



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Third Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, May 18, 2017

Day 36

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 29th Legislature

Third Session

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

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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),
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Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),
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Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)
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Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (ND)
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),
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Government Whip
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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)
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Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)
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Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)
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Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)
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Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)
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Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W),
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Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)
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Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)
Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC),
Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)
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Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

Party standings:

New Democrat: 55

Wildrose: 22

Progressive Conservative: 8

Alberta Liberal: 1

Alberta Party: 1

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Kazim	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, May 18, 2017

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: Good afternoon, everyone. Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my honour and privilege today to introduce to you and through you to the House students from Langevin science school in the fabulous constituency of Calgary-Mountain View. The students are accompanied by their teachers Elaine McCrady, Kate Logan, and Tim Bowles along with chaperones Milica Legault, Grant Lewis, Patty Ross-O'Donnell, and Carlos Ferreira. I would ask them to stand and receive the warm welcome of the Legislative Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

Ms Miller: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you 70 amazing students from Eastview middle school in the amazing riding of Red Deer-South. With them are teachers Mr. Bob Rutz, Miss Victory Shewchuk, and Mrs. Bev Wilibnisky. I'd like them all to rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of the Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other school groups?

Seeing none, I will now call on the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a privilege to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature the Alberta Donates Life Coalition, which was formed in 2012 to address the urgent need for increased numbers of organ and tissue donors in Alberta. I would ask Barbara Esdale to rise. She's from the great constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud and is the co-chair of the coalition. Her husband received the gift of life with a double lung transplant in 2009. Neil Folkins is the national membership director for the Canadian Transplant Association. He received a liver transplant first in 1996, and he received a second one in 2004. Lionel Jensen is a PhD student at the University of Alberta. A long-time blood donor, he established the Organ and Tissue Donation Awareness club at the U of A in 2015. The club's charter and materials can provide a model for other postsecondary institutions in Alberta. I would ask the other folks with the life coalition to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce Barry Morishita. Barry Morishita is the mayor of Brooks and also the chairman of the Newell Foundation in the Brooks region, which is heading up the Bassano project for seniors' care. He is here today advocating on behalf of the project to ensure that people in the Brooks-Newell region get the seniors' care that they need. I ask that he stand and receive the warm welcome of every member of the Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my privilege to rise and introduce to you and through you councillors from the town of Vegreville: Councillor Marielle Brodziak, Councillor David Berry, and Councillor Tim MacPhee. They are here as I will be giving a member's statement about the CPC centre in Vegreville. I would ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my privilege to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Myrna Wisdom. Myrna is a third-generation descendant of the original Amber Valley settlers, where she grew up. She has been a tireless advocate for the community and is responsible for Amber Valley having recently been designated as a national historic site. Myrna, I see you've already risen. Please receive the customary warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you a constituent of mine, Audrey Martyn. Audrey represents the Canadian National Institute for the Blind as a CNIB champion. CNIB advocates at various levels of government and community to extend services to the blind and low visioned to improve their quality of life. In addition to this, Audrey also organizes with the Alberta Donates Life Coalition, that has been recognized already today, a group that helped to bring in Bill 207, from which the donor registry for human tissue and organ donation was born. Please welcome Audrey, an advocate for community members in my constituency in Alberta and across Canada, and extend the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you three guests visiting us today from the town of Jasper. I ask that they please rise as I call their names: Jasper's mayor, Richard Ireland; Councillor Gilbert Wall; and Kathleen Waxer, a director of Community and Family Services for the town. They are here advocating for the family and community support services program. That incredible preventive social services program is jointly funded by municipalities and the province. I ask that the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly be given to them.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Donations to Political Parties

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In June 2015 I was very proud to vote for Bill 1, An Act to Renew Democracy in Alberta. Nearly two years ago that bill banned corporate and union donations in this province. I was very pleased to see this whole Assembly, including the Wildrose and PC caucuses, vote to ban those donations to political parties.

But I was really dismayed to read in the news this morning that these two dance partner parties still don't think the rules apply to

them. The Unite the Right folks on the opposition benches don't seem to find any rule too big or too small to break when it comes to fundraising and party operations.

Madam Speaker, last night the Member for Strathmore-Brooks and his buddies the Member for Calgary-Greenway and the Member for Calgary-West held a meeting about uniting their parties. They were able to get about 50 people into a theatre that holds about 460 people. Their own party advertising originally listed the event as sponsored by a business.

Even as the Leader of the Opposition said yesterday that corporate donations to his party are wrong, he's still listed online as holding a fundraiser next week where a corporation is bidding on tickets. As of this morning that event is still on the Facebook page.

Mr. Kenney is no better. Remember that his own party fined him \$5,000 because he fought the definition of what near a ballot box means.

Albertans expect politicians to be honest, to be committed to upholding the law in this province, and to be graceful when they make a mistake. But these parties don't seem to think there's anything wrong with accepting corporate donations. Jason Kenney still hasn't said who he got funds from for his leadership campaign, that began last July. He has yet to reveal who his for-profit corporation solicited for donations even though they apparently stopped accepting money last October.

Albertans want a government that respects the rules, respects the laws. The Unite the Right dance-off needs to stop making excuses.

1:40 Conservative Party Merger Agreement

Mr. Nixon: Madam Speaker, did you hear the good news? The path to unite the right has been paved. Last night a unity framework was reached between the Wildrose and the PC leadership, and as always, the power is in the hands of our membership, who will make the final decision. However, I believe I can safely say that my children will not have to live under an NDP regime ever again, nor will my grandchildren. We put our differences aside and came together for hard-working Albertans who have been waiting for this day for a very long time. To them I say: wait no more; the NDP will soon be political history. Alberta small "c" conservatives will not let Alberta become another casualty of the NDP world view on the scrap heap of history. The countdown is on. The dark days of the NDP will soon be over.

This government has fundamentally changed our province for the worst in two short years, imposing crushing tax increases that they never campaigned on, filling the hallowed halls of this building with anti-Alberta activists who have the audacity to collect a cheque from taxpayers while they conspire to sabotage our pipelines. The NDP has turned our province into a pariah, a province once a lighthouse of fiscal hope to the world, but this is nothing that cannot be undone.

Alberta's former prosperity was built on hard work, self-determination, and it will be restored on such things. Our members will now pave the path forward, and the next steps in unity take shape. Unlike the NDP, who serve special interests, we serve our members, honest Albertans who want their province back. Every member of our two parties believes there is no one person bigger than doing what is right for the families of this great province, so what we are doing is to honour the legacy of our two great parties, the wishes of Albertans today, and the hopes of all our future generations. [interjections]

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, I know today is Thursday.

The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Vegreville Immigration Centre

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Madam Speaker. When I was first elected as the MLA to represent Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, people would often ask me about the big Ukrainian egg. Now the first thing I hear is: how goes the fight for the CPC centre?

Madam Speaker, Albertans are frustrated by the federal government's decision to close the Canadian immigration case processing centre in Vegreville, but no one is more frustrated than the town. Global News is now reporting that internal federal government documents show that it will cost an extra \$10.8 million to move it.

Council members joining us here today were informed by frantic texts from workers, who were told unceremoniously at a staff meeting that the centre was closing. Council got to work immediately, contacting their federal and provincial representatives, and the Respect Vegreville campaign was started. Two town halls have been held. We've knocked on hundreds of doors with petitions. Many of us have written letters, only to receive canned responses. Our Minister of Labour held a face-to-face meeting on April 27 with federal minister Ahmed Hussen and fought for these workers.

Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, we go unheard. Recently I was forwarded a letter written by Minister Hussen in which he continues to refuse the responsibility for this decision. He says, "The decision to relocate the CPC in Vegreville to downtown Edmonton was a difficult one for the management of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada."

Madam Speaker, the difficult decisions won't be made in Ottawa. The difficult decisions will be made by town council, by families around the kitchen table, by schools trying to figure out how to make up a million dollars if they lose 130 students.

Prime Minister Trudeau stood in the train station in Vegreville and promised to support rural Canada. When he won, he said the words, "Sunny ways my friends, sunny ways." Madam Speaker, the sun is shining on parts of Canada, but the sunlight has not yet reached Vegreville.

Conservative Opposition Policies

Mr. Westhead: As the conservative parties merge, it's important to know where they stand on issues that matter to Albertans, but their memes and buzzwords only serve to obscure a serious problem with their intellectual balance sheet. It's obvious there's a deficit of ideas and facts from the conservative opposition members, no matter what they choose to call themselves. Albertans deserve better than the UCP.

Just how low is the opposition on intellectual capital? So low that the Member for Strathmore-Brooks proposes borrowing a Soviet-era idea to erase history. They'll have a lot of explaining to do when they wipe out school nutrition programs, slash the minimum wage, and cancel Black History Month. Just like their shadow budget, opposition policies have yet to see the light of day. If the opposition has a better way to do things and truly cares about Alberta, they owe it to all of us to share those ideas. But the cupboard is bare. Either they don't care about Alberta, don't have any ideas, or are scared that Albertans will reject their intolerant, slash-and-burn approach. To avoid making tough decisions, they've proposed a *Dragons' Den* style realty TV scenario that pits teachers against nurses and special-needs children against seniors in a no-holds-barred battle royal to avoid their damaging cuts.

The Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner attended a rally opposing women's reproductive rights. I guess that counts as an idea, but it's a deeply troubling one. It seems the conservatives don't care who gets hurt as long as they win the next election.

We must acknowledge the absence of solutions being offered by the members opposite. Madam Speaker, Alberta's opposition has a profound deficit of ideas, and their credit rating has been downgraded to an F minus. The next step for them is to declare intellectual bankruptcy. [interjections]

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members, just a reminder. We are on Members' Statements, and if we could be respectful to the speaker, please. You'll have time later.

Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Vaisakhi Nagar Kirtan

Loyola: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to recognize the organizers of the Vaisakhi Nagar Kirtan, a procession held annually in southeast Edmonton in the constituencies of Edmonton-Mill Woods and Edmonton-Ellerslie. I'd also like to thank the broader Sikh community of Alberta who host the Nagar Kirtan in Calgary as well.

The Nagar Kirtan is an important Sikh tradition for commemorating special occasions in the Sikh calendar. Traditionally the procession is led by the saffron-robed Panj Pyare, who are the spiritual and temporal embodiment of the collective Sikh community, who are followed by the Guru Granth Sahib, the holy scripture, which is placed on a float. Commonly, members of the procession are unshod in a deference to the displayed scripture. As bystanders bow their heads to the holy scripture as it passes, they may receive food provided to them from floats. The procession concludes at the gurdwara with prayers.

