Let's respect the voices of the people that are closest to our children.

Whatever I can do, I will help. I promise you that from myself and my colleagues. I urge members on all sides of this House to step up and do something and take action about our kids in care. It's not about tweeting snarky things. Let's get to work here.

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

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I stand today to support the many calls from both sides of the floor to take this situation as an emergency and to respond to it with all of our integrity, with all of our heart, with all of our desire.

But I've got to tell you that as a social worker for 34 years in this province, with a specialization in the area of child sexual abuse and neglect, having worked for the government in child welfare, having worked in private practice for many years working with children who have been sexually abused, having done the research study on the incidence of child abuse and neglect in the province of Alberta over the last three terms, that has been repeated, having been involved in this issue as somebody standing on the front steps of this Legislature, I absolutely have to express my frustration at the things I hear coming from across the floor, in the last speech particularly.

You know, I have been committed to this issue since I was a young pup just out of my first social work degree, in 1982, and I have devoted my whole life to making sure that the children of this province get the best care that they possibly can. When I hear comments like, "Children are moved from one house to another because the front-line workers don't care," I can't tell you the depth of concern and anger I feel that that kind of accusation would be made, that that's the level of analysis of this situation that is going on.

4:40

It's absolutely incredible to me that you can take a look at a situation and so narrowly focus on one activity without any kind of estimation of the context of why that's happened, why this system has been a failure for so many years. I was a child welfare worker in 1982, and I can tell you that I started organizations back then dealing with front-line workers to resolve these kinds of issues. You know who it was who always repressed and stopped us from moving forward on the actions that we needed? It was the right-wing parties of this province. That's who it was. That's why I was

standing on the front steps of this Legislature protesting along with thousands of other workers while there were cutbacks going on.

You talk about the fact that there's an ideology problem here. I can tell you that you're damn right. Sorry. I apologize and withdraw that. You are right. There is an ideology problem. I can tell you that it was the right wing of this government that took the Child Welfare Act and removed the words at the front of that Child Welfare Act that said that the act is to be concerned about the best interests of the child and replaced them with an act dedicated to the preservation of the family. That was ideology, and that came from the right wing of this province. That did not come from the front-line child welfare workers, who protested those kinds of behaviours and who said: "Do you want to know what the real problem is? The real problem is that there are structural reasons why people live in poverty. There are structural reasons why people commit acts, horrendous acts, of child abuse and neglect."

The right wing always, every time, votes against doing something about that, and we're tired of that all the time. They stand up and ask for individual things for their individual constituencies, but when we say, "The issue is structural; we have to change how this society works," they're never there for it. When we say, "We need after school care, we need food programs in the schools, we need child care that's affordable for everyday people," are they there saying, "We would like to vote for an increase in the budget for child welfare, we would like to vote for an increase in the budget for education, we would like to vote for an increase in health care"? Do we ever hear that? We do not because they keep their focus narrow. Some individual has committed a horrendous act, and that's all we can talk about.

There's a death that's been caused by one horrendous person, and we all feel that tragedy. I know that they feel that tragedy. I feel that tragedy – I feel it in sadness; I feel it in rage – but then I do something about it. I go out and analyze the system. I use my brain to look at: how has that happened? In my PhD research I can tell you that we looked at what happens that causes a child who is raised in an abusive situation to become an abuser themselves. I can tell you what happens. It's the lack of appropriate interventions, the lack of opportunity, the lack of structural change. As soon as we start to impose those kind of things in a child's life, we provide structural invitations for success. We make sure they have opportunities for loving, caring people outside of their family in daycares, in school systems, in hospital systems. We see a drop in that child abuse and neglect. So what do we do? We come into the House, and we vote for improvements to those systems – health care, social services, education – because we actually don't want children to die. That's why we do it.

I get really tired of individual workers being blamed. I get tired of people being told that they don't care. I tell you what. I can tell you that we care in a way that does not only include our hearts, but it includes our brains, where we look at the research, we follow up the practice that's done in the community, and we look at the issues.

Right now this child is a child who died on a reserve in this province. One of the primary issues has been brought to the Human Rights Commission at the national level, and they have said that the issue is that it's been neglected financially. That's what they said. They said that the amount of money put into the child welfare systems on reserves is between half and two-thirds of what is being put into child welfare systems in the provinces. That is a human rights violation. If you're not voting for more money for children on-reserve, then I really have to ask: what is it that you see when you read that Human Rights Commission result that tells you that it doesn't matter whether they get those services, that it doesn't matter whether they get things, that we just now have to be sunshine and rosy and treat our children better? I'm not putting up with that

happy-go-lucky kind of “we’ll just be nice people” anymore. I want to be determined people. I want to be people who will put our money where our mouth is because that’s how the system works. If you don’t put money into it, it’s not going to get better.

You want a better system? You stop hiring people when they come out of their BSW or, worse, with no social work training at all coming out of a geology degree and turning them into a child welfare worker at the age of 22. If you want a better system, you start hiring them at 30, and you pay them twice as much because they’ve got life experience and they’ve got training that says that they’re going to do a better job. Then you give them 10 families, not 30 families, and you say: “We want you to actually fix things with those families. We want you to develop a relationship. We want you to understand the families, the support systems, and the socioeconomic situation that we are in. We want you to change all of that. You know what I’m going to do to make sure that you can do that right? I’m going to provide you with the resources you need. That’s what I’m going to do. I’m going to pay you what you’re worth. I’m going to give you the money so that you can put those kids into Boy Scouts and hockey and art classes so that they can live the life that we want all of our children to live. I’m going to do that because I care.”

And I do care. If I get told one more time that I don’t care, I am going to ask that person how much they have done over the last 34 years, how many kids they have seen who came in their door when they were six years old who were sexually abused because they lived in a house with 12 people and there were bedrooms only for six. That’s what I want to ask them. What did they do about the housing on reserves? What did they do about the fact that we don’t have water on-reserve? What did they do about the fact that the teachers on-reserve are underfunded compared to teachers off-reserve? What do we do about the fact that child welfare workers are not funded? What are you doing about the real issues, not the ones that break your heart but the ones that you understand from your analysis of reading the literature or working with the people in the community and figuring out where the pressures are, where the problems are? Have you done that work? Then you come to me and you tell me I don’t care, but until then I don’t want to hear that I don’t care.

