



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Third Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, May 1, 2017

Day 25

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 29th Legislature

Third Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker

Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees

Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)
Anderson, Hon. Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND),
Deputy Government House Leader
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),
Deputy Government House Leader
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (ND)
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),
Official Opposition House Leader
Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (ND),
Government Whip
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W)
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (ND)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC),
Progressive Conservative Opposition Whip
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (ND)
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W),
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (ND)
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (ND)
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (ND)
Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)
Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (ND)
Jean, Brian Michael, QC, Fort McMurray-Conklin (W),
Leader of the Official Opposition
Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (ND)
Kleinsteuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)
Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)

Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)
MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)
Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)
Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND),
Government House Leader
McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret,
Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (ND)
McIver, Ric, Calgary-Hays (PC),
Leader of the Progressive Conservative Opposition
McKittrick, Annie, Sherwood Park (ND)
McLean, Hon. Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (ND)
McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (ND)
Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)
Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)
Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W),
Official Opposition Whip
Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND),
Premier
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)
Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)
Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND)
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W),
Official Opposition Deputy Whip
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)
Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC),
Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

Party standings:

New Democrat: 55

Wildrose: 22

Progressive Conservative: 8

Alberta Liberal: 1

Alberta Party: 1

Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly

Robert H. Reynolds, QC, Clerk

Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Director of House
Services

Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel and
Legal Research Officer

Philip Massolin, Manager of Research and
Committee Services

Nancy Robert, Research Officer

Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of
Alberta Hansard

Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms

Chris Caughell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms

Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

Gareth Scott, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

Executive Council

Rachel Notley	Premier, President of Executive Council
Sarah Hoffman	Deputy Premier, Minister of Health
Shaye Anderson	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Children's Services
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Community and Social Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Mr. Coolahan
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha
Deputy Chair: Mr. van Dijken

Carson	McPherson
Connolly	Orr
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schneider
Drysdale	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Aheer	Miller
Drever	Pitt
Hinkley	Rodney
Horne	Shepherd
Jansen	Swann
Luff	Yao
McKitrick	

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Drever	Nixon
Ellis	Pitt
Horne	van Dijken
Kleinsteuber	Woollard
Littlewood	

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	Nixon
Dang	Orr
Jabbour	Piquette
Luff	Schreiner
McIver	

Select Special Ombudsman and Public Interest Commissioner Search Committee

Chair: Mr. Shepherd
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Ellis	Pitt
Horne	van Dijken
Kleinsteuber	Woollard
Littlewood	

Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms McPherson
Deputy Chair: Connolly

Anderson, W.	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	Sucha
Kazim	

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

Carson	Loyola
Coolahan	McPherson
Cooper	Nielsen
Ellis	Schneider
Goehring	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Cyr
Deputy Chair: Mr. Dach

Barnes	Malkinson
Fildebrandt	Miller
Fraser	Panda
Goehring	Renaud
Gotfried	Turner
Littlewood	Westhead
Luff	

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola
Deputy Chair: Mr. Hunter

Babcock	Loewen
Clark	MacIntyre
Dang	Malkinson
Drysdale	Nielsen
Hanson	Rosendahl
Kazim	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, May 1, 2017

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let each of us reflect or pray, each in our own way. Hon. members, National Day of Mourning took place on Friday, April 28. Allow us to take a moment to remember and honour those who lost their lives and those who are injured due to workplace tragedy. Let us be reminded of our commitment to continue to improve the health and safety of all workers in our province and in our country. Let us ensure that we take action to prevent any further injuries, illnesses, and deaths.

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

Mr. Bohdan (Bud) Zip
March 5, 1929, to April 19, 2017

The Speaker: Bohdan (Bud) Zip was with us from March 5, 1929, to April 19, 2017. Mr. Bud Zip served one term as the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, from November 2, 1982, to May 7, 1986. Born in Saskatchewan, he completed his master of arts in economics at the University of Toronto in 1951. He drew upon this knowledge to contribute to the various committees on which he served during his term in office, including Public Accounts and the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Committee. Mr. Zip was active in Alberta's Ukrainian community, serving as treasurer and president of St. Vladimir's Ukrainian Orthodox congregation and president of the Calgary Ukrainian-Canadian committee.

In a moment of silent prayer or reflection I ask you to remember Mr. Zip.

Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. Robert Clark.

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 Visitors

The Speaker: Hon. members, with our admiration, respect, and gratitude to the members of the families who share the burdens of public office and public service, today I would like to welcome members of the Zip family who are present in the Speaker's gallery. Please rise as I call your name and remain standing until all members of your family have been introduced: Mr. David Zip, son of Mr. Zip; Catherine Zip, daughter of Mr. Zip; David Michael

Ford, grandson; Theresa Zip, daughter-in-law of Mr. Zip. Please accept our appreciation and thanks.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's with great pleasure that I rise today to introduce to you and through you students and staff from Westbrook school. Nestled away in the northwest side of my riding, the school strives to celebrate diversity in learning, to encourage students to think critically, and to develop lifelong thinkers. I get a great group of students whenever I meet with this school. I'm very pleased to have them here today, and I would ask them all to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

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

Dr. Swann: Well, thank you very much. A great privilege and pleasure for me to introduce to you and through you to the House the very special community school of Sunnyside school in the constituency of Calgary-Mountain View. Along with their teachers and staff – I'd like to introduce the principal, Sandra Trumper; Anne MacQuarrie, staff; Laura Clarke-Brubacher, assistant – a special welcome to Robyn Wanner, your daughter, Mr. Speaker; Kirsten Archuleta, my daughter, and her son, my grandson, Kace Archuleta, his second visit to the Legislature; and Tracey McLean, another parent, along with Steff Stephansson, another volunteer parent. Please stand – and all the students rise – and receive the warm welcome of the Legislature.

The Speaker: If you would allow me a special welcome here today. It's interesting that as you're in this activity, we cross paths in so many different ways. It's what makes us strong.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Dr. Turner: Merci, M. le Président. C'est avec fierté que je me lève à la Chambre aujourd'hui pour vous présenter une classe d'étudiants de l'école Monsignor William Irwin school in Edmonton-Whitemud. Pendant cette semaine ils vont participer à l'École à la Législature. Les étudiants et étudiantes sont accompagnés par leur enseignante, Mme Carol Dyck. Veuillez-vous lever, s'il vous plaît, pour recevoir la bienvenue chaleureuse de l'Assemblée.

The Speaker: Welcome.

You're going to be working on that language, right, hon. member?

Are there any other school groups, hon. members?

The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three guests that we have today in the gallery. First of all, Lieutenant Colonel, retired, Mr. Ray Hook, who has 40 years of proud service in uniform. With Ray is his wife, Elaine, and they have with them this afternoon Mikkel Storm Møller, who is a 17-year-old from Svendborg, Denmark. The Hooks have hosted Mikkel as part of the Camrose Rotary Club, so when Mikkel rises, you'll see all of the pins and buttons that he has as a proud Rotarian international exchange student. Today's visit is part of Mikkel's must-do of things to do while in Alberta, to come to our Assembly. He is also a guest of the Sergeant-at-Arms, and they've had the tour. If they would please rise – they have; thank you very much – and if we

could greet them with the warm traditional welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome. I hope you see this as an opportunity and not necessarily a burden.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Stephanie Shostak. Stephanie is a dedicated community volunteer. She's a board member with TESA. She's an active, politically engaged citizen and has most recently brought her skills to help organize with the Alberta Party. If I could ask Stephanie to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Minister of Environment and Parks and minister responsible for the climate change office.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Scouts Venturer youth and Rover youth from Lac La Biche. Scouts Canada provides coed youth aged 5 to 26 the opportunity to enjoy outdoor adventures, to care for the environment, and to learn about teamwork and leadership. Today in the gallery we have Evan-Lee Alook, Zoe Bourassa, Leanne Cote, Madison Gawryletz, Tialandis Guinand, Aywastin Lewis, Sakastew Lewis, Dominic Simpson, Meagan Theroux, Christian Guinand, and Scott Lloyd. If they could rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ministerial Statements

The Speaker: The Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal.

National Day of Mourning

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Every year on April 28 we honour and remember those who died from workplace-related illness and injury. It is known as the Day of Mourning. While I'm glad that we set aside a day each year to honour and remember those who died from workplace-related illness and injury, it's heartbreaking that this day is necessary and that every year some Albertans do not make it home at the end of the workday. Every worker has the right to come home safely at the end of the day, from the very first shift through to retirement. My hope is that the Day of Mourning motivates employers, workers, and government to continue working together to improve occupational health and safety in all industries across this province.

In 2016 there were 144 deaths related to workplace illnesses and injuries. These 144 people died because they went to work, but they were more than just workers. They were someone's grandparents, parents, siblings, spouses, children, and friends. They were children's sports coaches and community volunteers. They touched lives and made their communities better places. Their contributions made our lives richer, and their absence makes our lives poorer. It's tragic to see families ripped apart, friends left heartbroken, co-workers traumatized, and our communities suffering. We can and we must do better. I believe employers, workers, and government all have a responsibility to create healthier, safer workplaces and a better world.

Mr. Speaker, this year's Day of Mourning also marks the 25th anniversary of the Westray mine disaster in Nova Scotia. On May 9, 1992, a large explosion in the Westray mine, in Plymouth, killed 26 underground miners, that day's entire shift of workers who were underground. A subsequent public inquiry blamed mine management and government regulators for what was deemed a preventable disaster. In response to the Westray mine disaster the federal government amended the Criminal Code to allow criminal charges in serious cases of workplace fatalities or injuries. That law applies to anyone on a work site who directs the work of others.

Mr. Speaker, I was proud last Friday when our government signed the Westray memorandum of understanding with 10 police services across the province. This memorandum will define protocols between occupational health and safety officers and police officers when investigating serious workplace incidents to help determine if criminal charges are warranted. By defining roles and protocols, police can focus on any criminal activity that may have occurred and investigators can ensure that their time is spent on the incident investigation, to the benefit of all Albertans. This was an important action for our government to take because it will help OH and S and police better serve and protect Albertans and help ensure that every worker comes home safe at the end of the day.

Mr. Speaker, I encourage all members of this Legislature and all Albertans to take a moment and remember those who lost their lives due to workplace illness or injury. And as we go forward, I encourage all Albertans to commit to working together to create healthier, safer workspaces.

Thank you.

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

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Work is an important aspect of daily living. Having a job, earning one's own living, and being able to provide for our families and others plays a large part in life satisfaction and personal fulfillment. By working, people serve their communities and create value in this world. All jobs and all workers matter and make a difference.

Unfortunately, sometimes accidents at work have long-term or even fatal consequences. We must remember and honour all of those who have died, been injured, or made ill while on the job. In 2016 we, sadly, lost 144 Albertans to workplace illnesses or injuries. As a community we must take care of those who, while working, were victims of an accident that made them unable to continue to work, and we must also support the families who have tragically lost a loved one to a workplace incident. Let us as a government, as an employer, or as a worker learn from these tragedies and do better going forward. All people should feel safe and be safe when they go to work.

The first National Day of Mourning was held in 1991 in Canada, and I'm grateful for this annual opportunity for us to pause, reflect, and remember those lost to workplace injury or illness. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to request the unanimous consent of the House to allow the leader of the third party and the two independent members to respond to the ministerial statement if they wish to do so.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Speaker: The leader of the third party.

Mr. McIver: Thank you. I rise today on behalf of my Progressive Conservative colleagues to speak to the National Day of Mourning for workers killed on the job, which, of course, took place on April 28. Mr. Speaker, 144 Albertans were killed as a result of workplace injury or illness last year, and this is a devastating number, a number made all the more heart-wrenching because 19 more Albertans lost their lives on the job in 2016 than in 2015. It is more than just a statistic. It's 144 people with wives and husbands, children and parents, siblings and friends, people whose lives are forever changed by tragedy.

These 144 people also made invaluable contributions to the fabric of Alberta. Regardless of what job they did or what industry sector they worked in, they were a part of what makes Alberta great, and we are all poorer for their loss. Mr. Speaker, one death, illness, or injury on the job is always one too many, and whether our workplace is an office tower, a construction site, or the open road, we all have a right to expect that we'll make it home safely at the end of each day. That is why workplace safety is so important and why all of us – employers, employees, and government – have a role to play in eliminating workplace fatalities once and for all. It's clear from the 15 per cent increase in these fatalities that we have more work to do.

On the National Day of Mourning I can't help but also remember our colleague PC Member Manmeet Singh Bhullar, who was on his way to work at this Legislature when he was struck and killed in a tragic motor vehicle accident. His loss left a hole in our caucus and in our hearts that will never be filled. We know intimately the pain of losing a colleague, and our hearts go out to the colleagues and family and friends of these 144 Albertans as they begin their journey in life without these important people.

Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to stand in this House and remember 144 people whose lives were cut too short as a result of workplace illness or injury in 2016. Let us all honour their memories by working together to do more to reduce and, hopefully, one day put an end to these senseless and unnecessary deaths.

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Having attended the Friday memorial service in Lethbridge, a very emotional tribute to the workers lost in the Lethbridge area, I'm pleased to stand with a response to the ministerial statement on the National Day of Mourning. At this time we pause to remember and mourn Albertans who have suffered injuries, disease, and death in the workplace. The risk, especially for inexperienced and summer workers, is significant, and each worker must know of their right to refuse unsafe work. This upward trend simply cannot continue, especially given that these workplace incidents are all preventable. If we're to avoid further tragedies, we must strive to create a culture of safety.

By the way, Mr. Speaker, this is the first year that the deaths of paid farm workers are included in the WCB statistics, a result of the much-delayed Bill 6. For far too long farm workers went without the basic legal protection that every other worker in the country has. However, more work needs to be done to reduce barriers to claiming WCB coverage for ranch and farm workers and to encourage both workers and employers alike to file claims for incidents that occur.

1:50

By remembering the injuries and deaths of Alberta workers and by supporting the families they leave behind, our commitment to building a safe work environment will be strengthened. It is our solemn duty in this House and the responsibility of each one of us

to do all that we can to ensure every man and woman who goes to work returns home safely.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. One workplace death is too many. On the National Day of Mourning, last Friday, I thought about everyone who lost their life on the job, and I thought about the families they left behind. Many Albertans put themselves in danger each day simply doing their jobs, and every single one of them deserves to come home safe to their families. As we reflect this week on the tragedy in Fort McMurray, I think of first responders across the province who put their lives on the line every day. I also think about the 144 people who did not come home last year as a result of a workplace fatality or from illnesses contracted in the workplace. These numbers are too high, and there's now a missing piece in the lives of their loved ones that will never be filled.

Alberta occupational health and safety does important work promoting workplace safety, and I'd like to thank each and every worker and student in the field for their contributions to safer work sites. Creating a culture of safety on the job is paramount. I reflect on my own time working in the oil and gas industry, watching the safety culture evolve and grow in importance. Although recent workplace incidents show there is still work to do, it's heartening to see safety taken so seriously in one of Alberta's riskiest industries, and I know safety is an important issue for business owners all across Alberta.

My thoughts are with those who worry each and every day about their loved ones on job sites across the province, who fear hearing devastating news each time there's a workplace accident. I have faith in Albertans to take workplace safety seriously because even one workplace death is too many.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Fort McMurray Wildfire Air Tanker Use

Mr. Jean: One year ago the Horse River fire was discovered just outside my home in Fort McMurray. A year later many families are rebuilding but are still searching for answers. Everyone in Fort McMurray has questions about whether or not there was more that could have been done to prevent the fire and better prepare for evacuations, but Albertans are still waiting on reports to be released by this government. Flight logs show that only two air tankers were battling the fire the day before the evacuation, less than half from the day before. To the Premier: why did this happen?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Of course, a year is a short period of time, especially when you're dealing with a tragedy like we all witnessed in Fort McMurray, and to the member and to all of his friends and neighbours, our hearts are with you. That specific day decisions needed to be made by firefighters on the front lines, including protecting pilots, and the airspace was limited because of the smoke. Of course, they weren't going to dispatch more air tankers into the airspace if it was going to cause increased risk for those pilots and other firefighters.

Mr. Jean: When we asked forestry officials about this in Public Accounts, they blamed a temperature inversion for trapping smoke, causing safety issues, but if safety was a concern, how did two planes still perform 23 separate bombing runs? The fire chief noted that there was a temperature inversion on the morning of May 3 as well, but the government sent 12 tankers into the air to fight the fire that day. I'll ask again: how is it possible there were only two planes attacking a fire that was just outside one of Alberta's most populous cities?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thanks again, Mr. Speaker. The decisions that are made around specific decisions are made by people who have the expertise, including the firefighters, who are working to make sure that they protect all cities, all citizens, and all parts of our province. What they have explained to us is that they chose to have two of the biggest water tankers deployed to make sure that there was safety, that as much water could be transported as possible without putting increased pilots or firefighters at risk. Politicians don't make these decisions. We make sure that the resources are available, and it's up to the front lines and those who have the expertise to make the decisions about how to deploy them.

Mr. Jean: No, Mr. Speaker, but politicians are responsible for what happens.