I am always encouraged when hearing about the three pillars of the Sikh faith: to constantly remember the oneness that unites us all, to work with integrity while earning an honest living, and to share that wealth with all those in the broader community.

Madam Speaker, it is the sharing of our cultures that makes Alberta a great place to call home. As a Canadian not born in Canada, I give thanks that we have a culture of respect and understanding. As people who have come from a foreign land to now call Alberta home, we are not expected to fit the mold of a Eurocentric definition of what it means to be Canadian. It is exactly that multicultural nature of Canada that enriches Alberta society.

I'm proud to be part of a government that declared April 2017 as Sikh Heritage Month in Alberta and recognizes that cultural diversity can still embrace common values, values such as dedication to one's family, profession, and community while at the same time being compassionate to those in need.

Again, I thank all the organizers of the Nagar Kirtan for sharing their values with us, values that we share and respect as we continue to build Alberta into a stronger place to call home for everyone.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Amber Valley National Historic Site

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In February of this year, thanks in great part to the work of my colleague the hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre, Alberta celebrated its very first Black History Month, and Amber Valley has always been a big part of that history.

This past weekend I had the good fortune to bring greetings on behalf of our Premier to Amber Valley and share in the celebration of their official designation as a national historic site. This designation is in recognition of the arrival of over a thousand African-American settlers to Canada between 1908 and 1911, seeking to escape discrimination and in hope of a better future.

Amber Valley itself was home to over 150 of these individuals and is unique in having some of their descendants still living on their original homesteads. Growing up, my grandfather used to tell me stories about Amber Valley. Their baseball team was legendary across northeastern Alberta, as were their annual three-day picnics. These courageous settlers established their own institutions, created a rich social life, and forged vibrant farming communities. The arrival of these black pioneers to our province has been and will forever be an integral part of our western heritage.

1:50

Sadly, the initial rush of black settlers caused a racist backlash by our governments of the time, and the door was then shut to black immigrants until the early '60s, to our collective shame and also our collective loss. Those who did come have enriched our diversity and our society well out of proportion to their numbers, playing a vital role in battling discrimination and advocating for equality, tolerance, and justice for all.

Today the Amber Valley community centre, museum, and historic pioneer cabin is largely maintained by the Amber Valley historical society, dedicated volunteers who rely on their own hard work and by raising funds through hosting music jams and, of course, their famous chicken dinners. I wish to commend their community spirit and their dedication to preserving this truly unique piece of Alberta's heritage.

Thank you.

Oral Question Period

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

Carbon Levy and Pipeline Approvals

Mr. Cooper: Alberta's energy industry is the engine of Canada's economy and the reason why people across our country enjoy such a high quality of life, yet important pipelines that could bring our product to tidewater face significant opposition, including from the Premier's NDP friends in British Columbia. How could this be? The Premier promised that the carbon tax would buy social licence from the very same people that oppose these vital projects. Premier, your plan is failing. It's hurting Albertans. When will you admit that this carbon tax isn't working and that social licence is a hoax?

Ms Notley: Well, Madam Speaker, I appreciate that members opposite love to dine out on the words of the opponents of the pipeline for their own political gain. That's, unfortunately, not good for Alberta. What is good for Alberta is the fact that the decision around the pipeline is within the authority of the federal government. The federal government considered a number of issues, including our government's commitment to reducing and combating climate change, and as a result, they approved the pipeline, something that would not have happened under their watch.

Mr. Cooper: Albertans can't stand the carbon tax, and opponents of pipelines are indifferent to it. Insolvencies and bankruptcies are on the rise, and while Albertans are scrimping and saving to make ends meet, this NDP government is running a deficit that is four times the size of all other provinces combined. Still, this ideological government is charging ahead with increases to the carbon tax that are only making things worse. Is this what the Premier meant when she said that the carbon tax would buy social licence?

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. What our government meant when we said that we were going to stand up for Albertans and have their backs was that we were going to focus on building our economy and supporting Albertans as we come through this recovery. What's going on now is that we have the third consecutive month where new jobs have been created, and in the last nine out of 10 months we've seen jobs created. Manufacturing is up. Exports are up. Car sales are up. Housing prices are up. That's because we have Albertans' backs. We're not pretending that problems don't exist, and we are not going after cuts as a means . . .

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Cooper: Albertans are beyond tired of hearing from this government trying to take credit for pipeline approvals that had nothing to do with their terrible climate leadership plan. Albertans aren't buying it. What this government should do is take some responsibility for a damaging tax that has done nothing to gain social licence and get new pipelines built. Can the Premier tell Albertans why she insists on keeping this carbon tax, that has done nothing but drive investment and people from our province?

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. In fact, since the minister of environment and I first announced our climate leadership plan, here's what has happened. We've got not one but two pipelines approved by the people who have the authority to approve them. This year our province will lead the country in growth. This year our province will lead the country in investment. This year our province will lead the country in manufacturing growth. These are the kinds of things that happen when you invest in your province rather than cutting it down and slashing and burning to help your . . .

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.
The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Surgery Wait Times

Mr. Yao: Madam Speaker, the Wildrose has repeatedly called for solutions to address unreasonably long wait times. Sadly, not only is Alberta behind other provinces despite our big spending; some Albertans are even further behind, depending on where they live. For example, the average wait time for a knee replacement in south zone is 60 weeks, yet the wait time for the same surgery in Calgary zone is 36 weeks. That's almost a six-month difference. To the Minister of Health: why are there such major discrepancies for wait times in regions and centres?

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the Minister of Health to answer this question. Let me be clear that if you are an urgent patient, you will get urgent care. There have been some good improvements on wait times for things like hip fracture repair, radiation therapy, and our 17 stroke treatment centres are now among the fastest in the world. But we recognize that there is more to do, and as our population grows and ages, we're seeing a significant increase in demand for health procedures, and that's why we're working with physicians to increase efficiencies and capacity while we're reducing inappropriate testing. I'll be pleased to address more comments.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Yao: Madam Speaker, we already spend more per capita than both Saskatchewan and B.C. on health care, yet we are not seeing better results. You can only throw so much money at a problem before you run out of money. We can speculate as to why. Is it the number of operating rooms, is it perhaps the recovering surgery bed availability, is it staffing levels of front-line workers, or is it just simply bureaucratic red tape? To the Minister of Health: do you know why Albertans aren't receiving equal and effective health care?

The Acting Speaker: The Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Again, you know, we've seen some significant improvements in wait times. We have a 25 per cent decrease in wait times for neurosurgery. We've seen a 20 per cent wait time decrease in general surgery, 21 per cent decrease in internal medicine, and a 14 per cent wait time decrease for specialists focusing on ears, necks, and throats. The member opposite is obviously very concerned about how much money we're spending on health care because he wants to cut \$2 billion out of the budget and make sure that every patient has to wait forever to get health care in this province.

Mr. Yao: Madam Speaker, the Minister of Advanced Education doesn't know health care.

Excessively long wait times compound an already bad situation, resulting in increased costs and strains on our health care system. In this last budget we learned that the Health Quality Council of Alberta received an increase of almost 10 per cent and that they have capacity. Under the previous government they were tasked with measuring ER wait times and providing real-time reports on the website. Under this government they have been tasked with creating a report on the separation of lab services. To the Premier: will you give direction to the Health Quality Council of Alberta to conduct a study on surgical wait times so that we can understand why?

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Of course, the Minister of Advanced Education on behalf of the Minister of Health has already outlined what the members opposite don't want to acknowledge, which is that we've actually made improvements on wait times on a number of different levels and that, in fact, we are going to continue to do that work. What we're not going to do is lay off nurses, we're not going to privatize health care, and we're not going to do the kinds of things that the members opposite have said publicly that they want to do in order to finance their tax breaks for the wealthiest Albertans. That is not what we will do because we care about growing the health of Albertans.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Marijuana Legalization in Canada

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. With the recent announcements made by the federal government to legalize marijuana, it appears that the bulk of the decisions will be downloaded to the provincial government. With a deadline of a little over a year away, many things will have to be decided, including distribution and point-of-sale law. When it comes to the sale of liquor, Alberta is leading in providing free-market choice through the regulator AGLC. To the minister: will your government implement a free-market style system for the distribution and sale of marijuana?

2:00

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

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Of course, this is an issue that is of great interest to all Canadians and all Albertans. Before we make any final decisions, we are absolutely going to be going out to speak to Albertans, to consult with them because we feel that it is absolutely critical for the voices of those Albertans to be heard in the policy.

Mrs. Pitt: Madam Speaker, the federal government has decided to legalize marijuana and has provided no oversight to provincial governments on the implementation. Strict guidelines must be in place to protect our youth and ensure that they do not have access to these drugs. Another area that Albertans need answers on is around the age of consumption. The minister has promised just now to consult with Albertans, but we haven't heard anything about this plan. To the minister: where is this review; when is it happening?

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

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. We've been quite clear that we think it's absolutely important to hear from Albertans on this issue. We'll be going out to consult on a number of issues to ensure that those views are taken into account not only in areas of provincial jurisdiction but potentially in areas of federal jurisdiction as well. It is certainly an aggressive time frame, but at the end of the day, it is the safety of Albertans that is at stake. So I think it's really important that we go out and talk to them about those decisions.

Mrs. Pitt: Madam Speaker, all too often Albertans lose loved ones in avoidable workplace accidents. There are fatal consequences of on-the-job drug use, which is why Alberta's construction industry has implemented strict drug-testing policies. However, employers are concerned that they may not be able to detect levels of marijuana impairment. The government needs to consider restrictions on marijuana use in high-impact workplaces. Will the legalization of marijuana make it impossible for employers to enforce drug policies?

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

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It is absolutely the case that we will be able to impose those sorts of safety restrictions. Alcohol is currently legal. It is nonetheless permissible to impose restrictions on the use of alcohol while one is at work. We will be working very closely with employer groups and with unions to make sure that we are doing those rules in a way that's reasonable for all Albertans. We have no intention of bogarting this decision. [interjections]

The Acting Speaker: Hon. members. [interjections] Members. Thank you.

The hon. leader of the third party.

Teachers' Working Time

Mr. McIver: Madam Speaker, the Premier and her Education minister have stood in this House and lauded the new ATA deal as something almost revolutionary in that it buys two years of labour peace at a zero wage increase. The revolution is that they've given away management rights to the union by eliminating how teachers

allocate their time and created a \$75 million fund to be administered by the union. To the Premier. This is a very simple question: who is in charge of education in Alberta today, you and your government or your union pals?