I can tell you that there is lots we can do. Every death is a tragedy that should not have happened. We can get together across the floor, and we can . . . [Mr. Feehan’s speaking time expired.]

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Next on my list I have Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, one of the things that is great about living in this province is that we live in a democracy where people of divergent points of view can get up and speak. I want to thank the hon. Minister of Human Services for his comments, and I want to thank the government for allowing us to have this debate today. I want to thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford for his comments. The passion is there. I know that there are times when we could have a rebuttal and we could have a debate as to the causes of why families are in crisis and how we deal with them. Suffice it to say that on this side of the House I think there is just as much compassion. There is a time for rebuttal, and there is a time for debate.

4:50

I think that we have had opportunities in this House today and on previous days to talk about how perhaps we’re more compassionate when we provide people with jobs and finances to be able to take

care of their families than to have big government, but suffice it to say that I think everyone in this Legislature understands that we have a responsibility, Madam Speaker, as legislators to ensure the safety of our kids, our children. More importantly, I dare say that we have a responsibility as citizens to ensure that we take care of the children that are in our society.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford brings a great deal of experience. We recognize that. Please understand that after 30 years of being an educator, I too see the human side of this equation. When I look back on my 30 years of being a teacher, I’ve seen times when I wished that I had been able to do more to help the kids that I taught. Some of them are no longer here with us. I see the value of a foster care system and a system of adoption and a system of kinship care. I have three cousins that were welcomed into our family through a system of foster care and adoption, two of whom were First Nations, one of whom we thought was First Nations but turned out to be Hawaiian. So I see the value of foster care.

I think all of us in this House recognize the difficulty that comes with trying to deal with families in crisis. I saw it as a teacher. I see it in my church. I see it in my community. I see families in crisis. They have a myriad of reasons for why they are in crisis, and that’s what makes dealing with it so difficult. We are tasked in this debate with focusing in, however, on one child and a system that let one child down in a tragic way. I don’t think we’re here today to focus in on any one individual caseworker or supervisor. It’s not appropriate. We are aware that these caseworkers are in many cases overburdened and are trying to do the best job that they can. But it still speaks to a system that has broken down, and it is not acceptable for us to turn our eyes away from that.

We have a broken system when it allows children to suffer and die. We have a broken system when a child can be physically and sexually abused and malnourished. If that doesn’t tell us that we have a broken system, then we’re blind. We have a broken system when we can have a four-year-old child who cannot speak for herself, who weighs 18 pounds, is obviously suffering, yet we leave her in her placement. That’s a broken system. I guess we need a response from this government and from this ministry that will recognize that it is not only broken but that we have to take some concrete steps to fix it.

You know, if I was looking at this without the experience, which I don’t have, of the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford, I’d ask questions like: are we ensuring that the training that we have for our caseworkers is adequate? That’s a question that needs to be asked, and I think it’s a question that needs to be answered, Madam Speaker. Do we have training and support that will help them to recognize and to address child safety? Do we allow them the ability and the training and the knowledge to be able to identify the risk factors that need to be assessed and need to be recognized to ensure that they will recognize when a child is in danger? Do we have a commitment on behalf of the Legislature, of the government, of the caseworkers, of the supervisors that they understand that it must be child-centred and that at the very forefront of this child-centredness we have the safety of the child as paramount regardless of where that child is placed?

This really isn’t about whether this is a kinship placement or whatever kind of placement you want to call it. This is about child safety. This issue is about child safety, and it must always be about that first. That’s what I was taught as a teacher. I’m sure that’s what you’re taught as a social worker. Somehow it’s been lost in this situation, in this case.

Have we done the job in providing the resources and the care and the education necessary for the kinship providers to adequately take care of the children that have been given into their care? That’s a question that needs to be asked, Madam Speaker. We have a

responsibility to ensure that they are and that they have the resources that are necessary for these family kinship units to be able to serve the needs of these children.

I know that as a teacher, as an educator there were times when I had to sit down with another colleague and I had to ask them: “Do I really understand what this child is going through? Am I seeing it? Do I need another pair of eyes to look at the situation and be able to see if I’m actually teaching this child in a way that respects them and that encourages and engages their learning?” Well, I think that there are times with kinship, with the adults that are in that relationship that are overseeing these children, where maybe self-reporting is not good enough, where they need an objective pair of eyes on that situation.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, followed by the hon. Member for St. Albert.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to thank the Official Opposition House Leader for raising this today and the government for agreeing to go ahead with the debate. I think this is important. When we have children dying in government care or freshly out of government care, I don’t think that we could really say that there’s a lot we do around here that’s more important than that. So I think this is time well spent.

You know what? I’m not one of the experts, but here’s what I think about this because I have seen this. When we were in government, children in government care were dying. With the current government, children in government care are dying. None of it’s good. None of it’s what we want. But I’m interested, as long as we’re having this debate, in thinking about how we make it better.

I think back to my former colleague Manmeet. When he was the Human Services minister, he actually started to address this and started to open up the doors and make arrangements so that parents whose children had died could actually talk about it. There was a time when – I’m sure it was well intended, but it occurs to me that it’s not a good idea – they weren’t even allowed to talk about their own kids. There’s more to be done.

5:00

When I hear this today, I think to myself: what can we do? I hear the aboriginal affairs minister, who, with all due respect, lost his mind a little bit just now. I guess he was passionate, and I’m sure he meant what he said. I really don’t want to throw him under the bus, but the fact is that he spouted off a whole bunch of answers that he had, but his government has been in government for a year and a half, and they haven’t put those actions into place.