On May 2 Alberta had four wildfires and only five planes fighting all of them. The next day, on May 3, we had 20 planes in the air fighting fires, including 12 in Fort McMurray. This is a huge discrepancy. It raises real and serious questions that people all across Alberta want answered by this government. There is no question that this fire was somewhat unique, but Albertans deserve to know if more should have and could have been done. How, then, could there only be five tankers fighting fires in the entire province on May 2 when our province had 16 tankers at their disposal?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Again, we are proud to have the backs of those who make the decisions to ensure the safest deployment and to protect Albertans, including Albertans who could have been fighting the fires in airplanes, that could have been unsafe if there was not a clear flight path. Making sure that we have the resources available, which were there, and that they were deployed by the people who were in the best position to make decisions on the front lines: that's their job. They're experts. They did an excellent job. I wish more houses could have been saved, but I'm very proud of the work that happened and the lives that were saved, and I think we should all owe deep gratitude to the people who did lead the charge.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
Second main question.

Carbon Levy

Mr. Jean: Alberta's GDP decreased 3.8 per cent in 2016, after a similar drop in 2015. The last time that the GDP in Alberta fell for two consecutive years occurred in 1982 and 1983, and for only the second time in 21 years Alberta had negative net interprovincial migration. The NDP government's solution to a shrinking economy: to impose a \$3 billion carbon tax, that hurts Alberta families and businesses when they can least afford it. This is not reasonable. Will the Premier acknowledge that Albertans can't

afford this carbon tax during the worst downturn in over 30 years and scrap the tax?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud of the fact that our government is working to protect Albertans and to make their lives better. That's one of the reasons why I am so thrilled that we're up a hundred per cent in drilling . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Quiet.

Ms Hoffman: . . . by 210 rigs. That's over the numbers at the same time last year. That's why I'm proud that exports are up 37 per cent. That's why I'm proud that wholesale trade rose for the fifth month in a row and reached the highest levels since June 2015. Our jobs plan is working, and I'm proud to continue supporting Alberta families.

The Speaker: I would again remind the members: let's keep the volume and comments to a minimum, please.

First supplemental.

Mr. Jean: Ignoring the facts won't solve them, and under the NDP world view you don't face the facts; you throw more money at the problem consistently. The NDP government's solution to the overwhelming discontent with their carbon tax is to try to buy off Albertans with their own money, with overlapping and ill-conceived programs. If the Premier actually listened to Albertans, she'd know that they are more than capable of screwing in their own light bulbs. Will the Premier agree that Albertans deserve better than her government wasting their tax dollars on duplicate programs and cancel the Ecofitt boondoggle?

Ms Hoffman: You know, Mr. Speaker, the families that are accessing this program: they say thank you. They are glad to have the opportunity to save over \$100 a year, to be able to reduce their energy costs. I wish we would honour the fact that good work is happening. It's the last jurisdiction in Canada to finally catch up and make sure that we have an energy efficiency program available to Albertans. We're going to keep working to make sure that we protect Albertans, make their lives more affordable, and have the opportunities with our initiatives under the climate leadership plan to get two new pipelines built, which are fundamental to having tens of thousands of jobs to support our economy moving forward.

Mr. Jean: The NDP government thinks it's okay to siphon money away from Alberta families and put it into a pool of money, where they can have a free-for-all at taxpayers' expense. In the latest iteration of the carbon tax slush fund the NDP government is giving instant rebates without any checks or balances whatsoever. With direct rebates at the till, no limits on how many times products can be purchased, and no measures to stop purchases by non-Alberta residents, this program is ripe for abuse. Will the Premier face the fact that Albertans know how to spend their money better than government and scrap the tax?

Ms Hoffman: It's pretty rich, Mr. Speaker, that in the first question the member says that Albertans can buy and install their own light bulbs, and then in the third question he says that we shouldn't be letting them buy their own light bulbs. You can't have it both ways. I myself was out this weekend at Costco, and there were lots of people buying reduced-price light bulbs as well as signing up for the in-house program. This program is working. People are accessing opportunities to save money. I am proud that Albertans are stepping up to the plate. It's time for the Official Opposition to

acknowledge that Albertans deserve a government that's on their side, helping them save money, and that's what they've got.

The Speaker: The third main question.

2:00 Labour Legislation Review

Mr. Jean: Wildrose continues to hear the very valid concerns of business owners and employees surrounding the NDP government's labour review. It's almost as though maybe just a month wasn't long enough to hear from Albertans about how changes will affect their province. Now there are rumblings that legislation will actually be coming forward to overhaul our labour code as soon as this spring. Will the Premier assure Albertans that her government will not introduce legislation until consultation has truly occurred and Andy Sims has completed his report in full?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We are talking to Albertans about what needs to be updated and modernized in our labour and employment standards legislation, and we've received almost 5,000 survey responses, with over a thousand from employers, 340 written submissions. We've held round-table discussions across the province with employer groups, labour organizations, municipalities, academics, First Nations, and we continue to engage with Mr. Andrew Sims to make sure that we are bringing legislation that makes sense for Alberta and make sure that we have legislation that works for all workers.

Mr. Jean: The NDP's idea of consultation equals online survey and closed-door, invite-only consultations. That is seriously lacking any substance. Thankfully, the Calgary Chamber of commerce did the work for the NDP government, and blankly the NDP government should have done it. When it comes to removing secret ballot for union certification, the feedback couldn't be more clear. Seventy-four per cent believe that eliminating the secret ballot would have a negative impact. Only 4 per cent think it would have any sort of positive impact. Will the Premier guarantee that the NDP government will not eliminate a secret ballot? Yes or no?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We have received a great deal of submissions on both our employment standards and our Labour Relations Code review. We are currently reviewing the feedback from Albertans, from employers, from employer representative groups. We will be reviewing that and making sure that we bring forward fair and balanced legislation that makes sure that Alberta is the strongest business economy in the country and also has fairness for Alberta's workers.

Mr. Jean: Employees in Alberta have every right to be concerned that intimidation tactics would be used during the union certification process. Secret ballot protects their rights, which is incredibly important when you consider how much the NDP world view impacts unions in this province. Just this weekend at an AFL conference sometimes NDP spokesman and Progress Alberta head Duncan Kinney said, "We're the [organization] that kicks conservatives in the teeth." Will the Premier denounce these remarks, or is this NDP world view the treatment conservatives can expect during a union certification process?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud that our government has engaged in a fulsome review with employers, workers, labour organizations, that we've put out a survey that allowed nearly 5,000 Albertans to provide their feedback, that we've heard from Albertans like Amanda, who sent in a letter to my office, writing: my employment was recently terminated because I requested compassionate care leave after my seven-year-old son was diagnosed with leukemia. Amanda has lost her job. We have heard stories from Albertans across the province. I look forward to reviewing the feedback and bringing forward discussion to Albertans.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Progress Alberta Executive Director's Remarks

Mr. McIver: Thank you. Let's try again, Mr. Speaker. Our party has rightly denounced violent rhetoric directed towards the Premier. While we strongly can disagree on issues, there's no need or place for such language, which is why I was also disturbed to hear the words from the NDP's propaganda arm this weekend. At the Alberta Federation of Labour's convention executive director Duncan Kinney stated: "You may be wondering who @ProgressAlberta is . . . We're the [organization] that kicks conservatives in the teeth." To the Premier: do you stand by these comments from your surrogates at Progress Alberta, or will you denounce them?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I'm glad to hear that the member plans on denouncing comments around violence against any individual. Certainly, it would be useful if that was done in a timely fashion. With regard to this I would be happy to look into further details, but certainly we don't condone violence toward anyone. It doesn't reflect language that this side of the House chose to use, and we wouldn't condone that language being used towards any individual.

Mr. McIver: Well, that's good, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad that the Deputy Premier doesn't condone it because he is connected to the NDP, appearing on a carbon tax discussion panel on CTV's *Alberta Primetime* last December. Host Shawna Randolph gave us a glimpse into Progress Alberta's links to the NDP. I quote: we did ask for a few cabinet ministers in the provincial government to join us, and we were told that actually nobody from the government was available, and the province referred us to Duncan Kinney with Progress Alberta. Hardly independent. To the Deputy Premier: will you denounce Mr. Kinney in Progress Alberta or will you be kicking . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. [interjections] Hon. member.
The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This side of the House has certainly been referred to in ways that were demeaning, disrespectful, and had death threats. We don't condone that for anyone on this side of the House or anyone in this House. It's important that we treat each other with respect and dignity. No matter what question the member opposite asks, I will continue to treat him with respect and dignity.

The Speaker: The second supplemental.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. There's something that the Deputy Premier and our party can agree on: there's no place for this. We know Mr. Kinney's comments because the Alberta Federation of Labour found them so acceptable that it was the AFL that live-tweeted them on Saturday afternoon. The NDP cannot claim they have no links to the AFL because the AFL has specific representation enshrined in the NDP's constitution. So to the Deputy Premier: will you live up to your words, condemn these remarks, and condemn the person that said them?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, after the week that we've all spent in our constituencies, I hope working to find out ways that we can continue to support our constituents and make their lives better – I've made it very clear in my first two responses that I do not support those remarks or condone them. I'm going to say that we're going to continue to focus on making life better for Alberta families. That's one of the reasons why I was so proud to talk to constituents and residents from Alberta across the province about the work we're doing to cut school fees, the work we're doing to support health care and education, the work we're doing around making sure that 20,000 more Alberta workers have jobs this month than did last month. There's lots of good work happening. I wish the members opposite would keep focused on the things that matter to Albertans.

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

Condominium and Housing Co-operative Governance

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many of my constituents are condo owners or members of housing co-ops. Of those, many of the condo owners in my riding have expressed concerns in relation to decisions being made about governance models or issues surrounding management companies. To the Minister of Service Alberta: what safeguards are in place to ensure that these boards and management organizations are accountable to their members?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Our government is dedicated to ensuring that we have condo legislation that balances the relationship between boards and owners and provides the tools necessary for condominium corporations to govern strong condo communities. This means we believe all Albertans deserve to be protected as well as know all of the facts when they make a purchase as large as buying a home. Currently we're looking into amendments to the Condominium Property Act and looking specifically at ways to ensure more transparency and accountability. One of the main priorities for the condo act amendments will be to provide efficiencies to the day-to-day governance of condominium corporations. We encourage any and all constituents to send their contact information through ...

2:10

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

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that I have heard concerns expressed about conflicts of interest within some condominium boards, to the same minister: what are the government's plans to ensure that these boards are transparent to their members?

The Speaker: The Minister of Service Alberta and Status of Women.

Ms McLean: Again, thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. These are important issues to our government and to the member, obviously. However, it's clear the opposition, with their laughter, does not take these issues as seriously. More transparency from condo boards is definitely something that we are hearing from everyday Albertans. These new changes we'll be bringing in as a direct result of the feedback we've heard from our consultations. We've heard loud and clear that an accessible dispute resolution process is essential to condo living, and we're working towards establishing a tribunal to resolve condo disputes between condo boards in a more efficient and cost-effective manner.

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

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that housing co-ops are governed differently than condos and given that when a housing co-op mortgage is finished, it is no longer accountable to the CMHC, to the same minister: what strategies are in place that ensure that these co-ops do not run into governance issues?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McLean: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker and to the member for his question. Our government cares about everyday Albertans and believes Albertans deserve to have transparency and accountability on their housing boards. Co-operatives are governed by their own bylaws and articles of incorporation by their directors and members of the co-op. Unlike other co-operatives, housing co-operatives are required by legislation to address dispute resolution in their bylaws. Amendments to bylaws must be voted on by co-op members. There are two associations in Alberta, Northern Alberta Co-operative Housing Association and Southern Alberta Co-operative Housing Association, that provide guidance to boards and members to assist with best practices. We understand that housing governance is a real concern for many people, so I encourage anyone to write or call my office.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Unharvested 2016 Crops

Mr. Schneider: Mr. Speaker, we have talked about unharvested crops with the minister for about a month, now. We talked about mechanisms laid out in the AFSC regulations that are impeding resolve to this problem. It's now been brought to our attention that adjusters could be weeks away from getting out into fields to complete a preharvest assessment. Minister, you had the power under the act to dismiss an entire board. Do you have the power to override these regulations under these extraordinary circumstances and help these affected farmers to get this preharvest requirement done?

The Speaker: The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Without a doubt there are some farmers who have varied concerns. With the weather conditions we're looking for some warmer, drier conditions this week. I hope yet that those farmers are able to get out in the field. No farmer looks to farm for insurance. They want to farm, put the seed in the ground. I have asked AFSC to streamline a lot of their processes, to speed up so that when and if those drying conditions don't improve, they're able

to hit the ground running and able to make those claims as speedy as possible.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Schneider: Given that it was apparent last fall the possibility that there could be millions of dollars in unharvested crops still lying in the fields come spring and given that there is a large number of farmers dissatisfied with AFSC progress to date and given that waiting for warm weather to help the situation out is hardly a viable contingency plan, Minister, why have the adjusters not been allowed to use a triage approach to the problem and determine large areas where there is no question as to crop quality instead of being forced to use the case-by-case, time-consuming status quo?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. There are 120 inspection staff, all boots on the ground. All of them have been directed to go onto those areas that are most badly affected. I'm happy to announce that unharvested acreage claims are all but complete. Those inspectors now will focus on wildlife and preharvest inspections. I'm very proud of the work the AFSC is doing right across the province, especially in those inspected areas, and continues to do so.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Schneider: Given that waiting for good weather is not an appropriate contingency plan and given that every day that goes by shortens the growing season and yield potential of the 2017 crop, Minister, despite your talk last week about streamlining the policies for inspections, there have been complaints of little to no communication to farmers or AFSC offices beyond web updates. Can you answer this question that I'm getting from farmers: where is the communication failure here between AFSC and farmers, and who's going to fix it?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and the member for the question. If he has incidences of a communication breakdown, a very specific interest, I'm more than happy to address those. As such, AFSC has been directed to tweak the programs. As an example, inspectors have cut by half the number of inspections they have to do for wildlife and preharvest inspections. AFSC is doing a good job. I'm proud of the work they're doing.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a little repetitive, but that shows how important it is. Last week the minister of agriculture met with the Alberta crop commissions to discuss farmers' concerns about the unharvested crops. There are at least one million unharvested acres still in the field, and producers have called for immediate action to help them through this. With the late snowfalls, harvesting is still not an option in some areas due to wet conditions. To the minister of agriculture: how are you changing things, specifically, based on these meetings with the commissions?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and the member for the question. It's important that we expedite the crop insurance claims with the premiums that farmers make all across the province. Without a doubt this year, last year, and the beginning of this year it's been challenging, with moisture conditions way above normal

in some areas. AFSC has been instructed to make many changes. I mentioned before with the previous member the question of the number of inspections. They are forgoing grain samples on harvested acres. Preharvest inspections on severe lodged crop were low to pick up equipment because it was unharvestable, and other . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

First supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that there are still ongoing crop insurance claims unresolved and given that you've committed to providing farmers with a plan to streamline the remaining crop insurance assessment process, to the same minister: specifically, how will you be streamlining this process moving forward?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and the member for the question. There are a number of examples that AFSC is streamlining the process. I am happy to report that unharvested acreage claims are all but complete. Now those same inspectors can concentrate on the wildlife and preharvest inspections. Again I ask every producer out there: keep in contact with AFSC. Whatever the options they so choose, make sure that they contact AFSC so that they have best option possible going forward. I'm happy that we have farmers' backs and that we're making Albertans' lives better, including producers'.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we are now into May and given that it is still too wet to get out in the field to seed new crops and given that if this situation continues, it is becoming a crisis, to the minister of agriculture: how are you helping farmers get through the setbacks from last year and ensure that this year's crop is viable?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and the member for the question. Without a doubt, we need to get past the problems and the concerns that carried over from last fall and start concentrating on the new growing season. With that, AFSC has streamlined their process, and they have all 120 inspectors, boots on the ground, to be able to do so. I have confidence in the AFSC programs, the suite of programs, as most producers do. They're looking forward to that good weather to ensure that we can get that crop in the ground and, whatever options those farmers pick, the pick that works best for them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Oil Price Forecasting

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, this NDP government is making really bad bets with Albertans' future. They foolishly bet on oil to average \$55 a barrel this year, a price we haven't seen since 2015. Now, with the first fiscal quarter coming to a close, WTI has yet to hit \$55 even once, never mind average \$55. Today oil sits at just \$48. Why is this government betting the budget on these long-shot projections that are falling flat right before our eyes?

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. You know, this government is committed to building Alberta's economic recovery, creating jobs, creating tax revenue for this government. We're confident in our oil and gas sector in this province. They're a key driver of the economy, and it is the people of Alberta themselves that are our most treasured resource. This is going to be a government that will build for the future.

2:20

Mr. Barnes: In NDP fantasyland it's all blue skies ahead, but Albertans are experiencing a very different reality. Given that these irresponsible oil forecasts are exposing hard-working Alberta families to more debt, more deficit, and even more tax increases and given that we're already on track for an unthinkable \$71 billion of debt by just 2019, Mr. Speaker, how much more debt will Albertans owe by 2019 if this reckless NDP government keeps swinging and missing on oil prices?