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question because it is a tremendous opportunity for me to talk about the \$75 million investment that our government ran on in the last election about investing into our classrooms to improve the quality of classroom experience for kids. At the end of the day, that's where our money should be going. It should be going into the classrooms to ensure a better learning experience. We ran on that in the election, and I'm very pleased that that \$75 million will be going into classrooms to provide even better educational supports to our kids. We all care about getting exactly the best outcomes for our kids.

The Acting Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. McIver: Thank you. The Premier herself should be directing that money to the classroom.

Madam Speaker, this agreement will handcuff all boards but mostly rural boards. The cap on instructional hours will take away flexibility from rural boards. Teachers, who will not want to run afoul, will be forced to refuse duties like supervision, administrative duties assigned outside of instructional time, not to mention possibly shortening the school year, with impacts to high school programs like RAP. Again to the Premier: in your haste to shore up your union base, why did you bargain away these basic rights, that will drive up the cost of education and throw rural Alberta under the bus?

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I think it's important for the member opposite to understand that the cap on instructional hours was agreed to after thorough consideration was given to how many boards have teachers that actually ever come close to that cap or exceed it. In fact, the number is infinitesimal, so it should have no impact on the quality of education and the time dedicated to education by our hard-working teachers. What will however have an impact is \$75 million going to support our classrooms.

Mr. McIver: Madam Speaker, rural boards have already complained that they'll have to lay off teachers because of this. The narrow-sighted rush to a deal has put in jeopardy the great work done by parents and teachers and school boards across this province, and they've tried to find a balance of delivery between quality education in a fiscally challenging environment. Unlike this government, they know there is a finite source of funding. This bungled agreement, if ratified, will require a complete revamp of the funding framework. To the Premier: will you stop the madness, send your Education minister back to do the job properly, and find an agreement that's actually good for Alberta kids?

Ms Notley: Well, once again, Madam Speaker, I'm very pleased that teachers in Alberta have understood that the province of Alberta is under fiscal restraints and so have accepted a deal with zero per cent increases, and I think that sets a very good example. On the flip side, I'm very proud that our government is putting more money into our classrooms because, in fact, we do have kids in our classrooms – special-needs kids, ESL, or English language learning

children – that need extra supports. We've heard from rural school boards and urban school boards that they need more support to be able to deal with those kids and give them the education they deserve, and I'm proud our government is delivering that.

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

Logging in Kananaskis Country

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Kananaskis Country includes vital headwaters, prime outdoor recreation for Calgarians, an attraction for tourists from all over the world. That's why a plan for large-scale clear-cut logging in the Highwood region is very concerning to residents from Black Diamond, Turner Valley, and High River. The allocation of trees was supposed to be over a five-year period, yet they're planning to take it all this year, before the NDP government can amend logging plans or put in additional conservation measures. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: are you aware this is happening, and what are you doing about it?

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

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Madam Speaker and to the member for the question. Our government remains committed to protecting and improving the things that make a difference in Albertans' lives. That includes protection of land and water. We have good partnerships with our lumber industry right across the province to ensure that sustainable practices are maintained across the province and continue to be so. The partnership is working well. We'll continue working with those lumbering partners in the province, including in the area that the member is talking about, to ensure that those sustainable practices are maintained.

Dr. Swann: Madam Speaker, this clear-cut is part of the quota operated by Balcaen Consolidated Contracting, a company from B.C., and the timber will be processed in B.C. This means there are very few jobs for Albertans in this plan to clear-cut a significant part of Kananaskis Country. To make matters worse, it will reduce tourism and recreational economic opportunities, having a negative impact on livelihoods that are based on the region's intact forest. What is the minister doing to protect jobs and support the economic diversification this provides to Alberta?

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.
2:10

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Madam Speaker and to the member for the question. Up to 70 communities in the province and over 19,000 workers are in the lumber industry, so it's a very important industry. We continue to support that industry both nationally and internationally. We're continually monitoring the harvest operation, whoever is doing that harvest operation, to ensure that sustainable practices are maintained and to meet those standards. Governments, communities, and industries must continue to work together to maintain those standards and ensure the sustainable management of Alberta's important forestry resources.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Dr. Swann: Madam Speaker, the creeks in the forested slopes feeding the upper Highwood River also contain pure strain cutthroat trout, an endangered species in Alberta, and this activity threatens their further recovery. High River also depends on the forest for flood mitigation. Nonetheless, this operation is slated to start in

August even as many concerned citizens are speaking up to protect the local economy, the watershed, and the wildlife. Again to the minister: will you put this logging on hold and order a proper impact assessment before proceeding with this plan?

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

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Madam Speaker. All harvesting operations are done in accordance with operating ground rules in the area. Companies have to work with the department to ensure that their harvesting plans meet those standards. The department then periodically goes out, making sure those standards are maintained. I have confidence that those are maintained. For example, the logging companies must maintain a tree buffer zone around creeks, et cetera, to ensure that we do protect all species, endangered or otherwise, in those harvested areas.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Just a reminder that there will be no preambles, please.

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

AISH and PDD Programs

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Both the PDD and AISH systems have been around for a long time and continue to face enormous challenges given the complexity of the system and the difficult economic reality and depth of need. To the Minister of Community and Social Services: what is this government doing to modernize and integrate both of these systems?

The Acting Speaker: The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to my colleague for the question. PDD and AISH are more than government programs; they are a comprehensive set of supports. We have increased funding to both of the programs. We have stopped restrictive PDD safety standards and the SIS, supports intensity scale, and we have released a comprehensive plan, the AISH action plan, to overhaul the system. We will continue to work with the community to make sure we get it right.

The Acting Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that Alberta's population is growing and the demand for supports is also growing, to the same minister: what steps are being taken to ensure the PDD program manages the growing list of people waiting for services?

The Acting Speaker: The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member. When it comes to making life better for Albertans with disabilities, we know that PDD service providers are facing pressure due to growing demand for PDD services. That is why we increased funding to PDD and are prioritizing access to PDD funding services for those who have health and safety risks to ensure that their needs are quickly assessed, as opposed to cutting and burning these services and cutting operational dollars from these programs.

The Acting Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Renaud: I know who cut it.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm very thankful that our government understands the importance of addressing recommendations about the AISH program that have been repeated for many years. To the minister: what progress have you made with the AISH action plan?

The Acting Speaker: The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In my previous answer I didn't mention who will cut it because the member knows that very well.

Just to the question, at this point we have made improvements to the application process and how we collect the information about the program. We are making progress by developing a more accessible and streamlined application process, improving staff training, and finding better ways to monitor and report progress on the program. All these things are set out in our AISH plan, and we will continue to monitor the progress of this plan.

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

Job Creation

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker, the NDP government likes to paint a rosy picture of the Alberta economy and jobs, but according to Stats Canada almost net 11,000 people have left Alberta for other parts of Canada since October 2015. That is the equivalent of the towns of Hinton or Morinville or Strathmore packing up and leaving. To the Premier: how can you say that your programs to create jobs are working if more people are leaving Alberta for other provinces than coming in?

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

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I can talk about the jobs that are growing in this province because it is happening. The Alberta investment tax credit is bringing investment to this province and capital investment tax credits are bringing capital to this province from all over the place. AIMCo is investing in this province, which is creating more jobs. Jobs are coming back. Investment is happening because of this government. They would cut all of that. They've done it before. We're not better off with that side.

Mr. Panda: Given that the minister didn't have a clue about how many jobs were created by all the programs like AITC and CITC and given that Stats Canada also shows that the number of people drawing EI in Alberta is still almost double and that when the benefits run out, people give up and drop off EI and unemployment stats even though still unemployed, is the minister of social services prepared for the onslaught of people demanding income supports once their benefits and personal savings run out?

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. During these tough economic times job creation is a priority for our government, and we are investing in that area. At the same time, we have invested in the programs that provide support to Albertans who are looking for those supports. They would have cut \$2.6 billion. That means more than half of the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Panda: Madam Speaker, in order to weather the downturn, some engineering firms in Alberta have turned to work sharing overseas to get jobs done competitively. Given that much of this work sharing is being done by offshore offices in low-cost places like India and South Korea and given that hard-working Albertans are sick and tired of hearing talking points from all these ministers, what is the NDP government doing to get unemployed Albertans back to work, and after two years where are the measurable results?

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to talk about an announcement we made this morning about jobs that will be created in the next three years to recover orphan wells. The government today announced \$235 million in a loan that'll be repaid by industry over 10 years. That's 1,650 jobs. Many of those are engineering jobs. I talked to an engineer this morning who was excited about this plan. It's going to rehabilitate one-third of the existing orphan wells we have.

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

Serenity and the Child Intervention System

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Madam Speaker. When it became public that children continue to reside in the home where Serenity had lived, the Premier was questioned directly about how this was allowed to happen. The Premier responded: "The matter actually went before the courts. Indeed, in that case the judge indicated that what should happen is that monitoring should continue." To the Minister of Children's Services. Please confirm for Serenity's family and for all Albertans: did your department seek to remove the other children from the home where Serenity had lived, or did you choose not to?

2:20

The Acting Speaker: The Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Certainly, the safety and well-being of all vulnerable children in this province are our core responsibilities. Absolutely, we looked at the best interests of the child. The courts looked at the best interests of the child and decided that monitoring was the best way to proceed. We continue to monitor the safety and well-being of those children. Absolutely, I'm proud of the work that's been done to support Alberta's children, to protect their safety.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Mr. Rodney: The non answer makes the answer clear.

Now, given that just yesterday Serenity's family was present in this gallery here in this Assembly hoping for answers, hoping they could be reassured that what happened to Serenity would never happen again to any child in Alberta and given that they were wholly disappointed with the answers they received and stated unequivocally their demand for a public inquiry into Serenity's death, again to the minister: will you listen to Serenity's family? Will you launch a public inquiry into her death, or will you choose not to?

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Albertans and Serenity's family are right to want to know that we are doing everything we can to improve the way that we support vulnerable children, but what the member is asking me to do would interfere with an ongoing criminal investigation, and that is not something I will do.

Every Albertan wants justice for Serenity, and I will not do anything to jeopardize that. The member knows it would be completely inappropriate to hold any kind of inquiry when a criminal investigation into this case is ongoing. I want justice for Serenity. Everyone in this House, every Albertan wants the same, and we will do everything to make sure that happens.

Mr. Rodney: If that's true, I'm sure she'll agree to this.

Given that bringing forward Serenity's law as the next bill to be discussed in this Legislature would save the lives of vulnerable children across Alberta and given that Serenity's family is very supportive of this bill and articulated that fact to the Minister of Children's Services after the minister was pressured into meeting with them yesterday afternoon, Minister, will you bring forward and support Serenity's law during this spring session of this Legislature, or will you choose not to?