Madam Speaker, you could argue that our government could have done better, and I’m sure that the next government after this can do better, too. It’s a complex problem. It’ll never be simple. You’re dealing with the problems of society. When children are taken from their parents and put in government’s hands, that means that something isn’t perfect or that somebody believes something isn’t perfect. You’re dealing with a difficult situation. Rather than poke each other in the eye all day about whether right-wing people don’t care or left-wing people don’t care – well, that’s good entertainment for whoever is watching, but it doesn’t actually get us any closer to an answer.

I’m probably going to take less than my 10 minutes because I’m hoping that the Premier will stand up and commit to forming an all-party committee where we can actually talk about this. We’ve heard from people on both sides of the House that say: I know what to do. Well, maybe it’s time to do it. Maybe it’s time to stop pointing

fingers and saying that right-wing people don’t care or that left-wing people don’t care or that you people don’t care. If this matters to us, why don’t we sit down like adults and actually put some stuff on the table? I could talk longer, but I’m hoping to get a commitment from the Premier that she’ll do that.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert, followed by Calgary-Elbow.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Never has it been more obvious that the interactions between the many areas within departments and ministries influence each other in the success of our outcomes. It doesn’t matter that the services and processes we’re talking about today are the responsibility primarily on that reserve of the federal government. The issues facing our service sectors and even more complex life-and-death problems facing Alberta children are complex and intersect in so many areas, whether it’s mental health, addictions, inclusive education, poverty, access to services, safe housing, or supports for people with disabilities.

I raise this because I think we all understand that the changes required to solve the problems that result in these tragic deaths of innocent young children are multilayered and complex. The senseless death of yet another child is infuriating to all of us. I know that. It’s heartbreaking to all of us, but we can’t simply bow our heads and wear a ribbon to mourn a loss. We have to fight like hell in any capacity available to us in order to make sure this doesn’t happen again. I can’t wait till we get to the point where we stop just reacting. We have to know that there are so many factors that lead us to this place, the place where we lose children.

Indigenous communities and families face huge challenges and a disproportionate amount of loss, violence, and deep-rooted issues that continuously threaten to tear individuals, families, and communities apart: childhood trauma, exposure to domestic violence, parental addictions, mental health problems, often many that are untreated but some that are treated, and the frequency of death by suicide, which is shocking. Nobody should have to die so that a system improves.

On a side note, I would like to thank Paula Simons and the *Edmonton Journal* for their story, that I think all of us probably felt physically sick reading. I’m thankful for real journalism. This is their job, and I’m grateful.

All of these social problems need to be front and centre on a regular basis as evidenced by the time and the money that we invest in them. I know that these problems transcend party lines, but I do want to point out that we need to use our time properly. The opposition uses their time to score points with their base. They tend to ask the same questions every day. I get it. I get what you’re trying to do. Carbon levy, coal-fired electricity: all very vital issues to discuss. Making fun of ideology, sharing a fun bottle of Leninade: I get that, too. However, I have noticed that social issues predictably come up when there are headlines. Why are they not on your top-100 list? These are not stale issues. These are issues that need to light a fire under all of us every single day.

I remember that during the First Session our Premier stood up and faced family members of missing and murdered girls from Alberta, and their families were sitting above us. She stood up, and she publicly asked then Prime Minister Stephen Harper to conduct an inquiry befitting the horror of the problem. We stood and clapped, and we saw tears streaming from their faces. But not everybody in this House stood up. That’s bad politics. These are important issues. [interjection]

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, it's not appropriate in the House to be sharing what's on the screen, so please respect the member who has the floor.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Ms Renaud: That's unfortunate.

Another . . . [interjection] What's that?

Mr. Rodney: Would you like me to read what it says, Madam Speaker?

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert has the floor.

Go ahead.

Ms Renaud: You may know one of my constituents. Her name is Velvet Martin. She is a powerful advocate and had a daughter with complex disabilities who, for a number of reasons, was in care. She was in care when she died. Although this is one of the far-too-many tragic stories that we've had to hear in this House, even before we were in this House, we have much to learn from families and from women like Velvet. They're incredible experts, and they are so willing to share. They're reluctant experts, but they have a lot to offer, and I think we need to take them up on that. That is truly collaboration. Us discussing it here today is good. It puts a spotlight on a very important issue. You're right; it doesn't solve the problem, but I think it gives us momentum to go forward and solve the problem.

I think we all received some pretty thick books about Canada's truth and reconciliation process and the recommendations. Here is another example. I'm guessing that probably all of us didn't read them all. I know I didn't read all of the editions, but I commit and promise that I will now.

Thank you for your time.

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

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and thank you very much to the Member for St. Albert for her thoughtful comments not just today but for the work that she's done throughout her career advocating for people who cannot advocate for themselves. It means a tremendous amount for the government front bench and their advocacy.

I really do especially want to thank the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills for bringing up this issue. I think that the government certainly deserves credit for accepting that this is, in fact, an emergency and worthy of time spent in this House. You know, I think there's no question that everyone in this House wants to find a solution and that things will get heated and emotional. Frankly, I'd be surprised if they didn't – I'm not sure any person could – when looking at the situation with Serenity, specifically, but more generally at the systemic issues that have been discussed here this afternoon.

The questions I have are around why these problems continue. I know some of the root-cause issues have been discussed here this afternoon. But what steps are being taken? In fact, while the government has only been in power for about 18 months, I think that's enough time to have really started to dig into some of this stuff.

I have to say that were I to find myself on that side of the House, not just as, perhaps, the Minister of Human Services but if I were any member of the front bench, I would really ask some very sharp questions about what the current state of the system is. What are the constraints? What are the challenges? What are the resource shortfalls? I'd really bring that before not just my colleagues in my

own caucus but before this House and before all Albertans so that Albertans know that not only is something being done, but it is seen to be done. This is an issue that for decades has been crying out for transparency.

5:10

I want to recognize again and acknowledge the tremendous work of Paula Simons, Darcy Henton, Karen Kleiss, and other journalists who have done a lot of work. What I find frustrating is that it seems to take media reports and that level of digging for these issues to be truly brought to light. I would suggest that it is the job of government to surface these issues, even if they are politically challenging, even if they are awkward. I know that there are, clearly, rules around privacy and that we need to respect that, but I would challenge that the life of children in care in this province or children who have been in care or that are active with the child welfare system ought to take precedence over privacy.

