



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, November 25, 2015

Day 23

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

First Session

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

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

Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)
Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND),
Government House Leader
McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret,
Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (ND)
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McLean, Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (ND),
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McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (ND)
Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)
Miranda, Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)
Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W),
Official Opposition Whip
Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND),
Premier
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)
Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)
Payne, Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND),
Deputy Government House Leader
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)
Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)
Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND),
Government Whip
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC),
Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND)
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)
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

Party standings:

New Democrat: 53 Wildrose: 22 Progressive Conservative: 9 Alberta Liberal: 1 Alberta Party: 1 Independent: 1

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Deron Bilous	Minister of Economic Development and Trade
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
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Brian Mason	Minister of Transportation, Minister of Infrastructure
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Advanced Education, Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour

STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Ms Miller
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Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

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Carson	Hunter
Connolly	Jansen
Coolahan	Piquette
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Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee

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Anderson, W.	Miranda
Clark	Nielsen
Cortes-Vargas	Nixon
Cyr	Renaud
Jansen	Starke
Loyola	Swann
McLean	van Dijken
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Standing Committee on Families and Communities

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Jansen	Rodney
Littlewood	Shepherd
Luff	Swann
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Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

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Deputy Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick

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Coolahan	Nielsen
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Ellis	Starke
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Kazim	Woollard
Loyola	

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Rosendahl
Dang	Stier
Drysdale	Sucha
Horne	Woollard
Kazim	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, November 25, 2015

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Please be seated.

As we all know and feel, this is a very solemn time for this Assembly, members, family with the recent passing of a former member and a current member.

Hon. members, as is our custom, we pay tribute to former members of this Assembly who have passed away since we last met.

Mrs. Weslyn Melva Mather
October 2, 1945, to November 22, 2015

The Speaker: Former member Weslyn Melva Mather was born on October 2, 1945, and was with us to November 22, 2015. Mrs. Mather served this Alberta Legislative Assembly as the Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods from 2004 to 2008. Trained as both an educator and a chartered psychologist, after years of teaching, she became an adjunct professor at the University of Alberta's faculty of education. During her term in this Assembly Mrs. Mather tirelessly advocated on behalf of children's issues. She received many awards over the years, including the Alberta achievement of excellence in education in 1984 and the YMCA woman of distinction for education in 1997. In a moment of silence I ask you to remember Mrs. Mather as you may have known her.

Hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View, I would call upon you to say a few remarks and introduce the guests.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and to the House for the opportunity to pay tribute to my former colleague and friend Weslyn Mather. Today is an especially sad day in the Legislature. I was heartbroken to learn of the death of my friend and former colleague Weslyn Mather, who served in this House from 2004 to 2008 for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

I was elected alongside Weslyn, and she's been a stalwart of the Liberal Party in Alberta. I'm proud to have watched her champion causes and fight for a better, more accountable government. In particular, Mr. Speaker, what stands out most in my mind was her passionate advocacy for children and her long and eventually successful efforts to make the Child and Youth Advocate independent and reporting to the Legislature, which improved accountability and has helped so many since then. Weslyn, we will miss you.

With your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, allow me to introduce to the House the members of Weslyn's family who are seated in your gallery. I'll ask them to stand as I call their names: first, Christyann Olson, sister – welcome – Ava Morasch, sister – stay standing if you will – Dale Morasch, brother-in-law; Alexis Holstead and Larry Holstead, sister and brother-in-law; Mary-Jo Woolgar, sister; Kiza Trentham, niece; Stu Trentham, nephew; also Richie Mather, Weslyn's grandson. Thank you for joining us today. Let us give you the warmest welcome from the Legislature.

The Speaker: Prior to Introduction of Guests, given the unique circumstances we are in today it is my sense that we will reach 1:50 prior to Ministerial Statements. I would therefore seek unanimous consent from members now to continue with the Routine until after all ministerial statements are complete.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: I would call on the Minister of Economic Development and Trade to introduce.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly honoured guests from Alberta's Ukrainian community. In 1932-33 Ukrainians were subjected to a horrific, callous, and sustained act. The Holodomor was a government-imposed famine in the Ukrainian SSR that took the lives of millions and scarred the lives of millions more. Today I am humbled to introduce two survivors. Pani Natalia Talanchuk and Pan Leonid Korownyk are with us today, and Mr. Korownyk is also joined by his wife, Pani Anne Korownyk. No words can describe what they endured, and their stories of survival and courage are an inspiration to us all.

Mr. Speaker, today they are joined by the president of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, provincial council Olesia Luciwi-Andryjowycz; as well as past president Daria Luciwi; treasurer, Romana Latenko; provincial co-ordinator and the child of a survivor, Slavka Shulakewych; as well as Bishop Ilarion of Edmonton and the western eparchy of the Ukrainian Orthodox church of Canada; and from the Edmonton eparchy Most Reverend Bishop David Motiuk.