The Acting Speaker: The Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to say that when we learned about the tragic loss of Serenity and the heartbreak that her mother was going through, we reached out to Serenity's mom, just as we reached out to the family yesterday. Certainly, the work that the panel is doing to create good work for protecting children is incredibly important, and certainly they can consider Serenity's law. We need to do consultation with parties such as the police, who would be highly impacted by that. I look forward to hearing the outcomes of the panel's consideration of that so that we can continue to improve the child intervention system. [interjections]

The Acting Speaker: Members, please.

Schoolchildren's Transportation

Mrs. Aheer: Changes to transportation costs and busing routes as a result of Bill 1 are causing some very real concerns for Albertans. For example, a group of young children in Calgary will have to walk to a transit station, take the bus, walk to a train, take the train, walk to another bus, and then, finally, get out and walk to school, which will take over an hour each way and is completely unsafe and an unreal expectation for young children. How will the minister work with families to address the unintended consequences of Bill 1?

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Certainly, as we work through Bill 1, which is An Act to Reduce School Fees, we're working closely with school boards to make sure we're getting the money into families' pockets that they deserve. We're taking the instructional supply and materials fees and some bus fees as well. The Calgary board of education is working through other issues around their routes and so forth, and we're happy to work closely with them to ensure that we have good service for everyone in Calgary.

The Acting Speaker: First supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. Well, let's talk about Rocky View schools, then. Given that Rocky View schools is one of the fastest growing school districts in the province, with 50 schools and 21,000 students, and given that some families will see an increase in transportation costs by as much as 47 per cent downloaded onto them next school year and given that reduced school fees will be undermined by the increasing costs for transportation and given that new busing routes will include unsafe conditions, crossing major

highways, and unacceptable long walks on country roads, how is this making life better for Albertans?

The Acting Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. Again, we're working very closely with Rocky View schools. You know, what is important to note, because we had the bill here not long ago, is that it's An Act to Reduce School Fees, but it's also an act to monitor to make sure that school fees are not going up in an inordinate way. So the Rocky View school board must submit those fees to . . . [interjections] Excuse me. You know, if this was my classroom, someone would get a detention right now for interrupting while we're trying to put important information forward for parents to hear.

Mrs. Aheer: Well, after detention – he's talking about detention here.

Given that all of us in good faith voted for Bill 1 and given now that school boards are scrambling to accommodate the needs of families as they implement Bill 1 and given that one unintended consequence will be that families are now going to drive their children instead of using school buses and since, I would think, that contradicts the government's supposed commitment around sound environmental stewardship and punishes parents through increased taxes on fuel at a time when thousands of Albertans are unemployed, again, how is this making life better for Albertans?

The Acting Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's very important to remember that we are building on An Act to Reduce School Fees. We're going to be putting many millions of dollars, for example, into Rocky View schools. They'll see more than \$3.6 million going into the pockets of families. For so long the school fee situation was way out of control. The former government just let it go wild, and we are bringing it in. The school boards cannot increase their fees by 40-some per cent because it has to come by my desk first to see that they're not increasing other fees when we're reducing in other places. Rocky View is doing a good job to talk to us.

Seniors' Housing Construction in Bassano

Mr. Fildebrandt: For years volunteers at the Newell Foundation have been working towards a vision of seniors' care in the Brooks region that would see the Bassano hospital integrated with an assisted living complex. We would leverage private-sector resources to ensure that seniors living there can get the care they need. It's an innovative model for seniors' care that could serve as an example for rural communities across Alberta. The only thing that is needed now is for the Minister of Health to sign off on the integration with the Bassano hospital. Last week she said no without explanation. Why?

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm quite delighted to hear that the Member for Strathmore-Brooks actually made the trip to Bassano from his home in Calgary.

On the issue of the ASLI grants and the seniors' lodge, of course, we're pleased that our government has pledged \$3.4 million for the ASLI grants and \$9.6 million for the seniors' lodge. We continue to provide predictable and sustainable funding for health care all

across the province so that patients in Alberta can get the right care at the right place at the right time.

Mr. Fildebrandt: The disdain of the minister for the people of Bassano and Strathmore-Brooks is incredible.

Given, Madam Speaker, that Infrastructure Alberta did a cost analysis of the different options available to the Bassano hospital and they found that integration with the proposed seniors' facility was the most cost-effective option – it's good value for money, and seniors in the region have been depending on the project going forward for years – and given that this is a classic case of a government unable to smartly prioritize spending, instead of spending \$21 million on free light bulbs and \$9 million on carbon tax propaganda ads, why doesn't the minister think that those are better uses of . . .

2:30

The Acting Speaker: I'm trying to give you some cues, Member. The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm quite proud of our government's investments of \$3.4 million into the ASLI grant for the Newell Foundation and a \$9.6 million seniors' lodge grant for the new seniors' lodge in Bassano. If the member opposite is so concerned about health care for the people of Bassano, then he shouldn't be running on a platform of cutting \$2 billion from the budget and \$9 billion from capital, that would probably close down the existing hospital in Bassano.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Minister Magoo doesn't even know what the Bassano project is.

Mr. Mason: Point of order.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Given, Madam Speaker, that the Newell Foundation volunteers have been working on this project for years, it's critical for seniors in my constituency, and it's the most cost-effective option by the government's own studies. In her rejection letter the Minister of Health refused to give any explanation for her decision. Given that she has refused to meet with the chairman of the Newell Foundation, who is right here today, will she give a clear answer as to why she will not sign off on the integration of the hospital, and will she commit to meet with the chairman of the Newell Foundation, who is here right now?

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Of course, both Associate Minister Payne and the Health minister have met with the Newell Foundation over the last year . . .

Some Hon. Members: Names.

Mr. Schmidt: Sorry. The Associate Minister of Health – I beg your forgiveness, Madam Speaker – and the Minister of Health have met with the Newell Foundation over the last year. We're committed to working with them as we roll out the ASLI grant and the support for the new seniors' lodge. Of course, we're proud of our investments in health care not only in Bassano but for patients all across the province.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain Pipeline

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As B.C.'s election results remain murky, what is clear is that Alberta may end up the loser no matter the outcome. With the Green Party potentially

holding the balance of power, Doctor Weaver has reaffirmed the Greens' election campaign promise to oppose Trans Mountain, stating that he and his members believe it is their responsibility to stop the project. To the Minister of Energy: your public confidence is admirable, but can you confidently say today that the Trans Mountain pipeline is any closer to being built than the Northern Gateway ever was?

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, we continue to do the work we've done, and so does Kinder Morgan with Trans Mountain. As we speak, they are in B.C. talking. We continue with our relationships, as we've done. These relationships and this adult way of dealing with pipelines has gotten us not just one but two approvals. It's also been our climate leadership plan that got us those approvals as well, and we're going to continue that good work.

Mr. Gotfried: So the answer is no.

Madam Speaker, given that the Trans Mountain pipeline was approved after a rigorous assessment by the National Energy Board and given that B.C. had negotiated \$1.5 billion with their environmental protection and services with the federal government and a 20-year revenue-sharing agreement worth \$1 billion with Kinder Morgan and given that these factors coupled with carbon taxes in both B.C. and Alberta have resulted in absolutely zero compromise from those who oppose pipelines, again to the minister: will you admit today that your attempts to obtain social licence have been an abysmal failure?

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Madam Speaker. What I will admit is that our plan is working. We got permission for two pipelines. We'll continue that work until shovels are in the ground. None of that has changed. We've formed good relationships with B.C. and across Canada. The only ones who don't seem to want these pipelines are across the way. These pipelines are not just good for Alberta. They're good for Canada, for Saskatchewan pipeline-makers, for our workers in Alberta. I don't know why you oppose it. On this side of the House we're standing up for those pipelines.

The Acting Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The current flow measurement is zero.

Given that throughout the B.C. elections Albertans got to see their favourite ecoradical stand with a leader and a party that are wholly opposed to Alberta's best interests and given that the minister of environment seemed to indicate during question period last week that the composition of the oil sands advisory group would be changing, to the Minister of Energy: as we have called for repeatedly, will Tzeponah Berman be removed from the oil sands advisory group by the time we return for the fall session, thereby making life better for Albertans?

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

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Of course, what makes life better for Albertans is getting those pipelines approved and getting shovels in the ground as soon as possible. The other thing that makes life better is working with oil sands companies in order to invest in innovation, which is the second phase of the work that will be undertaken by the oil sands advisory group. We're working

in consultation with industry and with community groups and with First Nations in a respectful way in the oil sands region to ensure that we are moving forward with developing our economy and our resources in a way that's responsible for future generations.

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

Invasive Mussel Species

Ms Luff: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The waterways of the northwest region are the only ones in North America still free of invasive zebra and quagga mussels. If these invasive species got into Alberta's waterways, they could destroy irrigation infrastructure and cause up to \$75 million of damage annually. Given that last November these mussels were detected just south of the border in Montana, to the Minister of Environment and Parks: what measures are you taking to ensure Alberta's waterways are protected?

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

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker and to the hon. member for the question. What we have done this year is that we've expanded our number of watercraft inspectors. We have inspection stations along all of Alberta's major highways. We also have 24-hour inspections happening in addition to our K-9 sniffer dog units, which we also have moving again this year. We are leaders recognized in western Canada and throughout the western United States on this matter of ensuring that zebra and quagga mussels stay out of our waterways.

The Acting Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Luff: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that recreational boats are the main vector for transporting these invasive mussels and given that boating season is upon us, what do you recommend Alberta boaters do to help prevent the spread of these mussels? [interjections]

The Acting Speaker: The Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Of course, while the opposition laughs at this, it's actually a very serious matter. If we get aquatic invasive species in our waterways, it's about a \$75 million cost to our irrigation districts and our farmers. That's really important to the government on this side of the House. That's why we have new legislation that it's mandatory to stop at watercraft inspection stations. It's not just motorized boats; it's also if you are carrying a canoe or a kayak.

The Acting Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Luff: Thank you. To the same minister: given the massive impact that these mussels can have, what work is being done to ensure that Alberta could respond quickly in the event that invasive mussels are detected?

The Acting Speaker: The Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, it's well established that our programs have established leadership throughout western Canada. Indeed, when Montana had a detection of invasive mussels, we were there with them on the ground in response. That's the kind of collaboration that we've undertaken as a program, and that's why we're recognized as leaders. What wouldn't help is firing all of those watercraft inspectors, conservation officers, fish

and wildlife officers, commercial vehicle inspectors, all of the front-line workers that deliver this program, through massive and drastic cuts to the Environment budget, which, of course, the Wildrose is proposing.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie.