It's interesting. We have the annual report of the Information and Privacy Commissioner – and I've read part of it – and one of the themes that emerges and one of the themes that I've seen is using privacy laws, which are put in place to legitimately protect the private information of Albertans, as an excuse for inaction or as an excuse or cover for things the government doesn't want us to know about, that we ought to know about. The more information that's out in public, the better.

What I want to know is: what's happening today? We know what happened to Serenity and so many others that we've heard about in this House. What's happening today, and what is the government doing about it specifically? It seems like this government has continued on with a lack of responsiveness to foster parents, other guardians who will advocate vociferously on behalf of a child who it seems may be being put into kinship care. When I read the recommendations of the Child and Youth Advocate, specifically in Serenity's case, the recommendations, to me, are on one level very straightforward and on another level tremendously troubling.

I will start with the first recommendation. It talks about the creation of a home study tool specifically for kinship care – I think that makes sense – that is relevant and addresses the unique kinship circumstances. I think we ought to do that. The question is: why is that not being done already? That, to me, seems like one of the obvious things we ought to be doing. What the Child and Youth Advocate recommends is that we use that tool kit to collect information, working with community professionals who are familiar with the applicant regarding the demonstrated ability of that kinship applicant. Are we not now evaluating the demonstrated ability of a particular kinship situation to accept a child in care? Is that not happening? If that's not happening, that seems to be a pretty obvious root cause of why there could be problems.

Now, I want to emphasize that I believe the kinship care model is a very good model. It is what we ought to be pursuing, ensuring especially that indigenous kids are kept within their own cultural frame as much as possible, but never should they ever be put in a situation where that's going to put the child at greater risk. So that then goes to the supports that are required for kinship care providers, and that's the second recommendation of the Child and Youth Advocate, providing a continuum of culturally relevant supportive services. Is that not in place today?

One of the nice benefits of sitting next to my hon. colleague here for Calgary-Mountain View is that we were talking about Jordan's principle. The question of jurisdiction was raised earlier. Jurisdiction should never be an excuse for not providing proper care. Jordan's principle says that regardless of jurisdiction the first level of government that interacts with a child in this case should take responsibility and then let the administrators in the background

figure out the money piece later. That's absolutely vital. I wonder to what degree that has exacerbated this particular case and to what degree that is causing problems on an ongoing basis.

But perhaps the most troubling recommendation of the office of the Child and Youth Advocate in this case is recommendation 3: "require that caseworkers complete a child-specific assessment and resolution of risk factors prior to terminating guardianship." Are we not doing that now? Is no one assessing what the needs of that child are? Are they not assessing the risk factors of a kinship care model, of a specific kinship care situation? Are there cases where the government of Alberta is taking children out of a safe situation and putting them into a situation of risk? That's the implication of this recommendation. That seems to be what's happened in the case of Serenity, and if that's something that's more than a one-off, we have a very, very serious problem.

If I were in a position to be making decisions, if this recommendation was placed on my desk, the first thing I would do is say: what in the world is going on? How is it possible that we need someone in care, a child in care, to die in tragic and horrible – heartbreaking doesn't even begin to describe the thoughts I had when I was reading the Paula Simons article on this. How is it that that needs to happen, that an investigation needs to take place covering the better part of two years, for us to be looking at a recommendation that is just patently obvious? Before you place a child in care of anyone, make sure it's safe for them to be there.

It literally puts a chill down my spine as I think about the fact that there may very well be children right now in this province – in fact, it seems likely that there are – who have been put into dangerous situations where they are likely to face abuse, perhaps to the point of being starved to death, of dying in that situation. I don't suggest for a second that the government wants that for the kids. I know they don't. I know for a fact there are members of this House sitting here today who have directly worked with kids in care. I know that they don't want that either. I know for a fact they don't. But why is it that we have to let children die? That seems to continue. It seems to be a pattern and a cycle that's repeating over and over again.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, followed by Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I think, like all members of this Assembly, that over the last few weeks as I read Paula Simons' articles, her first article on November 16, I was shocked. As I read her article over this weekend, I was physically ill thinking about what happened to poor Serenity. For me and, I suspect, many of the parents that are in the Assembly and the House this evening, my thoughts were for my kids, to think about them and the preciousness of them, my nieces and nephews, just to think that somebody, a little Albertan like that, could be so abused and ultimately lose their life because of the situation that they found themselves in. Well, our responsibility is as a province, and nobody saw it. Nobody was able to deal with it despite warnings.

For me, when I read it, my main thought, my first thought, truly came to my dad. Most people in the Assembly are going to think: "Well, you're talking about a kid. Why would your thoughts go to your dad, hon. member?" My dad – his story is well documented in this province – came from a terribly abusive home. A terribly abusive home. The story that I remember him telling us – and he doesn't talk too much about his childhood – was that the routine in his house when he was little and even as a toddler was that his dad would come home, and if you could get the door open to your bedroom, he and his brother, before his dad took off his boots, then you wouldn't get beaten. You know when you're little and you're

trying to open that door and you can't get it open? That was the game that they would play.

My dad tells this story – this breaks my heart when I think about it – of the one day he finally opened that door and he still got beaten. He came from a terrible, terrible place. It's a miracle – it is nothing short of a miracle – that he survived that, that he was able to escape that because of some people. What is truly a miracle beyond that is that he was able to become a great person within our society, somebody who was able to raise six sons, somebody who was able to accomplish so much in the world of poverty, to be able to help thousands of people, you know, and overcome that terrible childhood that he had to be able to do that.