They are seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker, and I'd ask our honoured guests to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Minister of Transportation and of Infrastructure and Government House Leader, I understand you may have some guests to introduce.

Mr. Mason: I do, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly a distinguished guest and former Member of this Legislative Assembly, Jim McPherson. Mr. McPherson served in the Alberta Legislature from 1982 to 1986 as the Member for Red Deer, leaving public service after the 1986 general election. Mr. McPherson joins us today as part of the delegation from Advocis, the Financial Advisors Association of Canada. There are nearly 60 members of Advocis that may be in the gallery, so I hope they'll forgive me if I don't name them all. I would ask Mr. McPherson and all members of Advocis to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you a group of special guests in the Legislature today on Gurpurab, which marks the birth of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the first Sikh guru. Equality of all human beings and wand ke chhako, which means share your resources with others, help those in need, are the fundamental teachings of the guru and Sikhism.

1:40

These individuals are members of the Sikh community, Manmeet's community, which represents 27 million Sikhs around the globe. They include Balwinder Kahlon, Manjit Suri, Dr. Yadwinder Cheema, Parshotam Dass Bhardwaj, Manjit Singh Piasa. I would like to mention that these individuals are all members of Drug Awareness Foundation Calgary, which helps to raise awareness of the dangers of substance abuse in youth. I also have Chand Sadioura, Joginderpal Singh, Arundee Sandhu, Harinder Sandhu, Mahan Judge, Gurdev Plaha. In partnership with Canadian Blood Services these individuals helped organize blood drives in 80

cities across Canada. I attended one such event two weeks ago to commemorate the anniversary of the indiscriminate killing of Sikhs in Delhi in 1984. I would ask my guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The Minister of Advanced Education and Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly members of the University of Alberta Students' Union. In attendance are all members of the five-person student executive as well as members of student council, the highest governing body of the students' union, all of whom have been democratically elected by the student body. The organization's mission is to run and maintain a building built by students for students, create a sense of community on campus between all students through programming and events, operate relevant businesses on campus, and advocate on students' interests to the University of Alberta, government, and the general public.

They are seated in the members' gallery this afternoon, and I'd ask that they all rise as I call their names: Dylan Hanwell, Cody Bondarchuk, Vivian Kwan, Fahim Rahman, Charles Lewis, Donald Ademaj, Sandy Xu, Ben Angus, Matthew Ryan, Sam Cheng, Jane Yu, and last but not least is Bo Zhang, who's also my constituency assistant. I would ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Mr. Speaker, to you and through you to the members of this Assembly I will introduce Team Lethbridge, and I will do so by beginning with: I love Lethbridge and this wonderful coalition, and I hope that you will, too. This evening all MLAs are invited to a meet-and-greet hosted by Team Lethbridge to learn more about the many strengths, opportunities, and progressive work being undertaken in our city, and many of my colleagues have said thank you for the mugs. I will now introduce the first 23 members of Team Lethbridge, followed by my colleague: Councillor Liz Iwaskiw, Councillor Bridget Mearns, Mayor Chris Spearman, Jenn Schmidt-Rempel, Don Lacey, Angela Zuba, Cheryl Gilmore, Donna Hunt, Ken Tratch, Melody Garner, Brad Cook, Diane Kotkas, Erasmus Okine, Kim Gallucci, Michel Béchard, Cathy Maxwell, Chris Smeaton, Erin Low, Kurt Schlachter, Carol Roesler, Danny Ponjavic, Harry Gross, Marnie Brown.

Now my colleague Minister Shannon Phillips.

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

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly the additional members of Team Lethbridge from the city that I have the honour to represent: Tom McKenzie, Mike Mahon, Mike Schmidler, Nathan Neudorf, Nikolaus Wyslouzil, Ryan Westerson, Patricia Epp, Paula Burns, Richard Westlund, Councillor Rob Miyashiro, Rudy Friesen, Sacha Johnson, Sandra Mintz, Shilpa Stocker, Simon Griffiths, Sonny Zgurski, Stuart Cullum, Susan Eymann, Suzanne Lint, Trevor Lewington, Wendy Kalkan, and Wes Carroll. I would ask that all of you rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of our Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome, neighbours.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a group from Edmonton-Decore, the North Edmonton Seniors Association. It was formed in 1978 and provides over 600 programs annually to more than 2,000 seniors in northeast Edmonton, with supports from long-term partners like the Northgate Lions Club and the city of Edmonton. Here today from NESA are Sharlene Wyness, Ken and Elaine Berg, Hugh and Shirley Newell, Robert and Pat Carpenter, Randy Tomin, Louise Ertman, and Sharon Johnston. I would like them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to this House two people who work tirelessly every day to make Fort Saskatchewan an amazing place to live and raise a family. Please stand as I call your names: Mayor Gale Katchur, mayor of Fort Saskatchewan; and Heather Boonstra, executive director of Families First Society. Both of these women teach me all the time about how to be a better representative and how to effectively reach into the community. I ask the House to join me in extending the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Are there any other members who have guests to introduce today? The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of our Assembly representatives from the Lung Association, Alberta and Northwest Territories; the Canadian Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation; pulmonary specialists; and patient and caregiver advocates. They are here today in the Alberta Legislature to educate us about lung disease and its impact on Albertans. There are many in attendance, so I'm going to name one – that's probably in bad form – Kyrrell Gayle. If Mr. Gayle and the representatives who are also here in attendance could please rise. He's the youngest one in attendance. He is here with his mom and a whole team of people to advocate on behalf of clean, good air and good lungs.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On this otherwise sad day it is a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the House two former Alberta Liberal colleagues, Reverend Bruce Miller, former MLA for Edmonton-Glenora, and Kevin Taft, former Leader of the Official Opposition, Liberal, and MLA for Edmonton-Riverview for 11 years, almost as long as me. He is a consultant and a bestselling author, as many of you will know. They join us today in memory of our friend Weslyn Mather, and I ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Ministerial Statements