2:40 Queen Elizabeth II Highway Interchange at Balzac

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. For two years I have been advocating for this government to fix the Balzac interchange. I'm extremely frustrated that the government will not take action to alleviate the safety concerns and traffic congestion. Both the MLA for Chestermere-Rocky View and myself have submitted this as a priority for the last two years on the capital submissions list. This is currently Rocky View county's number one priority as well. When will the minister listen to the community and fix this problem?

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

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Well, this government is committed to the transportation needs of all Albertans. I have met extensively with municipalities, both urban and rural, during my tenure as Minister of Transportation and of Infrastructure, and we have been moving ahead with a significant increase in the capital plan for Transportation. We've had announcements of interchanges, of improvements to our highway system as well as funding for transit.

The Acting Speaker: First supplemental.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Given that Alberta Transportation has cut the budget to build interchanges and given that Alberta Transportation placed this on the three-year priority list but under this government it's since been removed and given that this poses a serious safety risk to constituents in Airdrie, Chestermere, and the surrounding area in Calgary, to the minister: how did this fall off the priority list?

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

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We have removed some projects on the 2016 unfunded list. Others have remained unfunded, and there are new projects in the capital plan that were not on the unfunded list in 2016. Our historic \$29.5 billion capital plan means that these funds have been flowing to projects that make life better across Alberta, and we are planning to increase our spending on Transportation.

Mrs. Pitt: Madam Speaker, dollars ain't flowing in the Balzac area.

Given that Alberta Transportation knew the overpass could not handle existing or future traffic and given that the minister's department has completed a review – the study is done; the only thing missing is action from this government – to the minister: does someone have to die before you fix this interchange?

The Acting Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Obviously, with this Wildrose opposition if it bleeds, it leads. Quite frankly, safety is our top priority, and it's going to be maintained as our top priority. We look at every interchange in this province and

every request that we get through the lens of safety, and that's because we want to make life safer for everyday Albertans.

Notices of Motions

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

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. On behalf of my colleague the hon. Minister of Energy I would like to give oral notice of a bill for the Order Paper, this being Bill 16, An Act to Cap Regulated Electricity Rates, another part of our plan to make life more affordable for Albertans.

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm tabling the requisite five copies of a letter that I submitted to the *Jewish Free Press* about how honoured I was to participate in a Yom ha-Shoah service in my riding, standing alongside the Jewish community to memorialize the 6 million Jews who were targeted and killed in the Holocaust.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of Dr. Swann, hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, map image indicating 2016-2021 timber harvest quota for Balcaen Consolidated Contracting Ltd.; second, report updated, entitled Bill 205: Advocate for Persons with Disabilities Act, Proposed Amendments and Review of Limitations, prepared by Inclusion Alberta.

The Acting Speaker: I believe there's a . . .

Mr. Hanson: Madam Speaker, I'm sorry, but they missed the tablings.

The Acting Speaker: You'll have to do it next week. You'll have to table them on Tuesday.

Mr. Mason: I request unanimous consent from the House to revert to tablings, Madam Speaker.

[Unanimous consent denied]

The Acting Speaker: We'll wait till next week. [interjections] Members. Members.

My understanding is that there is a point of order.

Point of Order

Insulting Language

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. During question period today the Member for Strathmore-Brooks referred to the Minister of Advanced Education as Minister Magoo. Of course, Mr. Magoo was a cartoon character, a bumbling and nearly blind character. As such, I would suggest that 23(j), a member who "uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder," has been breached. Moreover, in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* on page 613 it says, "Members do not refer to one another by their names but rather by title, position or constituency name in order to guard against the tendency to personalize debate. A Minister is referred to by the portfolio he or she holds."

Clearly, Madam Speaker, the hon. member used a personalized and insulting reference to the hon. Minister of Advanced Education. It's unacceptable. It's clearly in violation of the rules and the traditions of the House. I would ask that you rule that there's a valid point of order and ask the hon. member to appear in this Chamber personally to stand up and apologize to the House and to the hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

The Acting Speaker: The deputy Official Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I think the leader is getting a little desperate to find points of order, especially when it comes to the Member for Strathmore-Brooks. A couple of weeks back he actually called a point of order on the Member for Strathmore-Brooks for using an acronym, where he referred to the climate leadership plan as "the CLAP." You know, that's how simple it was. Then he quickly followed up. If you missed it, it was CLP. The argument was used . . . [interjections]

The Acting Speaker: Members.

Hon. member, if you could just speak to this point of order, please.

Mr. Hanson: I'm getting to it. Thank you very much. It's relevant, believe me.

The argument he used against that was that there was no "A" in climate leadership plan. He then called a point of order on the point of order. [interjections] Okay. I'll get right to it.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

2:50

Mr. Hanson: On this point of order for calling the Advanced Education minister Minister Magoo, I find it rich, coming from a government that uses name-calling as its first line of defence in question period, that they would be offended by a reference to a famous cartoon character like Mr. Magoo. That being said, if the Advanced Education minister found offence, on behalf of the Member for Strathmore-Brooks I will withdraw and apologize.

The Acting Speaker: All right, hon. members. I do have a copy of the Blues. The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks did refer to the minister as Minister Magoo. In saying that, this was clearly a comment that was meant to be disrespectful. The language's intent was to create disorder in the House, so I do find this a point of order, and he should withdraw the comment and apologize.

I would also like to just caution all members in the House, though, that the exchange between the minister and the hon. member was also creating disorder, so if we could just remember the kind of comments that we make when we're responding to questions, too. Thank you.

Hon. member, could you please apologize to the House on behalf of the member?

Mr. Hanson: I just actually did. I said . . . [interjections]

The Acting Speaker: Members.

The hon. member.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I do believe I ended my comments with: on behalf of the Member for Strathmore-Brooks I withdraw and apologize.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much.

Orders of the Day
Government Bills and Orders
Second Reading

Bill 15
Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2017

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

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to move second reading of Bill 15, the Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2017.

As I mentioned during the introduction of this legislation, Alberta's income and commodity tax statutes are typically amended every year. This is necessary to ensure that government policy decisions are implemented and our tax legislation continues to be aligned with federal tax legislation.

Allow me to briefly present the proposed changes being brought forward this year, starting with the most significant one. Madam Speaker, when I introduced this bill, I mentioned that we've heard from Albertans whose carbon levy rebates were affected by the death of a family member. We are taking measures to ensure that their rebates do not have to be returned. Repayments will be issued later this year for households that have already returned those amounts. Households that have not yet repaid will not be required to do so.

The same will apply to benefits received under the Alberta child benefit and the Alberta family employment tax credit going back to January 1 of this year. We heard and listened to Albertans and are making some changes and extending those changes to the Alberta child benefit and the family employment tax credit programs. We're taking action to protect these benefits and make this right for those families.

In addition to forgiving amounts owing to these situations, we are also proposing an amendment to the Alberta Personal Income Tax Act that will address the issue with the carbon levy rebates program so that it does not recur in the future. As most of you know, the Canada Revenue Agency, or CRA, administers a carbon levy rebate program on behalf of this province. Currently the program has a \$100 minimum payment rule in place. This means that total annual rebate entitlements of \$100 are paid in a single amount, a single allowable payment at the beginning of the benefit year. Essentially, in these cases we are prepaying the rebate in advance for the entire year.

However, the eligibility for the rebate may be affected later due to changes in residency or a death in the family, so if a household is no longer eligible for the prepaid rebate they received, CRA will seek repayment of any excess amount. We heard from a number of Albertans who received a reassessment notice after the death of a family member. This was an unintended consequence of the \$100 minimum payment rule that affected a very small number of the overall 1.2 million payments that were issued. But we recognized that families coping with the death of a loved one should not face the indignity of a notice requesting that they pay back a benefit that was meant to make their lives better.

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

What we are proposing is an amendment to the Alberta Personal Income Tax Act that will allow for rebate entitlements to be delivered in quarterly payments as low as \$25. This will prevent the prepayment of benefits and eliminate the need to recover those payments when a family member dies. I want to point out that the minimum annual rebate entitlement still continues to be \$100 per year, so rebates for less than that amount over the year will still not

be paid. We are just changing the legislation to allow for quarterly payments as low as \$25.

Mr. Speaker, we're also continuing to work with the CRA to ensure recovery notices use language that is more sensitive to grieving families, and we expect to see meaningful changes on that front by next year.

As I mentioned, this is the most significant amendment being brought forward in this bill, but there are additional changes that I'll briefly outline now, starting with other amendments to the Alberta Personal Income Tax Act.

One change relates to the government's decision to extend the political contributions tax credit to leadership campaigns and nomination races. As you know, our government has made important changes to provincial election financing to get big money out of politics, including banning corporate and union contributions and putting a cap on individual donations. These measures will remain in place. The amendment we've brought forward here implements a broader political contribution tax credit, as announced in Budget 2017. The aim with this change is to encourage provincial participation in the political process while fostering a healthy and competitive political environment.

Mr. Speaker, other technical amendments to this act are also needed to ensure that Alberta's policies with regard to provincial dividend tax credits along with our tuition and education tax credits are not affected by recent changes to federal legislation.

I'll move on now to changes related to the Alberta Corporate Tax Act. The Canadian Parliament recently passed legislation last year that amended the federal Income Tax Act. Federal changes to the Income Tax Act generally result in technical changes to our legislation to ensure that there is alignment.

For instance, our Corporate Tax Act needs to be amended to parallel the 2016 federal changes that aim to reduce misuse of the preferential 2 per cent small-business tax rate. These amendments will protect provincial revenue and the integrity of our tax system by preventing a few small businesses from using certain structures to multiply their access to the small-business tax rate. The intent of the existing legislation is for the preferential rate to only apply to a small business's first \$500,000 of income. These amendments are consistent with the intent and ensure that small businesses do not take advantage of a loophole.

Although Alberta administers its own corporate tax system, we rely on the federal government for the calculations and verifications of income that is eligible for the small-business rate. As a result, Alberta must adopt these federal changes to ensure the province can continue to rely on the federal calculations of income eligibility for the small-business tax rate. It was an automatic change for all other provinces, except for Alberta and Quebec, as we administer our own corporate tax system, so it makes sense to ensure that our corporate tax system stays aligned with theirs.

3:00

In addition, the act will also be amended to require tax preparers who fill out 10 or more provincial tax returns to file those returns electronically. It will also implement a penalty if they fail to comply with this requirement. A separate penalty will be implemented for corporations that fail to file tax returns electronically if required to do so. These penalty provisions are consistent with federal tax legislation and are necessary to promote compliance with Alberta's tax laws.