5:20

When I hear it, at first I think of the abuse that my dad went through, and it just breaks my heart to think about any child going through that. I also think about what Serenity could have become. What did we lose? We lost her when she was a toddler. I mean, if that had happened to my dad, I wouldn't be here, Madam Speaker, and neither would my five brothers, all our children. His legacy now will be his kids. You can imagine that with six boys, all their wives, and all of them with multiple kids now, we have to rent a hall just to get everybody together. But if he and the people that helped him weren't able to help him escape that situation, that would not be possible. That's where we failed Serenity. I think we can all agree on that. We were not able to help her escape that situation, and that's tragic. It's just tragic.

I think we have to talk about the key facts here. We have a four-year-old named Serenity who died after being in kinship care. That's a fact. At the time of her passing she weighed just 18 pounds, which is the typical weight of a nine-month-old baby. She had severe bruising, including in her pubic area. She was hypothermic and was suffering from a suspected head injury. There was a lot more that was listed in Paula's article that I can't even say because it's just too horrific to imagine. That child was in care, in our care. Something went terribly wrong. That's what we're here to discuss today.

I know the hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford spoke very passionately earlier. I want to be clear, Madam Speaker. That is a cabinet minister, who is around the cabinet table right now, in government, who has more ability than almost anybody else to help fix this situation. Albertans that I am talking to about this right now and the kids that are in care right now that may be facing similar situations as Serenity's don't care what we look like on Twitter. They don't care who can talk more passionately here and get the best Facebook post. They need help. Our system has failed them, has failed many children along the way, and continues to fail them. If we continue to have partisan conversations, focus on partisan politics and not on how we solve this problem, we will not solve it, and sadly we'll be back here again in another 18 months talking about another Serenity. To me, that is unacceptable. That is unacceptable.

I thank the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, my neighbour and my good friend, for bringing this up today because I think it is a great opportunity for all parties in this Assembly to have a discussion about something that is just so horrific, to be able to talk about why this took place, what the recommendations from the Child and Youth Advocate are to stop it from taking place in the future, and to hear some answers from the government, Madam Speaker, on what they are doing to make sure that this does not happen in the future.

Now, Madam Speaker, I want to be clear in saying, first of all, that, of course, nobody in government hurt Serenity. I honestly, one hundred per cent believe that every member of this House and every

party is absolutely horrified by what happened to that little girl. But the people that can fix the system to make sure that it never happens again sit on that side of the House, and standing up and taking partisan jabs at the opposition and trying to accuse us of not caring about social issues is not going to help the next Serenities of the world, kids that are in abusive situations right now that we need to get help. Do we honestly think right now that where they're at, where they're sitting, they're going, "Oh, jeez, who cares more about social issues?" Come on.

Everybody in this House cares about kids. They care about their kids. They care about their neighbours' kids. They care about kids. Everybody is horrified by what happened here. It's not a competition. The question is: what are we going to do about it? I truly was hoping, Madam Speaker, during this debate that we could talk about that, talk about the tragic incident that took place, talk about the death of a little girl that happened on our watch, on our province's watch.

To be clear, Madam Speaker, the death did not take place when this government was in power, but the investigation into the death has taken place largely while this government was in power, for the last 18 months. This government wants to continue to blame the third party for everything that goes wrong. That's not acceptable. Members of the third party have stood up and said: hey, we could have even done it better. I suspect that if we were on that side of the Assembly and if the 2015 election went differently, we could have done it better, too.

This should not be about politics. This should be about: what do we do to make sure there's never another Serenity in Alberta? What do we do? I was hoping during this debate that we could hear some answers to some questions instead of partisan attacks by the government. I would like to know: what concrete and specific measures will be taken to watch and supervise kinship care going forward? What have we done to watch and supervise kinship care based on what we have now found out?

They can do that. They're in charge of that, not this side of the House. All we can do is come and raise the concern on behalf of the children of Alberta. I want to know what has been done to oversee and improve child visitations. I want the ministers to stand up, through you, Madam Speaker, and tell us what is being done. I want to know what has been done to oversee and improve the checks that are placed on every adult living in a kinship care home. This side of the House can't do it. All we can do is raise it. We're doing our job. We're raising it. We're not blaming the government for what happened to Serenity. What we're asking them is what they're going to do to make sure it doesn't happen again. Not one answer from the government in almost an hour and a half of debate.

I want to know what is being done to improve the release of information to the child advocate, the person that our Assembly puts in charge of helping our children and youth in our province. Clearly, as you read through Paula Simons' article, the system is broken, the right information is not getting to the right people, and severe tragedies are happening because of it.

Right now, Madam Speaker, somewhere in this province an Alberta child is probably being abused in our care. Is that anybody in this Assembly's fault? No, of course not. They're not doing that to that child. But we can help them. What is the point of being an elected MLA and coming to this historic building if we can't even do something as simple as helping our kids in our province? Instead, we want to sit in here and talk about who's going to have the better Twitter comment and cares more about social issues.

I want to know what has been done to improve the communication between the chief medical officer and Human Services. We still can't get the information from the chief medical officer on what happened to this child. What's being done? The government can

change that. The government has the ability to deal with it. I would love it if the hon. Premier would rise and explain what her cabinet has done for that.

I want to know what has been done to improve the communication between the various justice agencies and the child advocate. Somebody reported abuse in the home that this child was in, Madam Speaker. Somebody reported it. While that child was being abused, somebody reported it, and nobody came to help.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, followed by Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate this opportunity to rise today and join in the discussion on an issue that I think we all recognize cuts close to the hearts of all Albertans. I thank the Opposition House Leader for bringing forward this opportunity for us to discuss here today.

You know, as the minister noted, I think there is nothing more heartbreaking in this world than the death of a child, so it's deeply important that we consider every way in which we can ensure the safety and protection of all children who receive services or are in our care, that we ensure that they are safe and protected. There is no question, as we've heard here today, as has been heard from all sides, that Alberta's child intervention system needs to continue to be assessed and improved to make sure that events like this don't take place again.

As the chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices I recognize the essential role of the Child and Youth Advocate in upholding that standard and providing the considered, sober critique that's required to ensure that government meets its obligations to the children it protects and serves. I commend the current officer on his dedication and commitment to fulfilling that role and continuing that work, including through this report that he's brought forward today.