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. You know, we created more than 20,000 full-time jobs last month. Despite the doom and gloom on the other side, the people that don't have faith in the future of this province, rigs are drilling up to a hundred per cent more from the year 2010. Our exports are up 37 per cent. This Alberta economy will lead the country to recovery. The policies of this government are rebuilding our economy, putting people to work, and creating prosperity.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Mr. Barnes: Given a reality that an energy executive recently told me about, that international companies are fleeing Alberta because our regulatory conditions don't allow for them to make money at a basic stress test of \$30 a barrel, and given that these companies, who weren't lucky enough to make backroom exemption deals with this NDP government, are suffering because of the carbon tax and the cap on emissions, Mr. Speaker, why is this government making a bad situation unbearable for international companies, who are planning to leave Alberta for good under this NDP government's watch?

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I think we need a bit of a reality check for the opposition over there because, you know, Steve Laut, the president of CNRL, says that this is a very exciting time, that we're moving back to a more stable time, and that Canadian companies are well positioned. That's from the horse's mouth. I want also to say that the *Financial Post* has said, "Canadian oilfield services companies . . . are reporting higher prices, buoyant business activity and robust bookings for the remainder of the year." If Albertans believe the opposition, they're just going to get depressed.

Fixed Election Dates

Mr. Fildebrandt: Alberta's fixed election date legislation was passed so that governments could not manipulate the timing of elections for their own narrow, partisan advantage. All parties voted for it as a big step forward for fair elections in Alberta, but as we know, the letter of this legislation did not live up to its spirit when an early election was called last time around. Even though most Albertans would love a chance to vote right now, the law is the law. Will the Premier commit right now, unequivocally that she will

respect our fixed election date legislation and not call an early election before 2019?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The question is really exciting, especially coming from somebody who is such a close dance partner with the party that called the last election a year early, so I have to say that we certainly do not intend to call the election early. We have dates in line in the legislation. The question is coming from nowhere, so to be honest, I'm not prepared to answer at this time. But I'm going to keep working hard for my constituency, and I am proud to have the mandate that we do to make life better for Alberta families, and we're going to keep doing that.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Well, riddle me this, Mr. Speaker. Given that you can't help but get the impression that this government is afraid of facing Albertans – they don't face them at town hall meetings . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member.

Mr. Fildebrandt: . . . and they don't face them when they write their legislation. Given, Mr. Speaker, that the NDP got just 2 per cent of the vote in recent Calgary by-elections and, as you know, 1 per cent in Medicine Hat, this all gives me the impression that the NDP are terrified of facing a single, united Conservative Party in the next election. Will the Premier commit unequivocally that she will stick to the fixed election date and not delay the election until 2020?

Speaker's Ruling Preambles

The Speaker: Hon. member, again, you seem to need more direction, consistency in terms of preambles that you use and the manner in which you do it. I must tell you that there are several people on your side of the House that are excellent at making preambles, and I hope you might get some advice from them.

The Deputy Premier.

Fixed Election Dates (continued)

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, thank you for the feedback from the member opposite as well as from the third party, which we know called the snap election. Certainly, we are happy to heed his advice with regard to this matter, but at this point this question is coming from nowhere. Again, we're focused on delivering the mandate that Albertans elected us to do, and we are happy to do that. We're not going to address hypothetical scenarios. We're going to keep working to make life better for Alberta families by fulfilling the mandate they gave us, including lowering school fees. We're proud of that.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Well, we're going to have to try again, Mr. Speaker. It's not that the NDP are lying; it's that everything they said made absolutely no sense and they refuse to answer a simple question. I'll ask it again: will they or will they not respect our fixed election date law and commit that they will not delay the next election until 2020?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The only ones talking about election dates in this House are the members opposite. On this side of the House we're working to make sure that we're implementing the mandate that we were given, and we're going to keep doing that. Of

course, there are no plans to deviate from the legislation. We're going to keep working to make sure that we make life more affordable, that we protect health and education, services that the members opposite are always pushing us to cut and make sure that we pull \$9 billion out of infrastructure, which would impact projects that are happening in the member's own riding. I bet you that he doesn't want to be advocating for that in the middle of an election. If he does want to keep pushing for deep cuts, feel free.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Budget 2017

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Speaker, it's likely this week that we will see the passing of the government's 2017 budget, and the government will accuse us in the opposition of not supporting necessary spending on health care and other essential services if we choose not to vote for their budget, but this is simply untrue. When we vote against the largest debt and deficit in Alberta's history, we're simply representing Albertans across the province who want this government to do a better job, prioritizing fiscal prudence and living within their means. To the Deputy Premier: do you truly believe that this budget respects the priorities of Albertans who believe that fiscal prudence is important?

Mr. Mason: Well, Mr. Speaker, the budget that was tabled by the Minister of Finance has very, very important and clear priorities. It's important to note that these were the priorities this government was elected on, and those are to protect our basic services, to protect our health care, unlike the party that's asking the question, who would have cut \$1 billion out of health care on the budget that they ran on and lost the election on.

Mr. Fraser: Given that this government has chosen to tip the scales in favour of unions versus quality private companies when it comes to laundry services and vital plasma collection and production in this province despite the huge potential savings for taxpayers and given that the increase to the corporate income tax is taking \$830 a year out of household budgets despite providing less revenue than it did previously, to the same minister: if your priority is really making life more affordable for Albertans, why does it seem that life is becoming more costly for the middle-class Albertan?

Mr. Mason: Well, Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. This government is committed to making life more affordable. That's why we froze tuition fees for the third year in a row, unlike the previous government that kept increasing them. We are reducing school fees. We are capping electricity prices, unlike the roller-coaster electricity ride that the previous government took us on. This government is clearly committed to making life more affordable and better for Albertans and their families.

2:30

Mr. Fraser: Given that your government has no plan to pay down the debt during your time in office and given that Alberta's GDP shrank by 3.8 per cent in 2016 after shrinking by 3.7 per cent in 2015 and given that a shrinking economy and ballooning debt-servicing costs are going to have a lasting effect on the ability of future governments to appropriately fund important programs, to the same minister: have you given any thought to how your budgeting is going to hurt future generations, and is future generational debt actually a priority for your government? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.
The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. What is important to this government is making sure that in the future our kids have good schools, that we have health care there when we need it, that people can afford child care, that people can make sure that their aging parents are well cared for. I want to say that the Conference Board of Canada, just on this question, projects that Alberta will lead the country in growth in 2017, quite the opposite of what the member is trying to suggest.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Energy Efficiency Programs

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While two-thirds of Albertans are eligible for the carbon levy rebate payments under the climate leadership plan, many of my constituents are concerned that they're not eligible for this rebate. Given the need to support all Albertans affected by the carbon levy, to the Minister of Environment and Parks: what opportunities are there for all Albertans, including those who don't qualify for rebates, to benefit from the carbon levy funds and save money?

The Speaker: The minister of environment and climate change.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All Albertans do have a chance to save money from the recently announced energy efficiency programs, which include rebates for rooftop solar panels, rebates of up to \$3,500 for home improvement products such as insulation, tankless water heaters, and triple-glazed windows. Albertans can also receive in-store and online rebates on a number of products, and the full list of those products is at efficiencyalberta.ca.

Thank you.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many of my constituents have also been inquiring about how these programs might help their local community organizations with long-needed renovations, to the same minister: how do these programs help community organizations to green their common spaces?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Some weeks ago we announced the nonprofit energy efficiency grant which allows nonprofits to undertake audits. In addition to that, we do have the business, nonprofit, and institutional energy savings program, which offers incentives to encourage organizations to choose high-efficiency products. Once an organization has installed those products, they can apply for the rebate to receive a cheque. Once again, all of the details are at efficiencyalberta.ca.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the interest my constituents have shown towards reducing their energy consumption, to the same minister: how can people who are interested in these opportunities sign up?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For example, the residential no-cost install program: many people are taking advantage of that, including people with disabilities, elderly people, new Canadians, and very low-income Albertans. You know, the members opposite continue to make fun of those people for availing themselves of those

programs and looking to save themselves money over time, but on this side of the House we want to make life more affordable for everyone. Efficiencyalberta.ca is where people can get more information on those things.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Renewable Energy Land Leases

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last week I had farmers sharing some of their serious concerns about renewable energy projects. Wind and solar energy companies, through unregistered landmen, are approaching these farmers and trying to lock in their property for renewable energy production on their land. Many of these farmers are being simply shown the rich lease payments and royalties, and they are not being given the basic information as to how these leases work or any of the possible negative consequences of these lucrative leases. To the Minister of Energy: what's being done to protect farmers from what have been called terrible contracts?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I believe I was asked this question last week. A similar answer. We know that there are many farmers and landowners who are excited about the possibilities and opportunities for wind and solar. We've had groups of folks going around the province to advise that there is help available through the AUC or through the Farmers' Advocate. We have some resources out, a nice little checklist of what they need to know before entering into contracts.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that negotiating a lease with a renewable energy company is not the same as negotiating with the oil and gas industry and given that there is no right-of-entry or expropriation process for renewable energy in Alberta, which means that farmers approached by a wind or solar company have the right to say no to wind turbines or solar panels being installed on their land and given, however, that once a contract is signed, their neighbours have no right to stop that same company from building infrastructure on their land to tie the project to the grid, to the minister: what's being done to ensure that these hard-working Albertans are informed of their rights prior to signing any contracts?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, as I mentioned, there are some resources available through the AUC and through the Farmers' Advocate, or have them contact my office, and we can walk them through the process. I would say that if you know that your neighbours are planning or have an interest in that, as a neighbour you'll also find out about your rights. To be clear, contracts do not need to be signed, nor do landowners have to take a project onto their property.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Hanson: I think this would be a great place for a wind turbine, Mr. Speaker.

Given that unlike oil and gas leases landowners involved with renewable energy projects are not able to appeal to the Surface Rights Board if the developer stops paying its leases and given that there is not currently any orphan program that would fund reclaiming old

turbines and solar panels in the event that a company became insolvent and given that people have been told by legal counsel that these are the worst contracts they have ever seen, to the Minister of Energy: has this government put ideology and the NDP world view ahead of protecting property rights in Alberta?

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, there are resources available. In addition to those resources, I would suggest that if people are interested, they talk to the counties of Vulcan, Cypress, Stettler, the town of Carmangay, Pincher Creek MD, and others. Those are all areas that have these projects, and they all have very positive things to say and would be glad to provide advice on future projects.

Workplace Legislation Review

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, countless employers and business organizations have contacted us expressing serious concern with the consultation process used by the NDP to gather input for changes to the labour code and employment standards. The minister rushed this process, and many stakeholders have expressed concern that this government already knows what the legislation looks like and simply hosted obligatory consultation in a failed attempt to appease them. To the Minister of Labour: will you be introducing legislation which changes either the labour code or employment standards during the current spring sitting of the House?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member opposite for his question about consultation. Whether it's for the MGA or royalty review, our government is getting consultations right. We've heard from hundreds of stakeholders on both consultations, and we will continue to listen to them as we review what we've received.

I'd like to read a quote from a former PC Minister of Labour: my department has embarked upon a six-week consultation process to review the Alberta employment standards legislation. Six weeks, Mr. Speaker, and only an online consultation. The opposition is talking out of both sides of their mouth . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, given that an inadequate consultation process has left many stakeholders feeling that this government is only listening to labour bosses and given that they also feel the government's close relationship with union leadership means that the changes to the labour code and employment standards will lead to heavy-handed, undemocratic changes such as removing the anonymous balloting process, again to the minister: will you be pushing removal of the democratic private ballot currently used to certify unions? Yes or no?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We have received information from nearly 5,000 Albertans, including a thousand employers or employer representatives, countless numbers of written submissions, and we continue to engage. The principles that we are keeping in mind through all of this are fairness and balance, making sure that we can implement process improvements for the benefit of all. I continue to review the feedback we've received to date, and I look forward to making sure that Alberta has fair and updated, modern labour legislation and employment standards.

2:40

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, we'll take that as a yes.

Given that the government has yet again failed to properly consult stakeholders holding opinions that do not align with the NDP world view and given that introducing sweeping changes potentially impacting the survival of many businesses across Alberta with little or no consultation shows that this government puts the interests of big labour ahead of small to medium-sized job creators, who have yet to be directly engaged, again to the minister: will you do the right thing, reopen consultation, enhance it, and extend it at least until the end of the current calendar year?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I've been very pleased to engage with small, medium, and large businesses throughout this consultation, including personally meeting with the Alberta Enterprise Group, meeting with chambers on this, and engaging to make sure that we are working with all stakeholders to ensure fair, balanced, and effective workplace legislation for all. We need workplace legislation that works for both businesses and workers because this legislation has not changed since 1988. We have a responsibility to make sure that we have legislation that works for Albertans. The previous government did consultations . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

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

Ray Gibbon Drive

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Half of working residents in St. Albert commute to Edmonton every day. With only a few transportation options and routes this leads to frustration during their daily commute. Given that the Capital Region Board has recognized the significance of twinning Ray Gibbon Drive and given that they have included this project as a top priority, to the Minister of Transportation: how do the priorities of regional bodies like the CRB impact the consideration of projects like Ray Gibbon Drive?

The Speaker: The Minister of Infrastructure.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for his pertinent question. Many factors are actually taken into account when we decide long-term road infrastructure plans, including the priorities of municipalities, so I meet regularly with mayors and reeves in the capital region and, for that matter, throughout the province to better understand their infrastructure and transportation needs. As part of the government of Alberta's \$29.5 billion capital plan, Transportation is investing more than \$5 billion in our provincial highways network to help connect communities and improve safety and travel on our roads.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

First supplemental.

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given the importance of Ray Gibbon Drive to St. Albert and the region, to the same minister: how is the province supporting this vital infrastructure?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Given the importance of Ray Gibbon Drive to the plans of St. Albert and region going forward, I want to say that, first of all, it is something

that we've been discussing with the city. I've talked to the mayor about this, and they have a plan, a proposal to take over the ownership of Ray Gibbon Drive, and that would result in highway 2 being transferred to the city of St. Albert.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Second supplemental.

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that increased routes would facilitate the development on the west side of St. Albert and support the development of local businesses, to the same minister: how is the government supporting my constituents' transportation needs?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Well, thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. This government is committed to making sure that the transportation needs of Albertans in St. Albert and throughout the province are met, and that's why we're spending so much money to upgrade the infrastructure throughout the province. We made several investments: building public transit with park-and-ride, funding for electric buses, repaving, and roadwork in a number of areas as well. We're going to continue to invest in this infrastructure so that Albertans can get safely to and from work and family meetings.

Thanks.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: Hon. members, we'll commence in 30 seconds.

The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Agricultural Supply Management Marketing System

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2015 supply-managed commodities accounted for \$891.6 million of our agricultural production in Alberta. As a New Democrat I am proud of our dairy sector along with all of our supply-managed industries, that are an important part of our agricultural mix, and as the Albertan MLA representing Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, I'm proud of the many farms that make our province strong. When I put cream in my coffee, when I put cheese on my burger, I know that my food is safe and that it's been produced locally and that it creates good, family-supporting, stable jobs.

There has been a lot of international news lately about supply-managed agriculture in Canada, so it has been with great interest and concern that I have been listening to our leaders.

Working together to determine what supply is needed from the farm to match the demands of families around the table creates a made-in-Canada system, that producers count on for economic sustainability. I visited locally owned farms like the Scotford colony to see what their modern dairy production looks like, where cows and technology come together to create clean and incredibly efficient operations. On the Glasman farm Lenora and Robert from Strathcona county are proud family farmers and continue to farm dairy, beef, and grain on their home quarter while raising three children and volunteering in their local community. They can do this because they have a stable source of income and because they love and take pride in what they do.

On April 21 Alberta's dairy stated: "We're not going to shy away or be bullied from promoting our proudly Canadian product."

Mr. Speaker, our government and our agriculture minister know that our marketing system works for Canada, and I know that we

will continue to fight for our farmers and that agriculture will continue to be a centrepiece of a diversified Albertan economy.

Access to Information

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, this NDP government will be remembered as one of the most secretive governments ever to hold office in Alberta, and their track record is only getting worse. November 2016: Privacy Commissioner Jill Clayton states that access to information is nearing a crisis situation in Alberta. February 2017: Clayton again says that the NDP are failing Albertans by imposing unacceptable processing delays, showing a complete lack of respect for freedom of information and for transparency. April 2017: Alberta's Privacy Commissioner states that she is angry and frustrated, with the government working so hard to prevent her from doing her job. Now we have evidence that this government's political staff are systematically meddling with FOIP requests made by the media and opposition parties.

Last month, Mr. Speaker, the Wildrose released a report with 10 recommendations that could help to fix Alberta's broken FOIP system, but did the NDP adopt any of these common-sense solutions? No. Why? Because they aren't serious about improving access to information and transparency. They tried to turn the temperature down on this issue by hiring a few new FOIP staff, but similar to the AIMCo scandal, senior government staffers have been caught with their hand in the cookie jar yet again, this time obstructing and interfering with the FOIP system. The NDP is halfway through this mandate, and all they've done is cultivate a toxic culture of secrecy.