Finally, we've included an amendment that will apply to the Tourism Levy Act. It will allow levy collectors, more specifically accommodations operators, to file a waiver to extend the assessment period when an assessment is issued against them. This provides operators additional time to resolve issues if there is a

dispute over the amount of tax owing and also aligns administrative processes among Alberta's tax statutes.

Mr. Speaker, to recap, this bill will address issues with the carbon levy rebate to prevent rebates from being recovered when a family member dies. It will adopt federal changes that will protect tax revenue and ensure consistency between our tax system and the federal tax system. It will help to protect the integrity and fairness of Alberta's tax system and ensure that government policies are implemented.

I'm pleased with the practical changes we've brought forward here, Mr. Speaker, and I have no doubt they will make a meaningful difference for all Albertans. I look forward to the debate on this bill.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, Minister of Finance. I just want to confirm that you're moving second reading of this bill.

Mr. Ceci: I am.

The Acting Speaker: Okay.

The Chair will recognize the Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the majority of this bill deals with changes brought about due to changes on the federal side, I'll keep my remarks rather brief. Most of the content of this bill is rather technocratic changes to refer to federal taxation changes brought about by the federal government. These are necessary changes in order to keep government running relatively smoothly. Some loopholes are closed, and some old legislation has been updated to align with the digital age. The major changes revolve around the carbon tax partial rebates, which I'll need some more information on before I can make a more informed decision on that front. I hope the Minister of Finance will be able to provide us with those details before this bill is passed.

First, I want to touch on a few of the changes in the bill. The closure of the small-business loophole, which allowed organizations to avoid paying higher taxes, gets my seal of approval. The more tax-avoidance loopholes that are closed: that is directly related to the amount of sleep I get at night. For those listening at home, there are instances where a group could create a separate, smaller business in order to not pay the larger corporate tax. Instead, their separate, smaller business would pay a small-business tax in an attempt to avoid paying the correct level of corporate tax. The initial intent of this portion of legislation will now be written as it was intended if the bill is passed.

Another change revolves around the fact that the federal government removed two tax credits for university students, the textbook tax credits and the education tax credit referred to in this legislation. Since they no longer exist, references to them are being edited out of our provincial legislation. This change is pretty much just housekeeping.

Another housekeeping aspect was brought about by this Legislature. Donation limits to political parties, nomination races, and leadership races were recently changed. With that change came a change to the fact that Albertans now receive a taxable credit for donating to nomination races and leadership races. This bill edits our legislation to allow those tax credits to be issued. As you saw from our announcement today, there will be many tax credits probably being issued in the near future.

Three pieces of legislation are being edited in order to bring them up to our digital-age standards. The tobacco, tourism, and fuel tax acts have been updated within them to allow individuals to file notice via digital means.

Now, the changes I would like to spend most of the time on are the changes being made around the carbon tax rebates. As was first

pointed out by someone in my constituency, right in Strathmore, this government in their relative ineptitude clawed back the carbon tax rebate from the recently deceased spouse of one of my constituents. This was completely unacceptable and, frankly, disgusting of this government. While I'm glad that this government is finally doing something about this to prevent it from happening again, I'm disappointed that incompetence within the ranks of the government could allow this to happen in the first place. I'm not surprised by this incompetence, but at least it is being rectified now.

I have concerns about this change, though. I believe that clawing back deceased people's money is just not right, but I'm not necessarily sure yet that this is the most correct way to go about making this happen. As it is set out in this legislation, rebate cheques will go out more often instead of in one lump sum. Now, this might be how the NDP have determined to go about avoiding the desire to claw back people's carbon tax money, but I'm interested to know if the cost of administering thousands and thousands of additional cheques outweighs the cost of letting people just keep the extra \$50 or \$100. How many people have had to deal with the CRA and the NDP clawing back their money?

If the minister could provide a figure on how many Albertans are actually affected by this along with how much it will cost to administer the additional issuing of cheques per year, that would allow us to determine which is more cost-effective. Should we be issuing more cheques every year, or should we just allow the spouse of a deceased individual to just keep the carbon tax money, which shouldn't have been collected in the first place?

I'm quite sure Albertans would like to spend a lesser amount of their money on a carbon tax, until we repeal it in 2019, but I have a feeling that the amount that it will cost to administer the cheques could very well be higher than just letting deceased people keep the cheques issued to their spouses. And technically it was their money to begin with since it was their tax dollars that were being mailed back to them.

I'll be supporting this bill at second reading, but for me and my caucus to support this bill at further readings, we will need to see an estimate of the costs for the administration issuing more cheques and the estimated cost of letting people just keep cheques when their spouse passes away. I hope that the Minister of Finance will be able to provide the opposition parties with that information so that we can hopefully come to a consensus on this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The chair will recognize the hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I always seem to stand right after the Member for Strathmore-Brooks. I'm happy that today he actually spoke about things about Alberta and not Saskatchewan or B.C. It's a really welcome change in the Legislative Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I'm really happy to support Bill 15, the Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2017, that was earlier introduced for second reading by the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance. As he mentioned in his introduction to second reading of this bill, this is something that is done regularly in Alberta because the commodity tax statutes and income tax laws change, and, as was referred to earlier, things happen in Ottawa that necessitate changes in Alberta.

This bill is necessary to ensure government policy decisions are implemented and that our tax legislation continues to be aligned with the federal tax legislation. These are some of the changes that are in this bill. I think the first change that is important is the fact that the government has heard from Albertans where carbon levy rebates were affected by the death of a family member. We all know

how challenging those situations were, and I'm really pleased to be part of a government that is acting quickly to put a remedy to the situation. We are taking measures to ensure that the rebates do not have to be returned if somebody dies in the family. Repayments will be issued later this year for households that may have already returned these amounts, and households that have not yet repaid the amount will not be required to do so.

3:10

The same will apply to benefits received under the Alberta child benefit and the Alberta family employment tax credit going back to January 1 of this year. I would really like to thank the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance for ensuring that in situations where somebody is facing a very tough time due to the death of a loved one, they are not faced with letters from CRA or the Alberta government asking for repayment. We have heard and listened to Albertans and are making those changes.

We're also taking action to protect these benefits and make this right for them. In addition to forgiving amounts owing in these situations, we are also proposing an amendment to the Alberta Personal Income Tax Act that will address the issues with a carbon levy rebate program so that this does not reoccur in the future. As most of you know, the Canada Revenue Agency, or the CRA, administers the carbon levy rebate program on behalf of the province. Currently the program has a \$100 minimum payment rule in place. This means that the total annual rebate entitlements of \$100 are paid in a single-amount payment at the beginning of the benefit year, as happened this year in January for those who qualified.

Essentially, in these cases we are prepaying the rebate in advance for the entire year. However, eligibility for the rebate may be affected later due to changes in residency or a death in the family. So if a household is no longer eligible for the prepaid rebate they received, CRA will seek repayment of any excess amount.

We've heard from a number of Albertans who received their reassessment notice after the death of a family member. This was an unintended consequence of the \$100 minimum payment rule that affected a very small number of the overall 1.2 million payments that were issued, and I want to emphasize that this was an unintended consequence. We recognize that families coping with the death of a loved one should not face the indignity of a notice requesting that they pay back a benefit that was meant to make their lives better. I think I can speak on behalf of all Members of the Legislative Assembly that we've all faced helping someone who experienced a death in their family and the number of letters and information that has to be communicated to CRA and various government levels, and just receiving a letter from the CRA asking for repayment added to the grief and the burden.

What we are proposing is an amendment to the Alberta Personal Income Act that will allow for rebate entitlements to be delivered in quarterly payments of as low as \$25. This will prevent the prepayment of benefits and eliminate the need to recover those payments when a family member dies. I want to point out that the minimum annual rebate entitlement still continues to be \$100 per year, so rebates of less than this amount over the year will still not be paid. We are just changing the legislation to allow quarterly payments of as low as \$25.

Mr. Speaker, we are continuing to work with the CRA to ensure recovery notices use language that is more sensitive to grieving families, and we expect to see meaningful changes on that front by next year. As I mentioned, this is the most significant amendment being brought forward in this bill, but there are some other changes.

Some of the other changes are other amendments to the Alberta Personal Income Tax Act. I think one change that is probably

important to my colleagues across the way, who have just formed another entity, which I cannot say the name of without laughing, so I will not . . . [interjection] One change relates to the government's decision to extend the political contributions tax credit to leadership campaigns and nomination races. [interjection] I'm sorry if I'm laughing. I just have a really, really hard time with acronyms.

As I mentioned and has been mentioned by the hon. minister, in one of the first bills that the government put forth, there was a decision to extend the political contributions tax credit to leadership campaigns and nomination races. As you know, we made important changes to election financing to get big money out of politics, including banning corporate and union contributions and putting the cap on individual donations.

I just find myself really frustrated by the way that our government has worked so hard to get the corporate contributions out of politics and how we just found out yesterday that the opposition may be contravening these.

These measures will remain in place. The amendment we brought forward here implements a broader political contribution tax credit, as announced in Budget 2017. The aim of this change is to encourage participation in the political process while fostering a healthy and competitive political environment. I want to really emphasize that the purpose of these changes is to encourage participation in the political process while fostering a healthy and competitive political environment, and this applies to all parties in the Legislative Assembly and for all Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, other technical amendments to this act are also needed to ensure Alberta's policies with regard to provincial dividend tax credits along with our tuition and education tax credits are not affected by recent changes to federal legislation. The Alberta Corporate Tax Act also needed to be amended because of what was passed by the federal government. Changes to the federal Income Tax Act generally result in technical changes to our legislation to ensure there is alignment.

For instance, our Corporate Tax Act needs to be amended to parallel the 2016 federal changes that aimed to reduce misuse of the preferential 2 per cent small-business tax rate. These amendments will protect provincial revenue and the integrity of our tax system by preventing a few small businesses from using certain structures to multiply their access to the small-business rate. The intent of the existing legislation is for the preferential rate to only apply to a small business's first \$500,000 of income. These amendments are consistent with this intent and ensure small businesses do not take advantage of a loophole.

Although Alberta administers its own corporate tax system, we rely on the federal government for the calculation and verification of income that is eligible for the small-business rate. As a result, Alberta must adopt these federal changes to ensure the province can continue to rely on the federal calculation of income eligibility for the small-business rate. Maybe it's really good to remind everyone in the House that this government lowered the small-business rate from 3 per cent to 2 per cent in the last budget. It was an automatic change for all other provinces except for Alberta and Quebec as we administer our own corporate tax system, so it makes sense to ensure our corporate tax systems stay aligned.