Madam Speaker, it's my understanding that at the time of the advocate's report the investigation into the situation was not yet complete. Now that it has been completed, the advocate is showing the respect for other related investigations that remain ongoing by not discussing further details. I appreciate the advocate's consideration and restraint, and our government is committed to the same. We will respect all investigations that are going forward and will not jeopardize the legal process by divulging information that may affect them. Our government, however, is committed to ensuring that child intervention programs and the advocate themselves have all of the resources they need to continue with their essential work, and the minister has outlined all of the ways in which we have done so so far.

5:30

As members know, the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices has been tasked with reviewing the Child and Youth Advocate Act, the legislation which empowers and enables the work of the advocate. I've appreciated the co-operation of members of the committee from all parties as we've undertaken this review and assembled a comprehensive list of stakeholders to make oral presentations in the new year. Through this review our committee will develop recommendations on how this key piece of legislation may be improved to ensure that the advocate has all of the powers and resources necessary to complete his essential work on behalf of Albertans. I'm happy to say that we'll be hearing from both Justice and Human Services as well as a wide range of community partners who work with youth who are receiving services, with youth in care, and with youth involved in the legal system and that this will include, specifically, indigenous organizations and perspectives. I

look forward to working with all members of the committee to ensure that our report is both considered and comprehensive so that we can ensure that the advocate is able to continue to do the important work he has done in highlighting the challenges and the issues that we face in our childhood intervention systems.

I think, as we've heard here today, all members in this House care about children in care. We may differ in some of our perspectives on how we need to get there. We may differ in our approaches or in how we feel certain funds should be spent, but I don't think there's any question that all of us want to see this system improved. I appreciate the perspectives that have been brought out by many here today.

You know, Madam Speaker, I myself don't have children, but I am an uncle to 13 nieces and nephews. I love them very much, and when I hear these stories, it breaks my heart. I think of the children in the system who are just looking for the simplest thing: to be loved, protected, and kept safe. I think of all of the dedicated workers who for years have struggled to fight for these children and the families they serve, sometimes while being asked to do far too much with far too little.

I don't think we're here today to lay blame on any particular group. These are systemic issues. They are complex, they are deep seated, and they are deep rooted, and I can understand the need and the feeling for some kind of catharsis, to get angry. Certainly, if there's any issue on which to feel emotional, it is the death of a child, but our job as legislators is to come here and give this considered, sober, and careful thought, to respect the processes that are in place, to acknowledge the legalities and the other barriers that are there and how we must be careful, in some respects, of the information we share and the information we discuss but recognize that within those constraints, we still have the opportunity to have reasoned, considered debate as members about how we can improve a system that is so important to all of us and all Albertans and, most particularly, to these children.

I look forward to continuing our work with the Committee on Legislative Offices to do our part in ensuring that the advocate has all of the resources and powers that are required to do this important work. I look forward to continuing to work with our minister to ensure that we are doing our part and continuing to dig into and untangle these problems, that have built up over years and are going to take time to take apart and address, and to ensure that as we do that important work, we are watching, we are careful, we are considerate to make sure that not one more child has to have an experience like this and lose their life.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to bring a slightly different focus to this that I think also needs to be a part of our conversation together as Albertans. Let me begin by saying that I don't question at all that everybody cares, but I do think that it's not enough just to care. Care and wisdom or administrative excellence don't necessarily go together, and, yes, there are structural and ideological impediments to the system that have caused this event to occur.

My question and the point that I need to bring forward is related to the fact that Serenity was in a safe and caring foster home. She was with a loving and stable young couple. They were emotionally calm. They had no addictions. Their care for her was excellent. Even her mother has acknowledged and said how happy and how healthy she was with them. I know this because they lived in my riding and the foster parents came to my office after to ask: "What

are we supposed to do? Why was she yanked out of a very good home against their protests?"

We cannot say that the government or the people involved didn't hear or didn't know because these people protested as loudly as they possibly could. They did everything they could. Against their pleadings, in the face of their tears, they spoke for this child who couldn't speak for herself in adequate kinds of ways. They spoke, and the point is that they were completely rebuffed, completely rejected, not listened to.

You can be as passionate as you want about the need for pouring money all over the system. Money would not have fixed this in the least iota. This girl was in the safest environment possible. Everybody that was involved realized and knew that, and the reality is that it's either government policy or ideology or bureaucratic arrogance – I don't know what it is – that will not listen to the ordinary, common-sense, sensible people of Alberta. When it gets to the point where it's not about the best for the child, when it's about forced kinship at any cost, at the risk of abuse, forced kinship regardless of safety of the child, forced kinship without any consideration to the people who are actually already caring for her and realize what's going to happen regardless of safety, where does that come from? It comes from government policy being pushed down the system to individuals without any care for the child.

My ongoing question is: why do these issues get covered up? The reports that we've received from the office of the Child and Youth Advocate didn't report any of the facts about the existing foster care relationship in which this child was healthy and happy. Did they ask why this child was yanked from a safe environment and put into one that is utterly, totally destructive, that was so abusive that we can't even hardly imagine it? I mean, I just don't get it. Is there anything more tragic than the death of a child? Well, yes, I think there is. It's government policy that makes it happen again and again and again.

What about the human side, even for this foster parent family? What's the human side for them? What do I say to them when they come in crying with grief for this little girl because they were giving her good care and true love, and they got thrown under the bus by the system and the policies and the bureaucrats who said: "No, she has to go into kinship care regardless of her safety, regardless of anything for her benefit, regardless of warnings; it has to happen because it's policy"? That is a crime, my friends, of the highest degree.

I have to ask: how long will this foster family, this young couple, grieve for the little girl that they tried to protect? And government muzzled them, government handcuffed them, government shoved them completely out of the way and said: we know better than you do. What help has been offered to them as a couple? Is it any wonder we have a hard time finding foster parents in our province because of the way things get managed and handled? They will carry the absurdity of this grief for having had her torn away from them and then seeing what's happened. They will carry that with them for the rest of their lives. That was created by government policy, my friends.