What's worse, Mr. Speaker, is that they're actively working to embed the deplorable actions they once decried. Instead of delaying and interfering with the release of information, they should prioritize making it public. How many times does the Privacy Commissioner, the media, the opposition have to catch this government in the act before they start taking transparency seriously? Albertans are tired of it.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Provincial Election Second Anniversary

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week will mark two years since the NDP won the right to form government in Alberta: good for the NDP, bad for Alberta. A lot has changed in two years. In two short years the NDP government has taken us from a \$1.1 billion budget surplus to two consecutive deficits over \$10 billion, with more than half of that going just to keep the government lights on, leaving our children and grandchildren to foot the bill for light bulbs that will long since have burned out by the time they even become taxpayers.

The Finance minister likes to brag about green shoots. I saw green shoots in my wife's garden this weekend but not one as a result of anything this government has done.

In two years the Finance minister's favourite fiscal metric, the debt-to-GDP ratio, has soared from 3.4 per cent in May 2015 to the mind-blowing 13.8 in this year's budget. He brags about maintaining Alberta's tax advantage while actively and systematically destroying it. He has no plan to repay the \$71 billion in debt he will strap on the backs of our children, yet he promised in estimates to exactly balance the budget to the dollar in 2024.

2:50

In two years Alberta's unemployment rate has gone from 5 to well over 8 per cent. This represents a loss of well over 100,000

full-time jobs compared to 2015. At the same time, there are 61,400 more part-time jobs than there were when this government took office. For all this government's rhetoric about making life better for Alberta families, the only thing they've done is to replace good, mortgage-paying jobs with part-time jobs. For the 88,470 Albertans that are surviving on employment insurance today, a number which is double from what it was two years ago, it's clear the NDP's efforts are not good enough.

Mr. Speaker, things sure have changed in Alberta over the last two years, and we still have another two to go before Albertans can throw this government out of office, as they intend to do. But based on what I hear from people across the province every day who are fed up with the NDP and their massive failures, I am confident we will be in a position to start cleaning up this mess in 2019.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater Constituency Update

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we approach the second anniversary of our government and my own as an MLA, I'd like to take a few moments to reflect on some of the progress that's been made in my own riding of Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

When I was first elected, there were many outstanding issues, some long overdue, that needed to be addressed. For instance, the bridge over the Athabasca River on highway 813 had been in need of replacement since my father was the MLA. Now, thanks to the commitment of our government to make good on years of previous neglect, this is finally happening. The completion of highway 63's twinning and the multiple upgrades and curve reductions on highway 28 have made driving much safer for my constituents and indeed for all those who live and work in northeastern Alberta.

Two years ago Athabasca University's status was uncertain. Now, thanks to our new government, a sustainable future has been assured for the university and for the community that depends on it. Happily, I would need more than two minutes to list all the improvements to health care facilities, schools, and seniors' facilities that we have been fortunate to receive as well. These investments speak well to the government's commitment to the health, education, and well-being of rural Albertans.

The Industrial Heartland is not only of utmost strategic importance to Alberta's long-term prospects; its local importance cannot be overstated. Thanks to our continued support for the North West refinery's phase 1, our petrochemicals diversification program, and, of course, our success in reframing our reputation as a responsible energy producer, investor confidence has been restored and new projects announced. But with increasing development in the Industrial Heartland, traffic has reached critical levels, severely impacting workers, local residents, and jeopardizing future growth. Working closely with municipal and industry partners, we have introduced badly needed intersection improvements to help clear congestion and improve safety.

We've made great progress on these issues and on many others, of course, but there's always much more work that needs to be done, and we will continue . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

National Day of Mourning

Mr. Rosendahl: Mr. Speaker, April 28 was the Day of Mourning. Every year we reflect on and mourn those who have lost their lives or have been injured or disabled as the result of workplace injuries or occupational diseases. We extend our condolences to the family

and friends who have lost loved ones and to the co-workers who worked by their sides.

Mr. Speaker, we know that workplace accidents do happen. In 2016 alone Alberta lost 144 men and women to workplace injury or illness. Of those 144, 27 were directly caused by mesothelioma, 19 from asbestosis, and one from silicosis. It is heartbreaking to read of the many workers who have died due to exposure to asbestos because the health risks of asbestos exposure were known for years before the government and industry moved to stop its use. This is why it's so important that laws and regulations regarding the workplace are reviewed and updated constantly.

It is also why I support the current review of our employment standards and labour relations law. Some of these codes have not been updated since 1988. This is simply wrong, Mr. Speaker. It's shocking that some of the opposition members want to delay its review even more. I would also strongly support a review of the Occupational Health and Safety Act. No one should have to fear for their life while they do their job. Our government is committed to this belief, and we've been working to extend safety legislation to workers who were previously exempt. Many workers in my riding of West Yellowhead work in high-risk jobs.

To recognize this Day of Mourning, we should do everything . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

HALO Medical Rescue Helicopter Funding

Mr. Barnes: On July 25, 2016, in southern Alberta a large truck rear-ended another large truck on a country road. HALO air rescue helicopter was called in to save lives that day. When Deandra Zeller was thrown from her horse while caring for cattle, she suffered a brain injury in the middle of a field in the rolling hills of Cypress-Medicine Hat. Travelling by ambulance on bumpy, unpaved farm roads could have put her at risk of further injury, but HALO air rescue was there to transport Deandra to the hospital safely.

In my years representing Cypress-Medicine Hat, I have heard time and again about the heroic work that the front-line responders from HALO do to service my region. HALO rescue shows up when they are needed and saves the lives of critically injured or ill southern Albertans. Rapid rescue response times decrease mortality and increase patient success. HALO rescue is the only dedicated medical rescue helicopter stationed in southern Alberta which can respond within a reasonable time frame.

Mr. Speaker, HALO fills STARS ambulance's blind spot. The only reason that HALO can help people is because of the generous contributions from the corporate, private, ranching sectors and caring donors. This government refuses to cover the high standby costs, only contributing a fee for service. Not only is this life-or-death service underfunded by this government; the NDP's war on economic prosperity and implementation of the carbon tax have only made it more difficult for Albertans to give generously to charities and not-for-profits.

Cypress-Medicine Hat has given so much to this province monetarily with the development of our natural gas resources, so I am left with just one question for the NDP: why is my part of the province treated with so little respect? The Medicine Hat region and HALO air rescue deserve to be a priority.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

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

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Private Bills I would like to report that the Standing Committee on Private Bills has had certain bills under consideration and wishes to report as follows: the committee recommends that Bill Pr. 1, Calgary Jewish Centre Amendment Act, 2017, and Bill Pr. 2, Paula Jean Anderson Adoption Termination Act, proceed in the Assembly. I request the concurrence of the Assembly in this report.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Do the members concur in the report? All those in agreement please say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Speaker: All opposed say no. So ordered.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, I think we'll almost make it here, but in an abundance of caution I will request unanimous consent from the House to continue past 3 o'clock to finish the Routine.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Presenting Petitions

The Speaker: The Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to table five copies of a petition sponsored by KAIROS urging the government of Alberta to implement a curriculum for K to 12 that is in line with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. They recommend consulting and collaborating with survivors, indigenous people, and educators to make mandatory age-appropriate curricula on residential schools, treaties, and indigenous people's history and contemporary contributions to Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Notices of Motions

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my colleague the hon. minister responsible for democratic renewal I would like to give oral notice of a bill to be introduced tomorrow, that bill being Bill 11, Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Amendment Act, 2017. I never thought I would be introducing a Bill 11, but here it is.

3:00 Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table five copies of written answers to questions which I was required to take notice of during estimates for the Ministry of Energy at the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship on April 11, 2017.

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

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings today. One is a letter from Synergy Projects construction professionals Senior Vice-president Barry Robertson sent to the Premier requesting an enhancement and extension of the Alberta Labour Relations Code review.

My second tabling is from Darryl Wiebe of Kerr Interior Systems Ltd., the president of that organization, sending a letter to the

Premier requesting an enhanced and extended review of the Alberta Labour Relations Code.

The Speaker: Any others? Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising to table five copies of a letter I wrote to the Government House Leader on the 9th of March quoting something he said on the 16th of March, 2004, where he refers to the Public Affairs Bureau as a Tory propaganda organ.

Thank you.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Ms Hoffman, Deputy Premier, Minister of Health, pursuant to the Regional Health Authorities Act the Alberta Health Services 2015-16 annual report.

Orders of the Day

The Speaker: The Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to request unanimous consent to waive SO 8 to allow immediate consideration of third reading of Bill 202, Protecting Victims of Non-consensual Distribution of Intimate Images Act.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 202 Protecting Victims of Non-consensual Distribution of Intimate Images Act

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure and pride to rise to move third and final reading of Bill 202, Protecting Victims of Non-consensual Distribution of Intimate Images Act.

I want to first thank members on all sides of the House for their support for this private member's bill.

Mr. Speaker, I originally proposed this bill after discussions with my oldest daughter, Amelia. I hope that this bill will make Alberta a little better for all Alberta children across this incredibly great province.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

I and many members have spoken at length about the harm that the non-consensual sharing of intimate images can inflict on victims. This bill aims through tort law, school discipline, and other measures to limit the harm that is caused. This Assembly has all spoken in support of standing on the side of victims and giving them recourse when their trust has been violated in the worst possible way.

As I have mentioned, this bill creates tort law for victims of this crime so that they can get reparations from those who commit such acts. It contains provisions so that financial gains that were a result of distributing these pictures can be awarded to the victim, not to the perpetrator.

Earlier I believe someone from the other side of the House noted that a website founder distributing such images was making

\$30,000 a month on advertising revenues from distributing these pictures. Thankfully, that particular website was shut down, but many more have sprouted up to take their place, unfortunately.

I also want to thank the members on the other side who proposed an amendment which will have the effect of tightening up this aspect of the legislation. I think that the amendment is a good example of how we can improve legislation by carefully considering what has been proposed.

Lastly, this bill will encourage fair and consistent punishment across Alberta schools for students who engage in such behaviours. This will discourage students who engage in distribution, and their suspension will send a message to other students who engage in such behaviour that this will have real consequences. This message will be sent in a fair and consistent manner, Madam Speaker.

The number of images that we capture today in this modern world is both astounding and, to be honest, a little overwhelming. In 2011 it was estimated that Facebook had over 10,000 times the number of photos that the Library of Congress does, and this was six years ago. The advent of camera phones means that we are also capturing more images than ever. This has had some undesirable effects such as people becoming addicted to their phones and the easy sharing of some images that were never meant to be shared, Madam Speaker.

The unwanted sharing of intimate images can have a devastating effect on people's lives. I have already outlined previous cases in Canada of young persons taking their own lives because intimate images of them were shared. It is unacceptable, Madam Speaker. We shall not and will not stand for those types of outcomes.

The passage of this bill will send a message that this Assembly and all Albertans stand with the victims of this heinous practice. I want to make it clear, Madam Speaker, that although within this debate we have spoken a lot about juveniles both as victims and perpetrators, they are not the only ones that are affected by this. Anyone of any age can be affected by such behaviours.

Unfortunately, there is not much data on this subject in this country, Madam Speaker, so please allow me to cite a study from our neighbours. McAfee in the U.S. conducted a study in late 2012 which surveyed 1,182 adults who were aged from 18 to 54. The study revealed that even amongst adults, when relationships break down, some partners, about 1 in 10, had threatened to send intimate images of their partners or their ex-partners to their ex-partners' friends and employers. About 6 per cent of those partners actually followed through with this threat. This is truly tragic. In addition, 13 per cent of the survey participants have had their personal content leaked to others without permission. This may be a password, bank account number, social security number, in addition to intimate images.

Despite the seeming prevalence of these unfortunate acts, the legislation has not kept up with the technological and societal change that we have experienced. This legislation will let us close the gap just a little bit and make Alberta a safer place for our children and indeed all Albertans.

However, legislation is not the only recourse, nor is it a sufficient recourse. We must impart upon our children safe online practices to help them navigate this increasingly complex world. That is not only the responsibility of parents but schools and other mentors as well. Operating safely online these days is just as important as teaching children how to cross the street safely.

As I've mentioned, Madam Speaker, the inspiration for this bill came in conversations with my daughter. It is a parental responsibility that we all should take seriously, and I think we can all agree that it is something that destroys our youth's lives. I'm hoping to see that this bill will come to fruition.

I want to thank the members opposite and the members in the third party and the other independent parties for their support of this bill. I'd like to also think that this highlights that together in the House here we can benefit Albertans' lives and make Alberta a safer place.

With that, Madam Speaker, I move to end my speech. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Speaker. And, once again, thank you to the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake for Bill 202, which I have said before in this Chamber I think is outstanding. I particularly love the fact that his first consultation was with his daughter. I think that it's incredibly important to bring in the voices of children and, well, of course, to listen to your daughter.

3:10

Bill 202 fits nicely with the intent of Bill 2, actually, introduced by the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General, and is consistent with our government's commitment to supporting survivors of sexual violence. I think it's really important to be careful with the language that we use, and it's important to use the word "survivor."

By working together, I think we are sending a very clear message that these extreme violations of trust, as described by the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, are violations of trust and privacy, and they are completely unacceptable. This is particularly true for youth and members of the communities that have historically been marginalized. We hope this bill will go a long way towards helping to comfort survivors of this type of behaviour and discourage others from engaging in these terrible violations of trust and privacy.

Bill 202 also follows in the steps of the federal government's Protecting Canadians from Online Crime Act, which made it a criminal offence to distribute these images without consent.

As I mentioned earlier, the bill aligns nicely with our government's commitment to support survivors of sexual violence and reinforces the commitment made in this session when we introduced Bill 2, An Act to Remove Barriers for Survivors of Sexual and Domestic Violence. Amongst other things, Bill 2 removes limitation periods for sexual misconduct where the victim is in an intimate relationship, a dependant, or a minor. Coupled with Bill 202, this would ensure that someone who may not feel comfortable pursuing a lawsuit immediately when intimate images are distributed without their consent – we all know that survivors may indeed need extra time until they feel they are healed enough to pursue this.

Bill 202 also creates many good tools for survivors to seek remedies from people that share images without their permission. Just the sharing of the image without their consent is enough. They don't have to show that it led to public shaming or job loss or even mental anguish, and this is a positive move. Madam Speaker, this bill is a very good initiative. It provides additional tools for survivors of revenge pornography to seek damages against the person who distributed the images.

However, I'd be remiss if I didn't point out that I was also concerned by the headline in the Wildrose press release on this bill. The headline warned that a picture lasts forever. While this is certainly true and the warning caution is appropriate for youth, we should ensure that our primary message is clear. It is absolutely unacceptable to exploit someone's right to privacy by distributing intimate images without their consent. The focus of this bill itself is in the right place, on empowering survivors after a serious violation

of trust, but we need to send a very clear message, and we need to support survivors with that clear message. And that message is that the people who are in the wrong are the ones that share the images. It's not the people that choose to share the images or send the images.

You know, I also want to say that I think one of the really reinforcing things about this bill is that it is one more step towards combating cyberbullying. I think, obviously, as the member said earlier, that social media and smart phones are very popular, very addictive – in fact, I see lots of people using them at this very moment – but I think that it's important that we address some of the problems that are associated. I think about how easy and disturbing and hurtful it is when people steal images from our own sites to create stupid memes with stupid headlines on them to insult opposition members or government members. I think about how much that hurts. Translate that to a very intimate and private image, the kind that we're referring to when we talk about this revenge porn.

I think this is a very good start. It sends great messages to our children and, hopefully, to all of us. Once again, I would like to thank the member for Bill 202 and again commend his outstanding consultation with his daughter and his community and, of course, other organizations and just say that I'm very happy to support this, and I can't wait for it to pass.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's with great pleasure that I rise today to speak on Bill 202, Protecting Victims of Non-consensual Distribution of Intimate Images Act. I'm proud to stand and offer my support for this common-sense bill brought forward by my hon. colleague from Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

In a consistently and ever-advancing technological world now more than ever it is important that our laws match real-life circumstances. It is a simple reality that children and some adults choose to use their smart phones for snapping intimate pictures of themselves for whatever reasons those may be. And while, obviously, these private pictures should stay just that – private – in this day and age there are very few things which do not end up on the Internet. When intimate images are shared without the person's consent, the effects can be extremely traumatic. We have seen what online bullying attacks have done to victims like Amanda Todd. Young people are increasingly exchanging intimate images, which may later become fodder for humiliating cyberbullying attacks, with these images spreading quickly and often uncontrollably.

This is something the former Harper government recognized when they brought in the federal Criminal Code violations against acts of cyberbullying. This bill expands on the Conservative principles of putting victims first by creating the provincial tort law necessary to seek financial compensation and return any profits from said photos to the victim.

This bill also recognizes that these are serious incidents which are happening within our schools by creating legislation which empowers the principals and individual school boards to deal with issues of nonconsensual image distribution.

I would like to read a passage from the government of Canada's website on cyberbullying and intimate images. This passage helps to provide the context of just how widespread the issue is. I'll table a copy tomorrow, of course.