In addition, the act will also be amended to require tax preparers who file 10 or more provincial tax returns to file the returns electronically. It will also implement a penalty if they fail to comply with this requirement. A separate penalty will be implemented for corporations that fail to file their tax return electronically if required to do so. These penalty provisions are consistent with federal tax legislation and are necessary to promote compliance with Alberta tax laws.

Mr. Speaker, we will be amending the Tourism Levy Act through Bill 15. It will allow levy collectors – more specifically, accommodation operators – to file a waiver to extend the assessment period when an assessment is issued against them. This provides operators additional time to resolve issues if there is a dispute over the amount of tax owing and also aligns administrative processes among Alberta tax statutes.

3:20

Mr. Speaker, in closing, this bill will do a lot of things. I know a lot of people think that tax bills are really, really boring, but tax bills are really enabling bills to allow the government to do what it set out to do in its budget, and they are some very important bills. This bill will address issues with the carbon levy rebate, to prevent rebates from being recovered when a family member dies. It will adopt federal changes that will protect tax revenue and ensure consistency between our tax system and the federal tax system, and it will help to protect the integrity and fairness of Alberta's tax system and ensure government policies are implemented.

I am pleased with the practical changes that are brought in by this bill. I would like to thank once again the President of the Treasury Board and Minister of Finance for the careful preparation of this bill. I look forward to the debate and for all Members of this Legislative Assembly to support second reading of this bill.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That was interesting to watch, that's for sure. I do have a question. You know, it's sort of an ironic situation, more or less. I'm pretty sure that during the carbon tax debate the opposition members raised several questions and amendments that spoke to the unintended consequences of the implementation of the carbon tax, and, sure enough, we're here – what? – one year later dealing with the unintended consequences of the NDP carbon tax here in Alberta. We now have to bring in legislation so that we are no longer taking money back from those that have passed away. This is crazy.

I can't even imagine how many more times this government is going to come back to the House, their tail between their legs, with a piece of legislation and go: "Oops. We've got to fix this stupid, crappy thing we did earlier." I just want to point out that this is actually absolutely ridiculous. Maybe next time do your homework and work through all the unintended consequences of a tax that is very harmful to everyone in Alberta. Most people don't like it, and I'm sure they're going to be really kind of annoyed that this government is wasting time with legislation here in this House to fix their mistakes.

Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker: The Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: I think the member opposite is not understanding the quick action that the government took as soon as the government realized that there were some challenges with prepaying the rebate. The minister alerted CRA, and things were set in motion quickly. This bill is to make sure that there are no unforeseen consequences to the payment of the carbon levy rebate, so it's changing the way that the payment will happen. It's going to be in quarterly payments so that nobody is faced with a situation where they've been paid for something and they have to give it back.

Actually, rather than putting the government down, I am really pleased to be part of a government that acted right away when the problem was brought up publicly and worked with the CRA to

rectify the problem. Now, through this bill, the problem will no longer exist because people are being paid in quarterly payments. On top of that, the people have been prepaid, and if they lost someone in their family, they will not have to repay the prepayment of \$100. That will be forgiven by the government. So rather than knocking the government down all the time, please pay some attention to how quickly the government has moved and how sensitive the minister and the Premier have been to this issue.

The Acting Speaker: Any other speakers under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Cortes-Vargas: Yeah. Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to comment on the intended consequences of the carbon levy because I think the members opposite forget that their approach and their continuous resistance to being able to talk to people that have different opinions than them created a polarized conversation that resulted in zero pipelines to tidewater. The fact is that the carbon levy and the ability to actually talk to people that are different than their world view has built a capacity for our government to build social licence and be able to talk to the members opposite.

I think they reflected on the election across our boundaries, Mr. Speaker. I think they need to remember that one of the top issues within that province is actually electoral reform. One of the reasons that that is happening is because the democratic process that we have has been affected by the fact that people haven't been listened to. The members opposite will soon find out that compromises are difficult, because they're about to create and are creating a merger between the two parties, and they can barely agree on who's going to finish the press conference. The fact of the matter is that the member opposite has failed to talk to what has been created by the carbon levy, and it's something incredibly important in our economy, and it's something that this government will not stop fighting for.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: With only five seconds left, I'll remind members that 29(2)(a) is for questions or comments relevant to the prior speaker.

The chair will recognize the Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to get up and talk about the Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2017. I think this is actually the first time I've gotten up to speak with this particular Mr. Speaker in the chair.

You know, I want to start off with some comments. I mean, this is a very important bill, and it does talk about that we are making some changes as they relate to the implementation of the carbon levy rebate as well as various other tax changes.

I want to start off by talking about this bill through some of the comments that had just come up under the previous 29(2)(a). You know, the opposition Member for Airdrie is correct that they did talk at length about what they perceived to be unintended consequences of the carbon levy, but unfortunately for them the unintended consequences that they were talking about are that they felt that there was going to be some version of economic doom that would come from it, and that is, in fact, not what happened, I will reiterate.

In fact, I believe that the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance actually mentioned in question period just today that housing starts are up, Mr. Speaker, that jobs are up, that rig activity and working rigs are up. I would submit to the hon. Member for Airdrie that it sounds like what they thought would be unintended consequences have not at all come true and that our plan for making life better for Albertans through taking action on climate

change is, in fact, working and that the hon. member's assertion is wrong.

You know, in their plan that they propose – I mean, we're now at the two-year mark of this mandate, and all the opposition has been giving us is anecdotes, if you will. They are purely opposing, and at this point in their mandate I would suggest it would be useful for them to ante up an actual plan so that Albertans can see what they think.

An Hon. Member: Table the napkin.

Mr. Malkinson: They can table the napkin, because so far the only thing that they've presented when we've gone to debate things over and over in this House, whether it's on the Tax Statutes Amendment Act, whether it was on the budget – that's all I hear over and over and over again from the opposition.

The only part I've heard that's a concrete plan from them is that they want to undo everything we've done, and unfortunately for them I think they need to explain to Albertans why they would undo the good that is in this bill. The hon. Minister of Treasury Board and Finance has gone on at length about why he's brought this forward. I think we've heard an excellent summary from my colleague.

You know, we've got to think about this. What do we want to do? Do we want to do good, or do we want to have an opposition that continually just opposes even when it's administrative changes to fix a problem that we identified and that the Premier committed to taking quick action on? I will point out, Mr. Speaker, that the Premier committed to take quick action on this, and here we are. We are here with the solution to that. I think it speaks to our continuing commitment to do what's best for Albertans, no matter what it is, whether it's providing daycare spaces or whether it's updating our tax statutes in order to make them run more efficiently and to keep them in line with the federal government.

3:30

I think we've already gone on somewhat at length about why these changes needed to be in there. I think I'll take a moment just to quickly mention about what happens with people who move out of Alberta and then receive a rebate. I think a question that most people would reasonably ask, which is, in all honesty, the only question I've actually gotten on this particular bill, is: what would happen in that case? Well, Mr. Speaker, people who leave the province and are no longer paying into Alberta's carbon levy should not be entitled to the rebate.

By switching to this quarterly payment system for the rebate, it will also help address this situation as well as the situation of what happens when a loved one or family member passes away. That's a traumatic time for anyone, and it's important that we do our best to make sure that we are not being petty by going after a couple of dollars from the carbon levy rebate. I don't think that's something that's good policy and that we need to do, and it's not in the interests of making life better for Albertans.

I'd also like to bring the House's attention to one other thing we're doing in here. In particular, as a result of the small-business tax we are closing a bit of a loophole, actually, in the small-business tax system because our government has the backs of small-business owners. Those are small-business owners that are in every single one of our ridings.

I know the hon. member from Fort McMurray, of course, laughs at that because he does want to cut everything we've done. He wants to put the small-business tax back up to its old rate. I'm very curious to see how he's going to explain and justify that to his constituents. Like was mentioned earlier, we've seen no plan from

that hon. member. I think it's high time that the opposition starts anteing up specifics to what they would do differently, especially as they merge into a new party.

We made this change. It was also to mirror changes that happened to the federal tax system to close a loophole that gave some small businesses an unfair advantage. But I'll also point out that it was our government that lowered small-business taxes, Mr. Speaker – our government, an NDP government – because we are there supporting small businesses, because we are always there.

We are making changes to make life better for Albertans. As part of our budgets we're also building new roads and new schools, which support various trades and contractors throughout the province, and that's jobs for other small businesses that happen to be in the infrastructure sector.

We've also had the hon. minister of economic development introduce various tax credits and incentives for investors to invest in Albertan businesses, whether they be in my home riding of Calgary-Currie, whether they be in the Finance minister's riding of Calgary-Fort, or whether they be in Fort McMurray, in the riding of the previous member who was, you know, laughing about these changes earlier.

I think it's important that we talk about these and that we pass this bill because it is one small part of how we're working to make life better for Albertans, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

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

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, the hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance to close debate.

Mr. Ceci: Well, thank you very much for the debate that's gone on with regard to the Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2017, Mr. Speaker. We on this side, of course, believe very strongly that the carbon levy rebates that are being issued to Albertans at \$410 million in 2017-2018 will make life better for those families. It will assist them in being able to address either costs to their households, to help ameliorate those costs, to improve their households, or lower their emissions.

It will also be something that helps this province, Mr. Speaker. As many have said around this side of the House, the climate leadership plan that has been brought forward is having a positive effect on this province. It is improving the ability of the province to achieve a connection to the west coast through access to tidewater, and that will help our economy so much.

We've been at the behest of one customer. The major competitor to Canadian oil sands is in the United States, and that situation has left us without a great deal of leverage power when it comes to getting world prices. We get a discounted price, and that discounted price directly affects the bottom line of this province. It directly affects the amount of resource revenues that come into this province, and as a result it has challenged this province financially.

We are taking action to change that, Mr. Speaker. The Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2017, while not directly changing that, does improve the situation that we have discovered and quickly acted on. The quarterly payments to Albertans who are eligible to receive these carbon rebates will make it so that the unfortunate circumstance of CRA asking to recover a portion of those funds from families will not occur going forward. We have taken the view that this is the best way to address this so that we're not in this situation as a government, as Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, in addition to that, though, changes to the small-business taxation loophole that was there are a good thing. I mean, it means that there won't be leakage from inappropriate use of that

rate. We need to appreciate that the federal government moved on that quickly, and that has helped as well.