5:40

You know, residential schools were a crime. I fully agree. Is this really any different? Government policy pushed forward regardless of the situation, of the people, of the impacts, of the effect. Government was driven by an agenda and not by listening to real people. We have to get away from this big-government, government-knows-best idea and start listening to the real people in our province if we actually really want to care about people and really want to make a difference in the lives of the Serenities,

because the way it works currently, we will be doing this again, and that is tragic.

Thank you.

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

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Clearly, the story of this young child is absolutely devastating to anybody who reads it. Anyone who read Paula Simons' article and still had a dry eye at the end of it: you know, I really, honestly, might be somewhat concerned for them. I mean, the amount of emotion that it drew out of all of us. As a mom and as a nurse the idea that a child could go through that is absolutely heartbreaking. Clearly, everyone in this room understands that no child should ever have to go through that.

You know, I referenced my time as a public health nurse. I dealt many times with children who had concerns and became involved with the intervention system, and it was clear to me at that time that the system was broken in so many ways. That, Madam Speaker, is one of the reasons that I am here, sitting in this seat today. It was on behalf of vulnerable children, that I felt there needed to be a better voice for them. The loss of many children over the years – many members seated here are here in part because they have been advocating for so long for changes in that system, advocating on behalf of those children, and felt the need to take action in order to change that.

Certainly, that broken system has been a major priority for this government. A system that is so broken cannot be made whole overnight, Madam Speaker, but those children stay in our minds, and we stay committed to moving forward on their behalf as fast as possible. Certainly, proof is in some of the actions we took. Certainly, money alone cannot solve everything, but it is a start, the increased funding to the Child and Youth Advocate, the increased funding for child intervention.

Madam Speaker, these are very complex issues, and certainly hindsight is always 20/20. The system is broken, but we look to the office of the Child and Youth Advocate to give us advice, to help understand how to change policy, to move forward to help repair that broken system. We certainly take all of that advice very seriously and accept all the recommendations that come from the advocate.

The challenges for families that need child intervention are complex and rooted in issues such as poverty, such as addictions and other mental health concerns. Certainly, the issue of inter-generational trauma and the travesty of residential schools and the legacy that they have left and how they have impacted so many families in Alberta – issues such as these are relevant to many indigenous families across Canada, and I have spoken to many of those families in my own riding.

Madam Speaker, the overrepresentation of indigenous children and youth is a serious concern and an issue that I know we all take seriously. For myself, again, I've listened to those stories from people in my riding, from families, and it certainly is something that I'm passionate about moving forward. I'm passionate about moving forward, and it is so wonderful to see the passion of people around this room and the commitment from everybody in this House to working together to take action on these complex issues. This is a very long-term goal, to try to deal with some of those underlying issues. I look forward to working together to address those issues of poverty, addictions and working together to help with the legacy of residential schools.

Some of the work we've been doing already. You know, being the co-chair of the mental health review was a very powerful experience, seeing the impact of addictions but also having those conversations with people about the impact of residential schools. I

met with many representatives from First Nations communities as well as settlements and heard their stories and heard the horrific stories of how that legacy of residential schools has impacted their capacity to work together as families and to take care of one another.

Again, the education initiatives we're doing to equalize education are helpful. I am very proud of the apology that our government did to those who suffered under residential schools in Alberta. We all need to take responsibility for that and commit to finding some resolution for those individuals. Part of that – and it's wonderful to see – is the cultural understanding framework in Human Services, that makes sure that we provide culturally appropriate supports and services to individuals.

You know, regardless of many of these long-term strategies and identifying those issues, we need to ensure children in care and families get the support that they need now. That support, Madam Speaker, is delivered by front-line workers who are smart, who are caring, and who are dedicated to justice for the families that they take care of. But they have been stretched, so stretched, to the limit for many years, being asked to work miracles with far too few resources and asked to do far too much. Money may not solve everything, but it sure as heck helps to make sure that we have the bodies that we need to do that. I look forward to the support of these people who also see the importance of this, to ensure that we have the financial support for those individuals, to ensure we have the bodies we need to do that work. It is with the commitment and the hard work of those front-line workers along with the work of families, communities, and our indigenous leaders that the system will be improved.

I'm also so thankful for the office of the Child and Youth Advocate. Again, through the mental health review I had a chance to meet with them. I also met with some of the kids to whom they had provided some support and who looked to them as supports. It was powerful to see the connection children had to the advocate's office and powerful to see the passion in their eyes. I know the work they are doing. The experts in this are so essential. I think it is important that we recognize that we are not the office of the Child and Youth Advocate and that we have that office there for a reason, to do the expert analysis of these situations, to provide us with the policy guidance that ensures that we take the steps forward that are evidence based, to ensure that we get to the outcome that we need of ensuring that these children are safe. We all have that end in mind, but it's important that we work with the office to ensure that we have information-based guidance in terms of how to go forward, which is why we take the recommendation from the advocate so seriously.

This is a heartbreaking issue not just here in Alberta but right across the country, right across Canada. I see Alberta being a leader in many areas in this country, and I look forward to moving forward and being a leader in this area as well. It is for the sake of Alberta's children that we do so.

Madam Speaker, social issues have to be taken seriously by this House. We have to learn from this. Child intervention has to have the support to be funded adequately, and more than that, we all need to be committed to taking action on the root issues that prevent some of Alberta's children from being safe and being loved the way that all Alberta children deserve to be treated.

When I go home, I will hug my children tight, and I will grieve some more for those children that are still hurting. I will keep talking to people in my communities about how we can do this better. Madam Speaker, it has been said many times that it takes a village to raise a child. We together owe it to the children, who need us to work together to put the child intervention system back together again.

Thank you to everyone in this House for your passion on this issue. It truly gives me hope that we can work together to truly move forward and make progress on this important issue on behalf of Alberta children.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

5:50

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

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to also thank the House for the opportunity for us all to speak about this very important issue.

I'm just reading from the website.