A recent survey of adults between the ages of 18 and 54 found that 1 in 10 ex-partners have threatened to expose intimate photos of their ex on-line, and according to the survey, these threats have

been carried out in 60% of the cases. With respect to young people, an online survey of 1,280 respondents (653 teens ages 13-19 and 627 young adults aged 20-26) in 2008 commissioned by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy found that 20% of teens and 33% of young adults had sent nude pictures of themselves via text or email (a practice referred to as “sexting”). A 2012 study published in the American journal *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine* that surveyed 948 high school students in Texas, also found that 28% of the respondents had engaged in sexting. A third recent study of 606 high school students at a single private school, representing nearly the entire student body, found that nearly 20% sent a sexually explicit image of themselves, and that 25% indicated that they had forwarded such an image to others.

This information clearly highlights the need for the laws to catch up to the technology.

As shadow minister for Justice and Solicitor General I’ve been proud to see how all parties in this Assembly have worked together to move forward to help put our victims first. It has been refreshing to listen to the thoughtful debate and hear some personal experience of Albertans and members of this Assembly.

I again urge all my colleagues in this Assembly to rise and support the MLA for Bonnyville-Cold Lake’s private member’s bill, Bill 202. Together we can help create the legislation necessary to protect victims of nonconsensual distribution of intimate images.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you. It’s a pleasure to rise and speak to Bill 202. You know, it’s not every day that the Assembly has the opportunity to work so well together, but I think that when it does happen, it is always a pleasure to be a part of. We’ve seen this take place on a number of occasions. I think that on an issue of such importance, when it comes to providing protections for those who are involved in such horrible crimes, involved in ways that some of the most intimate and sensitive portions of our lives are exposed publicly, it is good to see that our legislation here in the province of Alberta is catching up with many other jurisdictions.

3:20

I’d like to thank my colleague from Bonnyville-Cold Lake for spearheading this initiative. I’d like to thank members of the Chamber for supporting what really is a good idea. It’s just so important, whether it’s raising the level of conversation, whether it’s changing legislation, that we do everything that we can in this Assembly to protect those who are survivors of crimes like this and that we collectively raise the bar and ensure that we do our part so that these types of horrific acts can’t take place in the future.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I look forward to the passage of the legislation.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, I’ll call on the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake to close debate.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have to say that hearing some of the insights that all of the members within this Legislature have brought forward to Alberta, Albertans specifically, regarding the sharing of intimate images with nonconsensual, I guess, direction is something that is heartwarming, that we can all work together as a group. What happens is that it shows that in Alberta

when all of us work together, we can actually strengthen legislation to the point where we’re excited to pass this legislation. I myself am honoured to be the one that brought forward Bill 202. [interjections] Thank you.

The fact that the idea stemmed from a conversation I had with my oldest daughter is something that shows that real-life issues come forward that we are not thinking may affect us, but we don’t realize that it affects others so much. I will tell you that when I look at this bill and the fact that we had one of the members from the government put an amendment forward and that we also had suggestions from both the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Education on strengthening this bill, it is something that we can all take pride in moving forward, the fact that we can really move together as a cohesive group.

I would encourage everybody in this Chamber to vote for this bill. I believe that we will all be strengthened because of it, and I look forward to seeing this pass and put into legislation and that protection for victims is put forward in Alberta regarding the sharing of intimate images. I thank everybody for their suggestions and look forward to seeing how this turns out.

Thank you. I move to close debate.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:24 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Babcock	Horne	Piquette
Carson	Jansen	Pitt
Clark	Kazim	Renaud
Connolly	Kleinsteuber	Rodney
Coolahan	Littlewood	Rosendahl
Cooper	Loewen	Sabir
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Schneider
Cyr	Luff	Schreiner
Dach	Malkinson	Shepherd
Dang	McCuaig-Boyd	Smith
Drever	McIver	Strankman
Eggen	McKitrick	Sucha
Fildebrandt	McPherson	Turner
Fitzpatrick	Miller	Westhead
Ganley	Miranda	Woollard
Goehring	Nixon	Yao
Hinkley	Panda	

3:40

Totals: For – 50 Against – 0

[Motion carried unanimously; Bill 202 read a third time]

Written Questions

[The Acting Clerk read the following written questions, which had been accepted]

Public Property Theft

Q11. Mr. Cooper:

What is the total dollar amount of public property lost due to

theft in each ministry in each fiscal year from 2012-13 to 2016-17?

Budget Consultations

Q12. Mr. Fildebrandt:
What groups were given invitations to the government’s Budget 2017 consultations?

Government Staffing

Q13. Mr. Fildebrandt:
As of March 1, 2017, how many individuals were employed by the government, and of that number, how many were classified as managers or above?

Public Affairs Bureau Managing Director

Q14. Mr. Fildebrandt:
Was an open competition held to fill the most recent vacancy of the managing director for the Public Affairs Bureau, and if so, how many days was it advertised, where was it advertised, and how many applications were received?

Pension Plans

Q15. Mr. Fildebrandt:
As of March 1, 2017, what was the unfunded liability for each of the following public-sector pension plans: the local authorities pension plan, the public service pension plan, the management employees pension plan, and the special forces pension plan?

Carbon Offsets

Q16. Mr. MacIntyre:
Has the government spent any money on carbon offsets, and if so, what is the amount, broken down by ministry, in each fiscal year from 2013-14 to 2016-17?

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Automated Traffic Enforcement Tickets

Q3. Mr. Cyr asked that the following question be accepted.
How much has the government spent on administering municipal automated traffic enforcement tickets in each fiscal year from 2010-11 to 2016-17?

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak about my written question regarding how much the government has spent on administering municipal automated traffic enforcement tickets. This government has talked the big talk when it comes to transparency, and this serves as yet another example of the government failing to provide Albertans with their own information. These numbers should not be hard to find. They are line items in the budget and should be able to be tracked. In all of my years and experience there has been one fact that I’ve come to learn, that the government is very good at determining what you owe the government. Why are we not tracking and reviewing our government programs to evaluate cost-effectiveness? It should go without saying that the government should know its administration costs. How else do you plan a budget? I hope the minister endeavours to find this information out. When they do, please table it in this House.

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

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I am rising to ask for this written question to be rejected. My department does not have a way of accurately determining the answer to this question. Court clerks are involved to varying degrees in processing tickets but also carry out duties on other court matters. There is no way for the government to track, or they do not track at the time, the amount spent on administering specific types of tickets. Rather, we track the total amount spent on administering all types of tickets. If the member is interested in the answer to that question, it’s found in our budget.

Government staff at all levels are essentially involved in this, but their duties will involve some ticket processing and some other processing. Furthermore, judges and justices of the peace deal with a variety of matters, including traffic tickets, but all of their time can’t necessarily be attributed to these matters. All of this makes it difficult to determine the specific amount spent; therefore, I ask that this question be rejected.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake to close.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It’s very sad to hear that this question is going to be rejected when it looks like we’re being burdened by our photoradar system. It is important to understand the cost and the fact that this system seems to be something that really needs to be reviewed. I believe in putting forward this question that this is something the government should know, and if it doesn’t know it, then I believe it’s something that the government needs to close the gap on so that we can understand or better understand the implications that photoradar have on our entire Alberta justice system.

Please vote for my written question.

[The voice vote indicated that Written Question 3 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:48 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Cooper	McIver	Schneider
Cyr	Pitt	Smith
Fildebrandt	Rodney	Strankman

Against the motion:

Babcock	Hinkley	Miller
Carson	Horne	Miranda
Connolly	Jansen	Piquette
Coolahan	Kazim	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinsteuber	Rosendahl
Dach	Littlewood	Sabir
Dang	Loyola	Schreiner
Drever	Luff	Shepherd
Eggen	Malkinson	Sucha
Fitzpatrick	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Ganley	McKitrick	Westhead
Goehring	McPherson	Woollard
Gray		

Totals: For – 9 Against – 37

[Written Question 3 lost]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Correctional Services Protocols

Q4. Mr. Cyr asked that the following question be accepted.
What are the protocols for Alberta correctional services staff when dealing with an inmate in isolation?

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak on a written question regarding our correctional services staff when it comes to inmate isolation. Our corrections staff play a vital role in our justice system. They put their lives on the line just like our police officers, and it is important that they keep our corrections facilities running efficiently and safely. I'm a great believer in training, and the correctional staff, both sworn and nonsworn, can never get enough. We have all heard at one time or another that learning is a lifelong process, and this is an adage that is important for all of us to remember as legislators and policy-makers. This question will provide the Legislature with information into how we deal with our most violent offenders and the procedures they use to secure them in prison. We want to ensure that our front-line staff are properly trained and that the procedures they are using are in the best interests of everyone.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm proposing that we amend this written question. The amendment is simply to replace the word "isolation" with the word "segregation" as "segregation" is the term used in correctional services. As the question is currently worded, nothing would be responsive to it because that's not the term that's used.

Madam Speaker, I'd also like to note that I'm very pleased to see the members opposite, you know, referring to the important and vital work that our correctional services officers do. They work very hard each and every day to ensure that they're keeping the population of this province safe. With an expanding inmate population and increasing incompatibles in the populations, their jobs are very, very difficult. We work hard to ensure that they are trained in all matters to deal with all aspects of their job, but despite that, their jobs can be incredibly stressful and difficult for them, which is why it's so important that they have access to things like different forms of peer support for the difficult job that they do, which can often cause sort of emotional difficulties for them. So I thank the member very much for noting that.

That being said, the reason we're looking to amend this is because "segregation" is the term used, so then there will be policies responsive to that. Inmates are placed in either a disciplinary or administrative segregation under certain circumstances. We'll be happy to answer that question.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Written Question 4, moved by my colleague from Bonnyville-Cold Lake. I would just like to thank the minister for the amendment. I think it's reasonable. I think, you know, that any time the department or the government works to try to find a solution to get the answer to the question that we're asking for is always appreciated. I know that this information is very important, not only to my colleague from Bonnyville-Cold Lake but to

Albertans, to see the work that's taking place in our correctional facilities.

I might just add that I have a sneaking suspicion that the government isn't going to be quite as co-operative with some of the other written questions and motions for returns. I would just like to point out that the Minister of Justice has found a way to find a solution to get the information that's so critically important to Albertans. I encourage all members of the front bench to seek her guidance and leadership on these sorts of issues. Hopefully, as we progress today to what are some very important issues before the Assembly, we will be able to find compromises.

I encourage all members of the Assembly to vote in favour of the amendment.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
Are there any other members wishing to speak?

[Motion on amendment carried]

4:10

The Acting Speaker: Back on the original. Are there any members wishing to speak on the amended question?

Seeing none, we'll call the question on the amended question.

[Written Question 4 as amended carried]

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

Impaired Driving Charges

Q5. Mr. Cooper asked on behalf of Mr. Cyr that the following question be accepted.
Does the government collect information on the number of impaired driving charges that are due to marijuana, and if so, how many charges have been laid in each fiscal year from 2010-11 to 2016-17?

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise on behalf of my colleague from Bonnyville-Cold Lake to speak to Written Question 5. As you know, we have seen significant progress, if that's what you'd call it, from the federal government with respect to the Prime Minister's commitment to legalize marijuana, as we all know, next July 1.

There seems, unfortunately, to be a lot more questions than answers with respect to the announcement that we just saw in the last 10 days or so around what legalization is exactly going to look like, and I think it's very important that we progress in a manner that is reasonable with as many facts as possible. It sounds like a lot of the questions that people are asking with respect to federal and provincial jurisdiction, many of those will wind up on the shoulders of the provincial government, so it will be interesting to see how this government navigates what will certainly be some very interesting waters.

The heart of the question in many respects is to try and identify information and the hard facts about keeping our roads safe, and it's critically important that no matter what happens through the legalization process of marijuana, that is one of our primary concerns, we keep the roads safe. We need to find ways that we ensure that we're keeping impaired drivers off our streets and keeping all of those others safe.

It's important finding out how many driving charges are currently being issued for marijuana impairment. We need to be able to monitor the situation to see how trends may be increasing or decreasing. It is particularly important as we move toward legalization to see if, in fact, those sorts of impaired driving charges

would increase postlegalization, so it's very important that we have a point to measure now.

I understand that this data may not be readily available and that it's possible that our current laws might not differentiate between the types of impaired charges, but I think that it's critically important that we do whatever work we can to ensure that we have the best information possible so that the Justice minister has the best opportunity to make the best available decision, not just for the Assembly but for all of Alberta in ensuring that our roads are kept safe.

It's my hope that the Justice minister can in fact provide this information, and I look forward to the response.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I am rising today to ask that this written question be rejected. As the hon. member quite correctly pointed out, all impaired driving charges regardless of reason for impairment, whether it's due to cannabis, alcohol, or any other drug, would fall under section 253(1)(a) of the Criminal Code, which means that those charges would encompass everything. That would require us to go through individual cases to determine what those exact numbers are.

Impairment charges can also occur due to a number of substances and/or a combination of substances. For instance, we know from speaking with authorities in Colorado that after legalization they noticed that impaired drivers suspected of cannabis impairment were also frequently impaired by other substances such as alcohol. As a result, it's difficult to separate these out. It's also true that officers may not know the drug of impairment despite laying charges based on signs of impairment, so that also makes it difficult to come up with these exact numbers.

It would be difficult to provide accurate numbers. However, I have to note that the hon. member is actually also correct in saying that we are going to have to figure out, going forward, a way to handle this better. We will be working on that with my officials as we work towards legalization. As he has pointed out, there are a significant number of issues, and there is a lot of work to do in the timeframe we have been provided. One of our top three priorities is to ensure that we are keeping our roads safe as this legalization process occurs. We're very glad to see that the federal government shares this goal, and we will keep working with them on this.

Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, we don't have the information available at this time, so I'm asking to reject this question, but we will be working in future to ensure that we have adequate data to keep Albertans and our roads safe.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, I'll ask the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills to close.

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I guess it's a pleasure to rise and speak to Written Question 5 in closing debate. I think it's rather unfortunate that we don't have this type of information. It's very clear, as the minister pointed out, that there are various forms of impairment, and it would be reasonable that we take the necessary steps to focus our attention on those various types of impairment.

We see significant work done by organizations like MADD, specifically about driving impaired by alcohol and about the risks of drinking and driving, but without this sort of information, without this very critical information about how other forms of

impairment affect the safety of our streets, it doesn't allow for that same sort of advocacy. It doesn't allow for that same sort of baseline information that's so critically important to good policy-making. I think it's a real disappointment that we're not going to be able to get this information, that we're not going to have access to these very important stats.

Madam Speaker, you'll know that this government has a horrible track record when it comes to access to information. While I can appreciate that this particular piece of information may not be solely in their purview in terms of them not providing it, at every turn we see this government really letting Albertans down when it comes to access to information. Now we have another case where it's going to be difficult to make policy decisions because we don't have the statistics on impairment with respect to marijuana or other forms of impairment.

4:20

I encourage, implore, call upon the Minister of Justice to consider these sorts of questions as she may be making decisions in the future with respect to the data that they do or don't collect and how through the legalization process it's going to be critical to finding out if trends are increasing or decreasing, if our roads are more safe or less safe. We all have a duty to ensure that that is the case.

While I can appreciate the fact that the information may not have been kept, I'm certain that with the appropriate amount of research we could go back and find that information. Perhaps that would be cost prohibitive. As such, I certainly encourage the government to keep this very, very, very important information so that we can all make the best available decisions on a go-forward basis with respect to keeping our streets safe.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

[Written Question 5 lost]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Inmate Injuries

Q6. Mr. Cyr asked that the following question be accepted.

In each fiscal year from 2010-11 to 2016-17 how many incidents were there in Alberta correctional and remand centres that resulted in serious injury to inmates?

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is important for the public to know that our prisons are being monitored and that people charged and convicted are safe from violence. Understanding how the systems work and what the current state of our prison system is is as important for us as parliamentarians as it is for Albertans. We need access to this type of information so that we all can make a better decision when it comes to keeping our guards and inmates safe. Public scrutiny of this data will add further scrutiny to a very important piece of the judicial system.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm proposing an amendment to this written question. The amendment is simply to add the word "assault" before the word "incidents." Unfortunately, "incidents" is a broad term that would not provide meaningful results. It would also potentially capture some things that we maybe don't want to capture, which includes, you know, people who've had an accidental fall or people who've had a medical incident in the correctional facility, which does happen sometimes as well. My

understanding is that specifying “assault incidents” is acceptable to the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake and would provide the information that he is interested in. Therefore, I am proposing that we move forward with this amendment.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I’d like to thank the Minister of Justice for moving forward with clarity for this. I think that it would have been, I guess, unfortunate information if we would have gotten a massive lump of incidents. It would have really meant very little in the grand scope, so I thank the minister for moving forward and ensuring that we get the information that we are looking to get out of this written question.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, I’ll call the question on the amendment.