Just back to the benefit, of course, of the carbon levy and the rebates that are going back to Albertans. You know, Mr. Speaker, that helped us understand that we can do similar improvements with regard to the Alberta child benefit and the Alberta family employment tax credit. While we don't see the same number of situations occurring in those benefits to Albertans, which are very, very helpful, again, we have taken action to make sure that the same sort of thing doesn't happen there. Though there were far fewer numbers of circumstances in those other two benefit programs to Albertans, there were still impacts.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleagues again who have stood up and talked about these important changes. Typically, you know, they're not the kinds of things that would attract a lot of attention. They're more mundane and regularized. But because we have

brought in an important program in terms of the Alberta climate leadership plan, important rebates going out to families, it is worth noting and it is worth bringing forward that we have quickly addressed this. We have worked with our partner in CRA to make sure that they provide more sensitive information to individuals who receive these notices going forward. We are going to make sure that that happens as quickly as possible.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to close debate on second reading.

[Motion carried; Bill 15 read a second time]

Cortes-Vargas: Seeing the great progress that we've made this afternoon, I would move to adjourn the House and come back on Tuesday at 10 o'clock.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 3:40 p.m.]

Bill Status Report for the 29th Legislature - 3rd Session (2017)

Activity to Thursday, May 18, 2017

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

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

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at 780.427.2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter number until the conclusion of the Fall Sittings.

Bill 1 — An Act to Reduce School Fees (Eggen)

First Reading — 6 (*Mar. 2, 2017 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 105-10 (*Mar. 8, 2017 morn.*), 192-96 (*Mar. 9, 2017 aft.*), 235-42 (*Mar. 14, 2017 morn.*), 269-71 (*Mar. 14, 2017 aft.*), 273-74 (*Mar. 15, 2017 morn., adjourned*), 282-91 (*Mar. 15, 2017 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 424-31 (*Mar. 21, 2017 aft.*), 556-58 (*Apr. 6, 2017 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 674-78 (*Apr. 19, 2017 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — 879 (*May 4, 2017 aft.*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2017 c6]

Bill 2* — An Act to Remove Barriers for Survivors of Sexual and Domestic Violence (Ganley)

First Reading — 67-68 (*Mar. 7, 2017 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 110-11 (*Mar. 8, 2017 morn.*), 192 (*Mar. 9, 2017 aft.*), 314-22 (*Mar. 15, 2017 aft.*), 336-39 (*Mar. 16, 2017 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 455-59 (*Mar. 22, 2017 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 678-79 (*Apr. 19, 2017 aft., passed*)

Royal Assent — 879 (*May 4, 2017 aft.*) [Comes into force May 4, 2017; SA 2017 c7]

Bill 3* — Voluntary Blood Donations Act (Hoffman)

First Reading — 208 (*Mar. 13, 2017 aft., passed.*)

Second Reading — 323-36 (*Mar. 16, 2017 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 394-400 (*Mar. 21, 2017 morn.*), 421-24 (*Mar. 21, 2017 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 472-80 (*Mar. 23, 2017 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 30, 2017 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 30, 2017; SA 2017 cV-5]

Bill 4 — Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2017 (\$)

First Reading — 191 (*Mar. 9, 2017 aft, passed*)

Second Reading — 306-07 (*Mar. 15, 2017 aft., adjourned*), 322 (*Mar. 15, 2017 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 389-93 (*Mar. 21, 2017 morn.*)

Third Reading — 449-52 (*Mar. 22, 2017 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 30, 2017 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 30, 2017; SA 2017 c2]

Bill 5 — Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2017 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 266 (*Mar. 14, 2017 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 310-14 (*Mar. 15, 2017 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 393-94 (*Mar. 21, 2017 morn.*)

Third Reading — 452-55 (*Mar. 22, 2017 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — (*Mar. 30, 2017 outside of House sitting*) [Comes into force Mar. 30, 2017; SA 2017 c1]

Bill 6 — Northland School Division Act (Eggen)

First Reading — 524 (*Apr. 4, 2017 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 558-61 (*Apr. 6, 2017 aft., passed*)
Committee of the Whole — 671-74 (*Apr. 19, 2017 aft., passed*)
Third Reading — 755-59 (*May 2, 2017 morn., passed*)
Royal Assent — 879 (*May 4, 2017 aft.*) [Comes into force May 4, 2017; SA 2017 cN-5.1]

Bill 7 — An Act to Enhance Post-secondary Academic Bargaining (Schmidt)

First Reading — 552 (*Apr. 6, 2017 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 679-81 (*Apr. 19, 2017 aft.*)
Committee of the Whole — 810-15 (*May 3, 2017 morn.*), 828-38 (*May 3, 2017 aft., passed*)
Third Reading — 865-66 (*May 4, 2017 morn., passed*)
Royal Assent — 879 (*May 4, 2017 aft.*) [Comes into force May 4, 2017, with exception; SA 2017 c4]

Bill 8* — An Act to Strengthen Municipal Government (S. Anderson)

First Reading — 577 (*Apr. 10, 2017 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 691-700 (*Apr. 20, 2017 morn.*), 716-22 (*Apr. 20, 2017 aft.*), 780-84 (*May 2, 2017 aft., passed on division*)
Committee of the Whole — 784-95 (*May 2, 2017 aft.*), 838-45 (*May 3, 2017 aft.*), 855-65 (*May 4, 2017 morn., passed with amendments*)
Third Reading — 991-1004 (*May 11, 2017 morn.*), 1101-06 (*May 16, 2017 aft.*), 1107-10 (*May 17, 2017 morn., passed on division*)

Bill 9 — Marketing of Agricultural Products Amendment Act, 2017 (Carlier)

First Reading — 606 (*Apr. 11, 2017 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 683-87 (*Apr. 20, 2017 morn., passed*)
Committee of the Whole — 687-90 (*Apr. 20, 2017 morn., passed*)
Third Reading — 759-62 (*May 2, 2017 morn., passed*)
Royal Assent — 880 (*May 4, 2017 aft.*) [Comes into force on proclamation; SA 2017 c5]

Bill 10 — Appropriation Act, 2017 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading — 670-71 (*Apr. 19, 2017 aft., passed on division*)
Second Reading — 690-91 (*Apr. 20, 2017 morn.*), 700-02 (*Apr. 20, 2017 morn.*), 722-23 (*Apr. 20, 2017 aft., passed*)
Committee of the Whole — 762-67 (*May 2, 2017 morn.*), 795-97 (*May 2, 2017 aft., passed*)
Third Reading — 799-810 (*May 3, 2017 morn.*), 845-47 (*May 3, 2017 aft., passed on division*)
Royal Assent — 880 (*May 4, 2017 aft.*) [Comes into force May 4, 2017; SA 2017 c3]

Bill 11* — Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Amendment Act, 2017 (Gray)

First Reading — 771 (*May 2, 2017 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 849-55 (*May 4, 2017 morn.*), 924-39 (*May 9, 2017 aft., passed*)
Committee of the Whole — 1072-77 (*May 16, 2017 morn.*), 1092-1101 (*May 16, 2017 aft.*), 1168-69 (*May 18, 2017 morn., passed with amendments*)

Bill 12* — New Home Buyer Protection Amendment Act, 2017 (S. Anderson)

First Reading — 877 (*May 4, 2017 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 939-44 (*May 9, 2017 aft.*), 945-56 (*May 10, 2017 morn., passed*)
Committee of the Whole — 956-62 (*May 10, 2017 morn.*), 1004-1008 (*May 11, 2017 morn.*), 1008-10 (*May 11, 2017 morn.*), 1111-20 (*May 17, 2017 morn., passed with amendments*)
Third Reading — 1169-71 (*May 18, 2017 morn., passed*)

Bill 13 — Securities Amendment Act, 2017 (Ceci)

First Reading — 893 (*May 8, 2017 aft., passed*)
Second Reading — 977-90 (*May 10, 2017 aft., passed*)
Committee of the Whole — 1027-31 (*May 11, 2017 aft.*), 1065-72 (*May 16, 2017 morn., passed*)
Third Reading — 1137-44 (*May 17, 2017 aft., passed*)

Bill 14 — An Act to Support Orphan Well Rehabilitation (McCuaig-Boyd)

First Reading — 1090 (*May 16, 2017 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1144-52 (*May 17, 2017 aft., passed*)

Bill 15 — Tax Statutes Amendment Act, 2017 (Ceci)

First Reading — 1137 (*May 17, 2017 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1184-89 (*May 18, 2017 aft., passed*)

Bill 201 — Justice System Accountability Act (Jean)

First Reading — 127 (*Mar. 8, 2017 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 208-20 (*Mar. 13, 2017 aft., defeated on division*)

Bill 202* — Protecting Victims of Non-Consensual Distribution of Intimate Images Act (Cyr)

First Reading — 245 (*Mar. 14, 2017 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 375-86 (*Mar. 20, 2017 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 578-86 (*Apr. 10, 2017 aft., passed with amendments*)

Third Reading — 738-40 (*May 1, 2017 aft., passed on division*)

Royal Assent — 880 (*May 4, 2017 aft.*) [Comes into force 3 months after date of Royal Assent; SA 2017 cP-26.9]

Bill 203 — Alberta Standard Time Act (Dang)

First Reading — 253 (*Mar. 14, 2017 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 496-503 (*Apr. 3, 2017 aft., referred to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future*)

Bill 204 — Protection of Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2017 (Stier)

First Reading — 444 (*Mar. 22, 2017 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 503-07 (*Apr. 3, 2017 aft.*), 899-905 (*May 8, 2017 aft.*), 1046-50 (*May 15, 2017 aft., reasoned amendment agreed to on division*)

Bill 205 — Advocate for Persons with Disabilities Act (Jansen)

First Reading — 552 (*Apr. 6, 2017 aft.*)

Second Reading — 1050-57 (*May 15, 2017 aft.*), 1120-25 (*May 17, 2017 morn., moved to Government Bills and Orders*), 1153-63 (*May 18, 2017 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1163-68 (*May 18, 2017 morn., adjourned on amendment*)

Bill 206 — Child, Youth and Family Enhancement (Adoption Advertising) Amendment Act, 2017 (Aheer)

First Reading — 1024 (*May 11, 2017 aft., passed*)

Bill Pr1 — Calgary Jewish Centre Amendment Act, 2017 (Kazim)

First Reading — 524 (*Apr. 4, 2017 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1110 (*May 17, 2017 morn., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1110-11 (*May 17, 2017 morn., passed*)

Bill Pr2 — Paula Jean Anderson Adoption Termination Act (MacIntyre)

First Reading — 524 (*Apr. 4, 2017 aft., passed*)

Second Reading — 1027 (*May 11, 2017 aft., passed*)

Committee of the Whole — 1027 (*May 11, 2017 aft., passed*)

Third Reading — 1110 (*May 17, 2017 morn., passed*)

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