Kinship care is a family home that is approved to care for a child in need because of a family connection or significant relationship to the child.

Kinship caregivers provide:

- a child with love and care in a familiar setting
- parents with a sense of hope that their child will remain connected to their birth family
- families with a sense of trust, stability and comfort
- an ability to support and maintain lifelong traditions and memories
- support to a child in building healthy relationships within the family
- guidance and reinforcement of a child's cultural identity and positive self-esteem.

Yet in this situation Serenity faced beatings by wire hangers, was deprived of food, beaten for stealing food. I'm trying to visualize this little, minuscule four-year-old running into some pantry somewhere and stealing something off a shelf that she could reach to feed herself and potentially her siblings as she's starving to death here in Alberta. I'm trying in my brain to reconcile that vision of this munchkin traipsing across some cold kitchen floor to find food. Then she was sexually abused. We have failed this child.

I think that probably the most troubling aspect of all this is that there are probably kids in kinship right now that are receiving this love and this care and those aspects that are so important – I don't think any of us would disagree with that – but to echo the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, there were things that were happening in this particular situation that leave us all absolutely stone-cold terrified. When the birth mother, who the children were taken away from because of addictions and other situations, was reporting to people on her visitations that there were bruises and weight loss, that wasn't spoken about.

How is it that that happened? That's my question and one of the questions that I think as a group we need to be able to answer first and foremost. Where did we fail this child? She was starving. How long did it take for this little person to deteriorate to 18 pounds? Like, think about that. We have healthy little babies hanging out here in the Legislature with us, beautiful little children. Imagine for one moment that one of those precious souls was being starved to death. It is enough to make me run out of this place screaming, wondering how I can help.

How is it, then? Are we just asking questions? Are we formulating an idea? I understand that there are dollars that are being put towards this, but do we understand where we've already failed? If we don't understand the system that failed this child and other ones, there is no amount of dollars that are going to go into that system to save the next child if we don't understand where the breakdown was in the system in the first place.

We failed Serenity. Now the answer to the question is more resources. Well, that's wonderful, but if this mother, who knew that her child was suffering, the first person that would have the most ability to describe what her child is going through, was not listened to, can somebody please explain to me how more resources would have helped that situation? We weren't listening to her in the first place. Are more resources going to make us better listeners? I don't understand how that works.

You know, this is a hard situation to even breathe through. When I was explaining this to my children – and mine are 18 and 19 – we sat down at the kitchen table to discuss this particular issue. It's like the Minister of Municipal Affairs was saying: you just squeeze your kids tighter, absolutely. But the question that my 18-year-old and 19-year-old asked is exactly that question. Why didn't they listen to the mother or the family that had taken care of her and was actually raising a healthy, happy little girl? Question two: why was she wrenched from this family for kinship? It says right here, "Kinship care is a family home that is approved." Somebody approved this family to take this baby. Okay. Fine. It's a mistake in this situation, but now the resources are going to go to care? We obviously do not understand the families that are coming into these situations.

Obviously, we dropped the ball somewhere. I don't understand the entire concept of policy to implementation. There is a breakdown in that gap there. There is a huge gap. I don't know how to fill that. I don't. I am not an expert. I'm a mom, and I'm an aunt. I hope to be a grandparent one day. I am going to have a hard time reconciling this in my mind, knowing that on our watch – and I say that collectively: our watch, not yours, not ours – another child is going to come to me on a piece of paper as a death because we were writing policy when we know it's broken. Can we not just all agree on the parts that are broken and focus just a little bit, for a moment, on those things?

We obviously know that some things are working correctly, but the transparency of this issue is about what's not working. It's the hardest thing to do sometimes, to look at a situation and say: what am I not doing correctly here? It's hard. I know that. But it is in service of these children and these families that we have to take a hard look at what is not working and be honest about that. The third party very willingly said that they may not have followed through the way that they should have. All of us are going to suffer those consequences, but to actually put it off and say that we're going to just keep discussing it?

Okay. We're discussing it. What is action item number one that all of us are taking away from this today? I want to know. Action item number one: what is the action that we're taking today? Two, where are the dollars being spent so that the child actually is being advocated on behalf of? Our front-line workers are our voices and the eyes to the hearts and souls of what is happening in these families. Are we not listening to them either? Who is the decision-maker in this? All I know is that with the burden that is on my shoulders of being here – and I'm just speaking about myself – it's hard to breathe.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(2) the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

Table of Contents

Prayers	1883
In Memoriam	
Mr. John McKenzie Thompson, March 22, 1924, to November 1, 2016	1883
Ms Bonnie Mary Sheila Laing, March 30, 1937, to November 11, 2016	1883
Introduction of Guests	1883
Ministerial Statements	
Hon. Peter Eric James Prentice, PC, QC, July 20, 1956, to October 13, 2016	1884
Oral Question Period	
Deaths of Children in Kinship Care	1886
Electricity Power Purchase Agreements	1887, 1888, 1891
Energy Policies	1887
Fentanyl Overdoses	1888
Agricultural Environmental Programs	1889
Deaths and Injuries of Children in Care	1889
Balancing Pool Board of Director Resignations	1890
Member's Change in Caucus Affiliation	1890
Carbon Levy	1891
Family Violence	1892
Idiopathic Pulmonary Fibrosis	1892
Trade Mission to China and South Korea	1893
Building Codes and Efficiency Standards	1893
Members' Statements	
Career Month	1894
Hon. Peter Eric James Prentice, PC, QC	1894
Hon. Peter Eric James Prentice, PC, QC	1894
Hon. Peter Eric James Prentice, PC, QC	1895
Calgary Football Team Achievements	1895
Carbon Policies	1895
Notices of Motions	1896
Tabling Returns and Reports	1896
Tablings to the Clerk	1896
Emergency Debate	
Deaths of Children in Care	1898

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For inquiries contact:

Managing Editor

Alberta Hansard

3rd Floor, 9820 – 107 St

EDMONTON, AB T5K 1E7

Telephone: 780.427.1875