[Motion on amendment carried]

The Acting Speaker: We are now back on the amended question. Anybody wishing to speak?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake to close.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I’m looking forward to seeing exactly the serious assaults that are happening within our correctional facilities so that we can see the results of what exactly is going on within our facilities. I know that there have been two written questions that we weren’t able to get answers to, and that’s unfortunate, but we got two that we did get answers to. Again, I would like to thank the Minister of Justice even though I didn’t get everything I wanted.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

[Written Question 6 as amended carried]

Motions for Returns

[The Acting Clerk read the following motions for returns, which had been accepted]

Carbon Levy Impact

M6. Mr. MacIntyre:

A return showing copies of all economic impact assessments and consultation reports prepared by the government between May 24, 2015, and March 1, 2017, regarding the carbon levy.

Policy Co-ordination Office Deputy Minister

M13. Mr. Cooper:

A return showing a copy of the current job description for the deputy minister of the policy co-ordination office.

Ministerial Travel

M14. Mr. Cooper:

A return showing copies of all current protocols surrounding

the proposal and selection process for approving ministers’ out-of-province travel plans.

Budget Restraint Memos

M17. Mr. Fildebrandt:

A return showing copies of all budget restraint memos issued by the government between April 1, 2013, and March 1, 2017.

Public Affairs Bureau Jobs

M18. Mr. Fildebrandt:

A return showing copies of the current job descriptions for all positions in the Public Affairs Bureau.

Midwives in Alberta

M20. Mrs. Pitt:

A return showing copies of all documents prepared by or on behalf of the government between March 1, 2015, and March 1, 2017, relating to plans to increase the number of midwives practising in Alberta.

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

FOIP Request Processing

M1. Mr. Cooper moved that an order of the Assembly do issue for a return showing copies of all documents relating to Alberta Justice’s role in processing requests made to other government ministries under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It’s a pleasure to rise and speak to Motion for a Return 1. Over the past number of days and weeks we have seen significant toing and froing from this government speaking specifically about how incredible they are with respect to the FOIP process and how much better they are getting, yet we continue to see the Privacy Commissioner tell a very different story. We have seen the Department of Justice described as rogue. I had the opportunity to provide a member’s statement today about this government and the way that they have interacted with the FOIP system.

We have seen the Privacy Commissioner speak about a crisis situation. We’ve seen the Privacy Commissioner speak about unacceptable processing delays. She refers to two departments in her report, one being the Premier’s office and the other being the Department of Justice, engaging in the freedom of information requests process in a manner that some would say is unbecoming of the government. They are putting in place large amounts of unacceptable processing delays: those are the Privacy Commissioner’s words, not mine. The Privacy Commissioner has also spoken about how she’s angry and frustrated with respect to how the government is preventing her from doing her job.

4:30

I know I asked a question the week prior about the importance of access to information. This government likes to blame the last government. But, Madam Speaker, what happened and what’s happening is that the Privacy Commissioner in her report said that she had hoped that when there was a change in government, there would be a change in culture around secrecy and access to information, but in fact it’s gotten worse. I’m just speculating here, but given the fact that it doesn’t sound as though we’re going to get full co-operation around this particular issue, again, it’s this

troubling trend around a lack of transparency, a lack of desire by this government to be open and transparent about freedom of information. This type of information is very important.

One of the reasons why we asked this question is because we actually FOIPed this information, and Justice had said that it's not possible or it came in a very redacted form. The great thing about the Assembly, Madam Speaker – and you'll know this better than anyone in the Chamber – is the ability that the Speaker has to call for documents or the ability that the Assembly has to call for documents. And if it's the will of the Assembly, it can happen even if Justice has some reservations, even if cabinet has some concerns. If people inside the Chamber, if members that are speaking on behalf of their constituents are concerned about issues around access to information, this is the opportunity to ensure that we can get the access to information, that is so important, that Albertans are calling for.

I know it's hard to believe because from time to time FOIP isn't the most interesting topic of the day, but in fact there are people in the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills that, because they know I'm a passionate advocate on this particular issue, have come to the office and are starting to share stories on an individual level about how they are having such a hard time getting access to information and how they're disappointed that the government isn't as open and transparent as they ought to be. Certainly, I hope that whatever the government has to say about this very important question, they will be able to in fact provide the information just specifically about Alberta Justice's role in processing the requests made.

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

Not only is it important today, but just today in a CBC article, that has been widely shared on social media, it speaks very specifically about Alberta Justice's role. I'll just pull up a quote from the article about Alberta Justice's role in running political interference on freedom of information. The journalist FOIPed a number of questions, and it actually took over a year for him to get that information back. He thought that was ridiculous – I share his opinion in that case – so he actually FOIPed his FOIP about how this was possible, around why it took so long.

One of the things it says – and I'm happy to table the article in a written format tomorrow – is: "My ADM, Gerald Lamoureux, has advised me that the Ministry's Office would like to receive [copies] of records release packages for Access to Information Requests made by Opposition Parties and the media," reads an e-mail from Richard Marks, the director of FOIP records management. If this isn't a clear example of Alberta Justice politically interfering with the FOIP process, I don't know that there has been a more clear example of this. It should be concerning to every member of this Chamber.

At one point in time members of that front bench spoke adamantly in this House. I remember a pointed exchange between the now Government House Leader and the then minister, the Deputy Premier at the time, Mr. Lukaszuk, and them having some very heated exchanges about the Premier's office at the time engaging in political interference in the FOIP process. Now we have evidence of that taking place under this NDP government. They promised to do things differently, Mr. Speaker, and what we have is them doing the exact same.

We have it in the form of FOIP requests. We have clear evidence of political interference, in this case the ADM suggesting that all requests from media or the opposition parties need to go through the ministry. A FOIP request should be blind to the writer. It shouldn't matter if it's coming from the media or the opposition or

members of the public. They should be treated the same, not that they should be going back to Justice officials or any other, the Premier's office or otherwise, to manage the political risk.

It is more than a bit disappointing. I hope that the information that we've asked for will be provided in its fullest extent. I hope that they won't hide under the guise of solicitor-client privilege. We've already seen them using a wide swath to protect themselves and the Privacy Commissioner speaking out at length about that. We spoke about that in the last 10 days as well.

I look forward to hearing the minister provide a full and robust response to providing all the information that is so important to the people of Alberta.

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

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to speak to this particular motion, and I'm thrilled to get a chance to address all of the comments that the member opposite made. Certainly, it is the case that the CBC published an article today. They've quite helpfully included a link to the e-mail in question, which says that here is a copy of the information "released" – past tense – clearly making the case that, you know, the minister's office was being told that information had been released at some time in the past. Absent a time machine, that makes it pretty much impossible for me to interfere with anything at that stage.

Mr. Speaker, I think I'd like to make it clear, given the allegations being made in the House today, that there is no political interference occurring. It's not possible to interfere with something that has happened in the past. If they say that this is information that was sent out in the past, we can't possibly be interfering. [interjection] Yes. It does say that. In fact, helpfully, the article links to the e-mail in question.

Mr. Speaker, I think these allegations are just a little bit absurd. You know, there have been concerns around privilege for a long time. I absolutely agree that that has been the case. I can absolutely tell the House full stop that there has been no political interference. It is the case that ministers' offices get a heads-up on already approved documents. There is no asking for what they think about the documents. There's none of that. They're simply provided, potentially, with a package, in certain circumstances, saying that this is the information that has been approved and is going to whoever the claimant is. There is no political interference at that stage, and I don't think that's a very fair allegation.

It certainly is the case that sometimes ministers are called to respond to such documents, and we like to be prepared to do so because we have a great interest in transparency and ensuring that the public gets all of the necessary information. So, Mr. Speaker, I think it's totally fair for ministers to be versed in their portfolios and prepared and ready to speak to and address any concerns that come up in the public because, honestly, I think that's our job.

4:40

I am proposing today an amendment to this, and I'll just go a little bit into detail on why I'm proposing this particular amendment. As you will be aware, Mr. Speaker, Justice provides lawyers who provide legal advice on a lot of subjects. It is often the case that access to that legal advice would be, obviously, extremely beneficial to parties on the other side of cases. It's often the case that the government will have some very pricey litigation. I think specifically of tobacco litigation. That has been at issue a lot. That litigation is worth billions of dollars to the taxpayers of Alberta. At the end of the day, that billions of dollars is important. We're in a situation where, you know, those health care costs have gone out

the door. We've paid for those health care costs, and potentially there can be some recovery. That's in the interest of all Albertans, having that money come back from tobacco companies, who caused the injury in the first place, instead of having taxpayers bear the burden of that. I think that all sides of the House should be able to agree that it is in the interest of Albertans to ensure that that litigation proceeds and that the government is on its best foot to be able to proceed in that litigation.

Mr. Speaker, it's obviously the case, you know, that opposing parties are seeking privileged documents about those cases in order to improve their position in litigation and to impact negatively the position of not just the government but all Albertans, which is who, at the end of the day, the government acts for. We have an interest in protecting that information. It's absolutely critical. The interests of Albertans and billions of dollars in various litigation suits are important, and I think that they would expect us and do expect us to protect those interests. That's exactly what we're going to do, which is why we are amending this.

The amendment would add to the end of the motion the phrase "excluding documents containing legal advice." Essentially, what we want to exclude is any documents that contain legal advice. I think I've outlined in fairly graphic detail the reasons for that. I have no concerns with providing the documents relating to the role of Justice and Solicitor General in assisting other ministries with the FOIP requests they receive, subject, obviously, to those documents which contain legal advice. Again, the amendments are only to ensure that documents which are subject to privilege are not included in the motion.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I'm actually quite happy with the work that Justice officials have been doing. I instructed them over a year ago to go through and try to take a more reasonable and holistic approach to claiming privilege. There had been some concerns that privilege was being overclaimed, that documents that were not in fact subject to solicitor-client privilege – just to be clear, solicitor-client privilege occurs when actual advising is occurring, when somebody is asking questions of their lawyer, when the lawyer is giving them advice or answering those questions. It doesn't occur every time someone who's a lawyer happens to be in a room or on an e-mail. I have asked them to make sure that they're claiming privilege in an appropriate way and that they're claiming privilege in a consistent and rational manner so that it's applied the same to everything, so that there is equal application so that we can protect Albertans' interests in certain types of litigation while simultaneously ensuring that we're also protecting their interests in ensuring that they have access to information that they have a right to. We've been doing, I think, a better job of balancing that.

I think another critical piece of this has to do with staffing. Over the past number of years the number of FOIP requests received by the government has increased by several hundred per cent. Several hundred per cent with the same number of bodies doing the work: obviously, that results in backlogs. I don't think it takes a rocket scientist to figure that one out. What we've done in my department is that we've increased staff from 10 to 18, and that is to ensure that we're able to deal with these things in a timely manner. Mr. Speaker, that's an approach that we've taken across government to ensure that we have the individuals available to do the work in order to provide this information to Albertans because it's important to us. When something is important to you, you invest in it, and that's exactly what we're doing.

Mr. Speaker, I do find it a little rich that while the opposition calls for us to cut these sorts of jobs, to cut these sorts of what they call administrative jobs, at the same time they're asking for the people who are there to do hundreds of percentage points more work while doing it in the same time frame. I mean, that's obviously just not

going to work. So we had to make a choice. Because we feel that the interest of Albertans in this information is so critical, we made the choice to increase that staff, and we're starting to see higher clearance rates.

Obviously, you know, backlog takes awhile to build up, and it takes awhile to take care of, so as we have more and more of those people in those positions, more and more of that work will get done, and we will move forward in a more transparent manner. I do understand that the Information and Privacy Commissioner has been frustrated, and we certainly hope that, again, as we bring in the number of staff that's appropriate to the number of requests that the government is now getting that we're able to do that in a much more timely manner.

I think that pretty much covers most of what's going on. Again, as I've said, you know, subject to ensuring that we are protecting Albertans' interests in a lot of different litigation matters that the government has going on currently and ensuring that we're protecting Albertans' interests in future or past matters, essentially matters where the opposing party might be interested in the legal advice being provided, we are protecting that legal advice because that information, at the end of the day, allows us to pursue the interests of Albertans.

We are moving to add the phrase "excluding documents containing legal advice" to the end of this, but with that, we are happy to accept it and move forward.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to the amendment. I guess I appreciate the minister again trying to find a way to get some of the information out.

One of the challenges that we still face is that there is no check or balance on whether or not we'll know if they've provided all of the documents excluding the ones that contain legal advice and to what extent the legal advice will be applied and how robustly that will be applied. I'm, on one hand, thankful that they're trying to get us some of the information, but on the other there will be no way for us to know if we have in fact received all of the information. I am sympathetic to or understand the minister's point in that there are some pieces of information that are difficult to release around legal matters and matters that are currently before the courts and that would not benefit the province of Alberta, so I can appreciate her comments in that regard.

Part of the challenge, again, is around no way of knowing how the department is going to apply this exemption, no way of knowing the breadth and the width of that. While I appreciate us moving in a better direction of trying to get the information, I hope and implore the minister to ensure that it's not prohibitive in any regard around information that possibly should have been released but, in fact, is legal advice that would have a negative impact on our province.

With that, I will reluctantly vote in favour of the amendment, but I think, again, we need to make sure that we're taking much more proactive steps around this particular file, Justice already having a bad reputation for not being as forthcoming as they ought to be.

4:50

The Acting Speaker: The Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do have some concerns regarding this amendment. I understand where the government is coming from when putting forward this amendment. They are trying to protect privileged documents. That is actually admirable.

I guess my concern here lies in that they're actually using solicitor-client privilege on us as a defence against what we're looking for. I guess the question that I've got is: if there is advice between two government agencies not regarding any specific Albertan or corporation or whatever entities out there, will that be considered to be legal advice? Let's say that we've got Service Alberta asking for advice on how to move forward with some of their policies and we get specific advice on that. I'd like to see where the minister and the ministry are coming from. If that is included within this group, then that's fine, but if it's excluded from this group, it's these exact discussions that we're trying to find so that you will bring forward a finished document, that the government already doesn't seem to be following.

I guess the question here is that when we've got solicitor-client privilege, that is apparently being used within this, excluding documents that contain legal advice, we again have Justice deciding on, I guess, what paperwork they're going to be releasing. And with them not being responsible, in my opinion, in this area – and there's frustration across, I would say, all of Alberta when it comes to accountability and transparency – I would say that this is disparaging that we see this amendment come forward.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

I will vote for this amendment because in the end it does release some information, but if this does exclude advice between the government agencies that have nothing to do with Albertans specifically, I don't believe that that correspondence should ever be excluded.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, I'll call the question on the amendment.

[Motion on amendment carried]

The Acting Speaker: We are now back on the original motion for a return. Anyone wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you. I'd like to reference the April 2017 Privacy Commissioner's report, a special report and request for legislative amendment submitted to the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. Now, we've heard from the Minister of Justice that she's given direction to her ministry on exactly how she should be handling solicitor-client privilege. A quote that I would like to mention here from this report, directly from the Privacy Commissioner, is:

I am requesting that the FOIP Act be amended to explicitly state that I have the power to require public bodies to produce to me records over which solicitor-client privilege and other similar privileges are claimed, when in my opinion it is necessary to review those records (such as when a public body does not provide enough evidence to satisfy me that the records are privileged).

Right now I haven't heard that the minister is looking to bring forward any amendments to the FOIP Act, and this is a concern which means that our policy is all the more important, which is what this motion for a return is trying to get at. It's saying: "Okay. Fine. If you're not looking to amend the FOIP Act, then explain to us how it is that you're coming to this because in the end you're denying information from going to the Privacy Commissioner." If that is denied, then we have a real problem because now what we've got is a government that is more or less its own guardian, if you will,

and there's nobody that is doing independent oversight on this, which is what the purpose of the Privacy Commissioner is.

I'll read this second quote from the same report. "The Legislature established the position of Information and Privacy Commissioner to provide for an accessible, affordable and timely process for reviewing access to information decisions made by public bodies."

Now, this is important when we go on to this next part. Bear with me here.

Access to information enhances citizens' trust in government.

Transparency in the functioning of government permits citizens to participate in their democracy and promotes government accountability. For this reason, the right of access has been deemed quasi-constitutional by the Supreme Court of Canada.

This is important. This is very important.

Here is the actual quote that sums this all up. "For nearly 18 years, public bodies accepted that the Legislature intended . . . that my predecessors and I could review records over which solicitor-client privilege was being claimed."

I believe that when we look at legislation, we need to also look at what the intent of that legislation was. In this case we set up a Privacy Commissioner. The Privacy Commissioner was to look into ensuring that we have accountability and transparency and bring, really, a confidence to Albertans when it comes to our government bodies. By allowing the Justice department or the Ministry of Justice to start to review what documents it feels are privileged and which ones aren't, we put in a process where we end up having a gatekeeper that may be acting more in its own self-defence than in the best interests of Albertans.

Now, I'm not pointing fingers at the Minister of Justice because I do believe that when the minister gave direction to her staff, it was well intended. But then we have the e-mail – this was tabled on the last Thursday we were in the House – where we actually see that the Deputy Minister of Justice and the Deputy Minister of Service Alberta were creating rules that contradict what the Minister of Justice is saying. So I am curious about the timing of when she gave that decision because what we're looking at here is that if she said that it happened a year ago – and this was in May – this memo came out in June, so right after . . .

The Acting Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, but the time limit for consideration of this item of business has concluded.

5:00 Motions Other than Government Motions

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

Water Storage

503. Mr. Loewen moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to improve water storage in our ecosystems by consulting with the construction industry to develop requirements that provide for wetland remediation where development disturbs or removes a wetland, requires fill soil, or is designed to store water for industrial use.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm proud to rise this afternoon and move Motion 503. This motion calls on the government to engage the construction industry in developing wetlands remediation policy that incorporates industrial disturbances such as urban and industrial expansion, resource extraction, and road construction. Many within the industry are already actively doing

this, and by engaging industry experts, remediation policies can be designed in a way that both creates wetlands and offsets the loss that occurs as part of the development process.

Wetlands are unlike any other naturally occurring water body because they come in many different forms and are not easily defined. When someone says that they went to the lake for the weekend, most people are able to envision the lake in their mind. Sure, not every lake is alike – a prairie lake will likely be shallower than a lake located in the Canadian Shield or the Rocky Mountains – but for the most part, a lake is a lake. Likewise, a river is almost universally understood. While there are differences between any two rivers – some of them are fast-moving currents; some are slow and meandering – most people understand what a river is and can quickly picture a river. A wetland, on the other hand, is something of a mystery to people, even here in Alberta, where so much of our province is covered by wetlands.

Wetlands Alberta defines wetlands as

low-lying areas of land covered by water long enough to support aquatic plants and wildlife for part of their life cycle. Wetlands are highly diverse, productive ecosystems that provide a host of ecological services and form an integral component of Alberta's diverse landscapes.

While they are not clearly understood, wetlands are an integral part of our water system. They act as a natural filter. They reduce the impact of both floods and drought. They act as carbon sinks and support biodiversity. According to the Environmental Protection Agency “wetlands are among the most productive ecosystems in the world, comparable to rain forests and coral reefs.”

You'd think that for something that covers over 20 per cent of Alberta's surface and provides so much benefit, protecting wetlands would have been a no-brainer, but too often wetlands were seen as a hindrance to development. Over time, as the benefit of wetlands began to be better understood, particularly how they reduce the impact of both flooding and drought, the agriculture industry has become leaders in promoting water and wetland conservation. Resource extraction, the construction industry, and urban and industrial development have shown they care deeply for our environment and understand the importance of wetland and water conservation.

Unfortunately, instead of being considered standard practice, wetland and water conservation requires wading through a myriad of red tape and bureaucracy. I recently had an opportunity to tour an energy company and their projects. What I found most interesting was that they had already created holding ponds that were designed to be more natural, not just straight-walled dugouts for holding water but a pond with shallows and structure. In order to build these water storage ponds, they needed to get approval from the government to design them in a way that was more natural. Unfortunately, the process they went through to create these natural-looking ponds should have been easy. It should have been standard procedure.

I think I can speak for most of us here this afternoon when I say that conservation efforts should never be held up because of bureaucracy, because bureaucracy hasn't caught up with industry yet. If government can be proactive and facilitate a conversation with industry partners so that building and development take into account conservation right from the beginning of the project, ultimately that is what I'm hoping to address with Motion 503. Too often construction and industry in general are seen as incompatible with conservation and environmental stewardship. This leads to the development of policies that purposely stifle development, usually through the addition of ever more layers of bureaucratic red tape. These added layers of red tape result in additional costs, which are ultimately downloaded onto the end-user, whether it be the

taxpayers or consumers. Things like this reduce our competitiveness.

Motion 503 urges the government to start changing its relationship with industry and start treating them as joint stewards of the environment. By consulting with industry directly, we can ensure that the changes that are made don't create any further burdens while Alberta's economy looks to recover and we can reduce the burden of reclamation after the project is completed. Motion 503 would result in the seamless integration of wetland mitigation into the project.

Another reason Motion 503 is so vitally important is because Alberta has experienced loss of historical fish-bearing habitat and wetlands, and the current reclamation requirements for many industries fail to take that into account. By including permanent wetland creation as part of the development approval process, we can make water and wetland conservation easier and cheaper while increasing the number of fish habitat in our province, which ultimately leads to even larger fish populations and opportunities to pass along the gift of fishing to the next generation.

An example of where this could have a great impact is along highways. I drive highway 43 at least twice a week during the session, and what I've noticed is that along this highway there are a number of dugouts along the roadside where soil and dirt have been removed during the road construction process. When a highway is being constructed, in order to build up the base of the roadway, it is common for soil to be removed from along the construction site, leaving large dugouts. Instead of simply being left as a straight-walled pit, consider the opportunity to turn that into a pond with some wetlands and fish. It would not only provide great benefit to the local ecosystem; it would provide motorists the opportunity to stop and cast a few lines in a pond and catch some fish. Not only would we be conserving and expanding our wetlands; we'd be improving angling opportunities for people who may never have considered fishing before. This would not only create habitat for fish and other wetland species, but it would create water storage for a changing climate. All projects would be developed in a cost-effective manner that best represents natural wetlands and fish habitat.

Wetlands and our fisheries represent a large section of Alberta's ecosystems across the province. This motion would make water storage more natural and sustainable for fish and wildlife without adding any additional costs to industry. Where we have the opportunity, we should always ensure we are protecting these unique habitats across Alberta.

Motion 503 presents a real plan to improve our environment, and I hope it receives support from all sides of the Legislature. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm happy to take a moment to speak in support of Motion 503. I'd also like to thank the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky for bringing this issue forward. Our government recognizes the importance of wetlands, and we are committed to their protection. Ensuring our future water security through care for our wetlands is necessary to our health and well-being and to Alberta's economic prosperity. Industry, particularly the construction industry, is a key partner in the protection and conservation of wetlands. For this reason the hon. Minister of Environment and Parks has engaged extensively with representatives from multiple sectors, including the construction industry, via the Alberta Urban Development Institute, the recognized

voice for Alberta's land development industry, along with the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties and the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association.

In 2016 our government identified wetlands as a provincial priority by implementing Alberta's wetland policy, developed through extensive engagement and collaboration. The Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky references in the motion the reality that development can disturb wetlands, but let me remind the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky that the Alberta wetland policy states that its intention is "to conserve, restore, protect, and manage Alberta's wetlands to sustain the benefits they provide to the environment, society, and the economy." The Alberta wetland policy indicates the need "to avoid and minimize [potential] impacts on wetlands." When all avoidance and mitigation measures have been considered, Alberta's wetland policy directs that wetlands which cannot be saved should be replaced. This replacement is usually achieved through compensation with the wetland policy directing that wetlands be replaced or compensated at the same or a higher level than the wetlands being lost.

5:10

In addition, Madam Speaker, the Alberta wetland policy acknowledges the importance of urban and constructive wetlands, allowing these urban and constructive wetlands to be considered for wetland offset programs. The Minister of Environment and Parks is working with the Alberta Association for Conservation Offsets to develop a wetland restoration directive and a wetland construction directive, complete with a technical guide informed by the association's industry stakeholders.

At a time when climate change threatens to disrupt reliance on known precipitation patterns, it's prudent to optimize the health of our wetlands and their ability to store and purify water. A well-managed landscape and healthy wetlands can help Alberta's communities adapt to a changing climate in which severe weather and unexpected precipitation patterns become more common.

Madam Speaker, it is evident that this motion is well intended, and again I'd like to thank the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky for bringing it forward. Although our government has already been working on the issues raised by this motion, we support efforts to strengthen Alberta's wetland policy and opportunities to collaborate with key stakeholders to promote environmental sustainability.

For that reason, Madam Speaker, I'd like to support this motion, and I encourage others to do so as well. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Why, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to Motion 503, put forward by my hon. colleague from Grande Prairie-Smoky. As the hon. member has pointed out, it is vital that we take proactive steps to work with industry to conserve one of Alberta's most important ecosystems. Strong wetlands yield a plentiful and healthy environment for our wildlife and for the people of Alberta. We all benefit when we have strong wetlands, strong riparian areas, strong streams and rivers.

Madam Speaker, as you know, on this side of the House we are conservatives. It is in our nature to conserve, and that includes . . . [interjections] I don't understand. We are about to pass a motion about conserving wetlands, and they don't think we want to do it. I don't get them.

Madam Speaker, you will know more than anyone that they're an interesting mob over there. There are some things about the

government I will just never understand, and there are some things about this side of the House that the government will just never understand. I'm just so glad that we live in a place that doesn't result in parliamentary brouhaha, as we see in other jurisdictions around the world, and that we have the opportunity to robustly debate. Even with issues that we agree on, apparently, we get laughed at. But I digress.

Clearly, Madam Speaker, you won't be surprised that this portion of my remarks wasn't in my notes, but I do thank the government for the opportunity to again point out that we are about to, as an Assembly it seems, pass a motion about conserving wetlands, as put forward by my hon. colleague from Grande Prairie-Smoky, who is a conservative who's interested in conserving wetlands because at the heart of being a conservative is that desire to conserve. [interjections] I still don't understand.

It is integral that we maintain this natural treasure that is our province. I know that in the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills we have some fantastic wetlands and some areas that I know members of the community take great pride in ensuring are conserved.

What's integral about this particular desire is how we partner with industry. Part of this consultation includes that very critical conversation with industry and that conversation around the requirement for wetland remediation where development disturbs or removes wetlands.

I know that just in the past month I've had the opportunity to attend a number of fundraisers with some of the largest conservers of wetlands. Interestingly enough, most of the people in attendance at these particular fundraisers, that are often put on by Ducks Unlimited in the constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills – both in Olds and in Didsbury there's one; I invite everyone to come down – the vast majority of people that were there, that were concerned about conserving wetlands, weren't actually NDP voters but, in fact, were conservative voters because oftentimes – oftentimes, Madam Speaker – the thing that conservatives do much differently than this government is that conservatives put their money where their mouth is and do things on their own and don't just wait for government to come along. Literally – literally – hundreds of conservatives in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills were there putting their money on the line to help conserve wetlands because it is a critical resource for our province.

It has to do with partnership, so I'm glad that the government is going to be working on partnering with industry. It has to do with partnering with those who also like to use and recreate around those wetlands. Alberta's industry is a world leader at environmental remediation, with many industries already using the best practices. It's incumbent upon all of us and the government to engage with these leaders, to engage with these users to find the best way that we can utilize their experience to create policy that protects our environment while ensuring Alberta remains competitive with our neighbours as well. Failing to adequately consult with industry or stakeholders will not yield that competitive advantage. It will not yield the best practices, and it will not yield the conservation of our wetlands in a way that it ought to.

Mr. Rodney: So what are you trying to say?

Mr. Cooper: I'm trying to say that sometimes I get a little bit cautious about the government and their track record on consultation. We've seen a pretty shaky track record on consultation around Bill 6, a pretty shaky consultation around the labour review consultations, Madam Speaker, so I do have some reservations. It is of critical importance that we ensure that we are consulting with all of our stakeholders to ensure that we are working to build a stronger

network of wetlands across our province, that we are working to build a stronger and more prosperous Alberta for generations to come. Conserving wetlands is part of that much bigger picture.

It's my pleasure to stand here today to support this environmentally friendly motion. It's important to support this motion, that respects industry and ensures that we will have the best possible – the best possible – go-forward plan, balancing all of those very, very key stakeholders while ensuring that the Alberta that we leave behind for our children is a better Alberta than we found when we arrived at this place. That is exactly what this motion has the opportunity to do, to create a framework where that's possible. It sounds like the government is going to be supporting it. I appreciate their support on behalf of my colleague from Grande Prairie-Smoky and encourage all members of this Assembly to come to Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills and meet fellow conservatives like me who also want to conserve the great resources that are here in our province.

5:20

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I, too, am very pleased to rise in support of Motion 503, which urges

the government to improve water storage in our ecosystems by consulting with the construction industry to develop requirements that provide for wetland remediation where development disturbs or removes a wetland, requires fill soil, or is designed to store water for industrial use.

I was actually really enthused about this motion when the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky presented it. Then I listened to the member for the outstanding riding of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, and I am now really confused because I thought this was a motion about conserving our wetlands and doing everything we could to conserve our wetlands rather than some sort of contest about how big our environmental credibility is. I'm really surprised at that. In fact, I would advise the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills to maybe think about the impact of criticizing the good wishes of those people that would ordinarily support his colleague's motion. I think that maybe he should take some advice from this side of the House. When we see a good motion like the one that's been put forward by the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky, like my colleague from Calgary-Northern Hills, we're fulsome in support of it. We haven't done any sort of ad hominem type reaction to it.

Having said all that, why are we limiting this to just the involvement of industry in this motion? It's probably one of my main questions. Just last Saturday I attended a phenomenal event in the outstanding riding of Edmonton-Whitemud. It actually was an event that was at the border of the outstanding ridings of Edmonton-Rutherford and Edmonton-South West. It was actually an outstanding event organized by the Edmonton and Area Land Trust. It was an event that saw the conjunction of the city of Edmonton; a private developer, Melcor; and a very generous and altruistic family donation from the Poole family, the owners of the Poole construction . . .

Mr. McIver: PCL.

Dr. Turner: PCL. You know what I'm talking about. Sorry.

. . . and in addition the Edmonton and Area Land Trust, which is a nonprofit organization, that's obviously centred here in Edmonton, that, I think, has 17 different projects similar to the one I'm going to describe. This project, which is in the fantastic riding

of Edmonton-Whitemud, is going to enhance the quality of life of those that are living near it, is going to protect wetlands, and is going to add immeasurably to the mitigation of climate change. I was happy to hear one of the previous speakers talk about the importance of this wetlands mediation on our climate. If we can produce more land that will actually absorb some carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, this is going to be a big push.

Maybe I should go on and talk a bit more about this project. The main proponent of the project is Peter Poole, who is a businessman from Banff and who has inherited his parents' real regard for the environment. He was describing, actually, what his experience was just walking through this 59-acre environmental reserve or conservation area. He was describing seeing coyote tracks. He described seeing moose in this area, moose of all ages, actually, several moose. This is within the Heday. This is on the inside of the Heday. Just imagine what a schoolchild going for a walk through this area would experience if they could see the animals in their natural environment, undisturbed and how we could get those schoolchildren to get engaged and invested in preserving this environment. It's a fantastic result. I'm really pleased with that sort of thing. It's the kind of thing that I think that the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky is actually promoting here.

I'm going to give a little bit of history not about Edmonton-Whitemud but about Alberta and what's called the Palliser Triangle. The Palliser Triangle extends, with its vertex in southern Manitoba and its base basically along the Rocky Mountains. This was described by Palliser. He did this 150 years ago, and he was very concerned about the fact that it was basically a desert in this area. His main contribution was the recognition that we need to preserve our water resources in this area and particularly in Alberta, which was the driest part of the Palliser Triangle.

It's very important in terms of making sure that we have not only fish habitat and moose habitat and carbon dioxide sinks, but it's very important in terms of making sure that we've got headwater protection or water protection and that our aquifers are maintained. The Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act was a product of the Dirty Thirties, or, if you want to call them that, the dry thirties, where the federal government basically mandated that the farmers and the agricultural users in the Palliser Triangle area needed to build dugouts and build other structures that were going to maintain the water.

Now, sort of as a side benefit, Ducks Unlimited loves this. Ducks Unlimited has come to this area, to all of the Palliser Triangle area and have fund raised and helped with the conservation of wetlands. This is all going on now. Then you've got people like CPAWS, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society; Clearwater county; Vermilion county. There are a bunch of folks that are really working hard on this. This sort of work is ongoing.

This is why our government, our government members at least – I can speak on behalf of the members – are so fulsomely supportive of all of this. You know, I'm really pleased that we're able to basically express this support for this important measure.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my privilege to stand and speak on Motion Other than Government Motion 503. I'd like to congratulate the member that brought it forward.

You know, Madam Speaker, during the nine years I spent on city council in Calgary, we actually spent a great deal of time talking

about wetlands. What I think I've learned from some of those discussions, where many times we brought in, really, environmental experts to speak to us, is that wetlands are very much nature's way of cleaning the groundwater, and they need to be maintained. They not only are responsible for how clean the groundwater is but also for how high the groundwater is, which makes a great deal of difference not only in the agricultural sector in rural Alberta but, certainly, in urban Alberta, too, where in this climate it's on average drier than a lot of places in the world. Having that groundwater charged up makes a big difference in the survival of trees and other vegetation that, certainly, in parts of Alberta are more complicated to grow than they are in an area with more rainfall, higher humidity, those types of things.

5:30

I think this is a thoughtful motion. The other thing that I think is particularly worth while, based on what I remember from my time on city council in Calgary, is that rather than have the municipalities have in place up to 350 different wetlands policies, I think that for Alberta at some point it does make sense to have an overriding, consistent, thoughtful wetlands policy for the whole province.

For those reasons and on that basis, I'd like to thank the member for bringing this motion forward. After passing it, I think it's going to be environmentally important if we do it right. I certainly will be looking forward to voting in favour, and I hope that other members of this Legislature choose to do the same thing.

Thank you.

Mr. Cooper: Madam Speaker, I'd like to request unanimous consent of the House to revert to introductions.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

(reversion)

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today, and I wouldn't normally do this because, as you know, my children have the opportunity to come to the gallery on a fairly regular basis, and it is always a pleasure to see their smiling faces in the gallery. But today is a very special day for the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills because accompanying the finest children in the history of the world is the best dad in the history of the world. And I'm not speaking of myself; I am speaking of my father, who joins us in the gallery today. It's always a pleasure to be able to introduce one of the two people who made this all happen. If he would rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: Welcome.

Motions Other than Government Motions

Water Storage

(continued)

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Ms McKittrick: Madam Speaker, it's always hard to follow the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, but I did want to let him know that he does have some NDP members in his riding, not just conservatives . . .

Mr. Cooper: I know both of them.

Ms McKittrick: I think there are definitely a few more, and I could definitely introduce him to some.

Anyway, it's really an honour to rise and speak about a motion that protects Alberta's environment and especially its water resources. I really appreciate the motion from the member opposite. It demonstrates his support for the effect of man on the environment, including, I hope, his understanding of man's impact on the environment due to climate change.

Wetlands are among the most fertile, complex, and productive ecosystems on Earth. They play an important role in improving the quality and quantity of our water supplies in addition to providing valuable wildlife habitat. More and more, wetlands are recognized and appreciated for their contribution to the health and wellness of Alberta's environment, water quality, biodiversity, and economy.

I just wanted to talk a little bit about the economy because wetlands provide opportunities for tourism. I think that in most of our ridings we have wetlands where people go to bird-watch, to do nature photography, hunting, fishing, and other activities.

As many people in this Assembly know, I am an avid road cyclist. [interjections] Surprise, right? This allows me to see first-hand the wetlands and their importance to birds in their migration and a multitude of large and small animals. There's nothing like running across a moose when you're on your road bike. I enjoy watching how the wetlands in rural Strathcona county change over the months in terms of vegetation, water level, and type of wildlife. Cycling in the evening is particularly rewarding when it comes to watching wildlife in the wetlands.

The specialized municipality of Strathcona county has been very proactive in terms of ensuring that wetlands are conserved in both its urban and rural areas. When I worked for the county, I was first exposed to the Strathcona county wetland conservation policy. This policy works to ensure that no net loss of wetlands occurs in the urban and rural areas of the county. All development initiated by either a landowner or a third party, including Strathcona county, is subject to this policy.

I had first-hand experience of this policy as I sat in planning development meetings and listened to discussion on how developers had to mitigate the loss of wetlands in their development and the changes that they had to make to the subdivisions to preserve the existing wetlands. This is why throughout subdivisions in Sherwood Park developers have had to build new wetlands and ponds to remediate the destruction of wetlands when subdivisions were built.

The Strathcona county policy is clear as to the no net loss of wetlands direction and how degraded lands must be remediated. The county also works with residents to support the conservation of wetlands by suggesting that residents should recreate on trails and keep dogs on leash to maintain a safe habitat for birds and other wildlife, place litter in the garbage to make sure that it doesn't enter the water, reduce fertilizer and pesticide use to keep wetlands healthy and prevent algae blooms and odours, take unused chemicals to the enviroservice station for proper disposal to prevent accidental release, and ensure that the drains on people's property are not disturbed. The county also suggests that watering cattle and other livestock has to be done in another area than wetlands or dugouts.

Madam Speaker, the example of what Strathcona county is doing, linked to provincial policies and direction, is an indication of the importance of wetlands and their remediation and of the interest by both municipal and provincial governments in this issue.

I will vote in favour of the motion but would like to remind the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky that it's not only consultation with the construction industry that is needed but all

sectors whose activity disturbs wetlands, including the users of off-road vehicles and other industries such as oil and gas and farming.

We are fortunate to have in Alberta a number of organizations whose mandate is to support the provincial and municipal governments' conservation efforts, including the Edmonton and Area Land Trust, which the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud talked about. The Edmonton and Area Land Trust is preserving a number of important wetlands in Strathcona county, including a wetland that is a very important migration resting site for migrating birds.

Madam Speaker, I would like to close by thanking the member for putting forth this motion, and I will urge everyone to vote in favour. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to thank my colleague from Grande Prairie-Smoky for his work in creating this motion. Obviously, in northeastern Alberta we have a lot of wetlands, and this is actually very important to my constituency.

I'd like to go back to an article that my local editor from Cold Lake had written, Wetlands "Pressured" by Development. This was written by Peter Lozinski. It was written on February 10, 2015, so for many of us this was before we actually took the House as new members. But some of us were here during this time.

It's important that I reference some of the points in this article because, you know, this development that is happening, especially in northern Alberta, is something that is impacting our wetlands, and it's important that we understand what it is that wetlands do. I'll read through parts of this.

To start off with, it says, "Local wetlands are 'pressured,' especially near development, according to Beaver River Watershed Alliance program manager Harry Keess. Feb. 2 was world wetlands day." Now, I didn't realize that there was a World Wetlands Day, but it does make sense that my riding would be celebrating that important day.

5:40

You know, I will say that I've been to a couple of the Beaver River Watershed Alliance AGMs. There are good people on that board that are trying to make sure that our local watershed is protected. This is very admirable. This is something that we all need to be conscious of. It's important that we are working with – and I'll go back to the original motion here. It says that we're "consulting with the construction industry," that is looking to grow. We need to have balance. We do need to recognize that there are road requirements that my riding needs. We do need to recognize that there are industry projects that need to move forward. That does mean that there are going to be disturbances. So how do we mitigate that?

Going back to this, we've got one way, and it's very admirable. The MD of Bonnyville has come up with an environmental reserve bylaw, and this allows the MD to designate an area of shoreline as an environmental reserve that is protecting the riparian vegetation from development and modification. Riparian or shoreline vegetation is a type of wetland that grows along the shore of a body of water, storing water and filtering out toxins. This is something that we need to be looking forward to, these really interesting ways that our local municipalities can look at in defending the wetlands. We are stewards, and we are all responsible in this House for the wetlands.

It goes on – and this is a direct quote from Keess – to say, "Restoring or preserving wetlands [is] an investment because

wetlands are able to filter out and prevent pollutants from reaching water systems." Let's look at this. Cold Lake is our main regional source for water across my riding. This is something that is producing an incredible source for us to be able to feed our needs across our entire constituency when it comes to ensuring that we've got enough water. If we were to pollute that water source, that affects everybody, which is why, making sure that when we look at conservation, we look at conservatism, and we look at this as a goal for this government, that's admirable. The fact that my colleague was identifying this as a problem and saying, "Let's look for solutions; let's bring forward a motion that is going to show a direction for this government": this is responsible.

I will tell you that I take pride that this was a motion that was brought forward by the Wildrose Party. It was brought forward by the shadow minister of environment. You know what? This shows that we are looking to be as responsible with our environment as I know the government across is trying to be as well. When we're looking at moving forward in environmental conservatism, moving forward in wetlands, we are looking out for my riding, and I would like to say thank you to everybody in this Chamber for supporting that.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Madam Speaker, for providing me the opportunity to speak in relation to Motion 503. You know, it's funny. When you look at this from the outside and as an ordinary citizen – and I would have been even naive to this three years ago, before I started digging into this job as an MLA and learning a lot of new things – you would think that this is really a rural issue or an issue that small counties or small municipalities would have to deal with. It isn't, actually. I think the Member for Calgary-Hays kind of outlined some of that as well, that large cities have to tackle this and deal with this as well. Being near the outskirts of the city of Calgary and near the edge, it's actually been remarkable the number of times that I have had to have interactions and talk with developers in relation to wetland development and wetland remediation.

Recently we've had an area in my constituency of Calgary-Shaw, in Shawnee Slopes, where they're developing an old golf course. Unfortunately, some of the residents were unhappy about this. The development actually started when I took this role. There wasn't really much we could do to reverse any of it because pretty much the entire pitch had been torn apart, but the one thing that was remarkable is that there was actually a wetland there. The wetland was always there, and they made it part of the golf course.

Then subsequently, when they were developing the area, they had to start doing environmental assessments. They were going to move the wetland a little bit, but they had to make sure that they reclaimed parts of the space there as well. Moving forward, it was remarkable to see the due diligence that came from Environment and Parks when they were working with them, the long process, the environmental assessments that they had to do. It's great to see that the Ministry of Environment and Parks is looking to make sure that we are doing what we can to protect them further, making sure that we have the right amount of studies and that we're working with developers.

But I also have to underline what the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud pointed out, that as we move forward, it shouldn't just be with the development and the construction industries. I learned that right after the election. I probably alluded to this before in this House, about a challenge that we had with ATCO Gas running a

natural gas pipeline through Fish Creek park. It was something I had to deal with literally two days after the election because (a) the challenge was that the residents in the area felt like they hadn't been consulted appropriately, and (b) there was a huge environmental output that was going to happen because of that, and there was a lot of concern in relation to how it was going to impact the park and actually some waterways as well.

The one thing that was remarkable about this is that while I had to make phone calls to the AUC to learn about regulatory law and I had to connect with the ministry of agriculture because part of that fell under their jurisdiction and I had to connect with some of the bureaucrats within parks, the most important information that I learned in relation to the impacts on the environment and the construction of this was actually from a bunch of old, retired people who had been involved in the industry for 40 years who happened to settle in houses adjacent to Fish Creek park. So I think it's important that we also make sure that we engage with residents because many of them are experts in their field regardless of where they come from.

You know, it's funny when you look at the city of Calgary, too, because early on in that city there wasn't a lot of care. It's no one in this Chamber's fault. Most people who made those decisions are long gone. But at the time the due diligence and the care weren't necessarily put in in relation to the wetlands.

I actually remember my elementary school teacher telling me that when she was visiting Calgary as a child, the area where I grew up, which is Marlborough Park, was a wetland. It was swampland. A lot of people actually attribute some of the challenges we have with our cracking – I shouldn't say "our" because I don't live there anymore. The issues that people have in relation to cracking roads and cracking sidewalks is because they didn't properly reclaim that land, and they didn't have appropriate stormwater ponds and areas for the water to go. Eventually they actually had to develop dry ponds in those areas, too, so that the water actually had a place to go when there was heavy rainfall, and that's something that wetlands protect as well.

Looking deep into the south, as we're developing some of the ring road and doing some of the alternative routes, there's a lot of work that's going on with our developers, with the city of Calgary, and with Environment and Parks to make sure that we aren't causing any negative ramifications towards the wetlands that are in that south end, just south of Stoney Trail along Macleod Trail, because that is a pretty pristine area of land, and I know that a lot of people would be upset to see that. It's also important, as we do further developments, that we also look at developing the stormwater ponds that we see on a lot of adjacent roadways, which are kind of the man-made wetlands that we have, and those can come from old gravel pits to many areas within the land that we see.

You know, it's a huge balancing act that we face within municipalities trying to balance the urban sprawl that we see in Calgary, the quality of life that people have come to expect, whether it's the garage and the yard and the large area that they have, with protecting our environment and protecting our wetlands that we have here as well. That's why with a lot of the newer developments we always see that mandates are made with the developers to ensure that they're protecting existing wetland spaces, or at least developing new ones, to ensure that we can actually clean the water, just as the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake alluded to earlier, using the environment and allowing nature to take its course to clean and purify itself, to make sure that at the end of the day, when we're having major storms and when major water events are happening, we find places for the water to go.

5:50

I think it's important to note that we've seen a ton of leadership from many of our oil and gas companies when we're dealing with this. Suncor and Enbridge have been huge supporters of Ducks Unlimited and the Nature Conservancy of Canada. We've seen some strong stakeholders that have already stepped forward and taken that leadership before we've even approached them as government to move forward.

With that, Madam Speaker, I want to thank the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky for bringing forth this motion. I think it really parallels some of the great work that our government is doing to make sure that we do what we can to conserve wetland spaces so that we can make sure we maintain a pristine environment for our kids and for future generations. So I will be supporting this motion.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the motion?

Seeing none, I will now call on the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky to close debate.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I brought forward Motion 503 to facilitate what is either already taking place or what industry is desiring to do. We already have wetland policies in Alberta, but we need to be able to streamline those wetland policies so that they make sense to all Albertans and to industry. I think that by discussing these issues with industry, we can come up with suitable solutions that protect our environment but aren't a burden to industry.

I guess what I noticed, too, was a lost opportunity when I toured that energy company that I talked about earlier and we saw the holding ponds that they had developed years ago, that were just straight-walled holding ponds, and we saw the ones that they've developed recently, where they had made shallow water into wetlands and created a little bit more natural holding ponds for water. It just seemed like it was a lot more suitable for wildlife, for waterfowl, and for fisheries. I just looked at that as a lost opportunity, where in order for that company to develop that natural-looking pond, they actually had to get permission from government, had to go through an extra process to get that done. That just didn't seem right. It seemed like that should be the way it should be done, not that these companies should have to go through extra work and extra bureaucracy to make it happen.

Another thing I thought of is that with these holding ponds, when they're finished with them, they may have to reclaim them, drain them and fill them back up. That just doesn't make sense when we have an opportunity to use these holding ponds as habitat for fisheries, for waterfowl, and for other aquatic life. It would be just great to have that water storage.

Now, I talked about the ponds along the side of the highway. There are some lakes that we have in Alberta that are great fisheries that are no bigger than those ponds, those dugouts, that are along the side of the highway. So it only makes sense that those things be designed in a way that people could fish them, you know, that migratory birds, ducks, geese, whatever, could nest on them. It would just make a lot more sense if these were designed a little bit more friendly to wildlife.

For those people that know me, they know I love the outdoors, that I love wildlife. Those that know me know I don't fish that much – I enjoy fishing once in a while – but I have a deep respect for people that do spend a lot of time on the water fishing, enjoying that pastime. There's no reason why we can't have more opportunity here in Alberta. By this motion, we could possibly have more

fishing opportunity for the anglers in Alberta. There's a lot of opportunity. Like I said, some of the lakes that we fish now are no bigger than some of these ponds that are created by industry, so there's no reason why we can't use these ponds as fisheries and give extra opportunity for Alberta anglers.

There needs to be consistency in policy. Things need to be simplified when dealing with wetlands. Right now there's a lot of bureaucracy, a lot of red tape, and we can simplify those things. We can work with industry to make it so that they're more competitive in their businesses, and we still can protect our environment and protect our wetlands.

I appreciate the support from all sides of the House on this motion, and I appreciate hearing everybody's comments here today. My colleague behind me here talked about World Wetlands Day. My colleague from Bonnyville-Cold Lake talked about World

Wetlands Day on February 2. I thought we should probably call it world ice day because we don't have much that looks like wetlands in February here. Again, I appreciate the support, appreciate everybody's comments here today. I'll wrap this up and ask for everybody's support, and we'll vote on this now.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 503 carried]

Cortes-Vargas: Madam Speaker, seeing the progress today and the collaboration across the aisle, I move to call it 6 o'clock and adjourn the House.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:58 p.m.]

Table of Contents

Prayers	725
In Memoriam	
Mr. Bohdan (Bud) Zip	725
Introduction of Visitors	725
Introduction of Guests	725, 751
Ministerial Statements	
National Day of Mourning	726
Oral Question Period	
Fort McMurray Wildfire Air Tanker Use	727
Carbon Levy	728
Labour Legislation Review	729
Progress Alberta Executive Director's Remarks	729
Condominium and Housing Co-operative Governance	730
Unharvested 2016 Crops	730
Oil Price Forecasting	731
Fixed Election Dates	732
Budget 2017	733
Energy Efficiency Programs	733
Renewable Energy Land Leases	734
Workplace Legislation Review	734
Ray Gibbon Drive	735
Members' Statements	
Agricultural Supply Management Marketing System	735
Access to Information	736
Provincial Election Second Anniversary	736
Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater Constituency Update	736
National Day of Mourning	736
HALO Medical Rescue Helicopter Funding	737
Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees	737
Presenting Petitions	737
Notices of Motions	737
Tabling Returns and Reports	737
Tablings to the Clerk	738
Orders of the Day	738
Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders	
Third Reading	
Bill 202 Protecting Victims of Non-consensual Distribution of Intimate Images Act	738
Division	740
Written Questions	
Public Property Theft	740
Budget Consultations	741
Government Staffing	741
Public Affairs Bureau Managing Director	741
Pension Plans	741
Carbon Offsets	741
Automated Traffic Enforcement Tickets	741
Division	741
Correctional Services Protocols	742
Impaired Driving Charges	742
Inmate Injuries	743
Motions for Returns	
Carbon Levy Impact	744
Policy Co-ordination Office Deputy Minister	744
Ministerial Travel	744
Budget Restraint Memos	744
Public Affairs Bureau Jobs	744
Midwives in Alberta	744
FOIP Request Processing	744
Motions Other than Government Motions	
Water Storage	747, 751

Alberta Hansard is available online at www.assembly.ab.ca

For inquiries contact:

Managing Editor

Alberta Hansard

3rd Floor, 9820 – 107 St

EDMONTON, AB T5K 1E7

Telephone: 780.427.1875