The Speaker: Allow me, hon. members, on behalf of all of you to acknowledge to each and every one of you and particularly the party caucuses that in spite of the differences of opinion that get discussed in this Legislature, I've had a real sense of the loss that you've all shared, and your co-operation has been quite exceptional.

I would therefore call upon the hon. Premier to make some remarks.

1:50

Mr. Manmeet Singh Bhullar
March 1, 1980, to November 23, 2015

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On another day I would be happy for an occasion to rise in the House and shower a member with praise. Today I wish with all my heart that there was no need to do such a thing. I'm deeply saddened by the loss of Manmeet Bhullar. We have all lost a dear friend to a tragic accident, and we can only pay him the tribute he so richly deserves in his absence.

Today we remember our colleague the late Member for Calgary-Greenway. I count myself lucky in that I had the pleasure of his acquaintance for seven years. He and I both became MLAs in the same election, as part of the class of 2008. He was a lot younger than me. He was just 28, the youngest MLA ever elected at that time, and he already had an impressive history of public service behind him. He'd organized a youth group in Calgary. He'd volunteered generously to raise money for community and youth causes. His community leadership had attracted recognition that led to his receiving the Alberta centennial medal, the centennial medallion, and the Athabasca University leadership award. He came to public life with a determination to do even more for his community.

As new MLAs we had a lot to learn about this Legislature, about our new responsibilities, and about each other, and it wasn't long before I grew to appreciate his good humour, his sense of duty, his sharp intelligence, and his powerful compassion, fuelled by his faith. He served the people of Calgary-Greenway and all Albertans as an MLA and as a minister of the Crown always with utmost integrity and dedication. Clearly, he was always meant to accomplish great work.

As Minister of Service Alberta he acted to protect Albertans from unscrupulous contractors while homeowners were rebuilding after the southern Alberta floods. That protection went as far as laying charges. His special passion was advocating for the vulnerable in our province, especially children. That passion found its expression when he became Minister of Human Services, responsible for children in care. He led the move to greater transparency and reporting on fatalities of children in care. He led it with an unprecedented openness born, I believe, out of a confidence that, he felt, it was simply the right thing to do.

Whether in government or in opposition Manmeet was accessible, authentic, committed, and very capable. He had a special place in his big heart for people trying to escape discrimination and threats of violence and death, especially for practising their religion and their faiths. He learned of the discrimination first-hand on a recent overseas trip and urged the federal government of the day to lift restrictions under Canada's private sponsorship program for refugees. Just two weeks ago he spoke passionately in the Legislature on issues of human rights in Pakistan, India, and Afghanistan.

Manmeet was also very gracious, and just last week, as we ended our estimates debate on Executive Council, he offered up his very generous and personal praise of and directly to public officials for the work that they do both now and when they worked with him. He saw the good in everyone around him, and when confronted with hurt, his first instinct was to do whatever he could to put it right. It was typical of the Member for Calgary-Greenway that he would stop to help someone in need, stepping from the warmth of his vehicle in the midst of a heavy snowstorm. For him there was no other way to live. He thought of others before himself. With his energy and his youth and his passion I truly expected to see Manmeet in public life for decades to come, and I believe without question that Albertans are worse for the fact that we will not.

My thoughts continue to be with his family, his friends, and his colleagues. A family has lost a son and a husband, Calgary-Greenway has lost a champion, Albertans have lost a strong voice, the Progressive Conservative caucus has lost a loyal member, and this House has lost a colleague, a good and decent man.

His passing is a reminder that the members of this House are a family despite the differences between us and the disagreements they sometimes provoke, and we will do what every family does when it loses a loved one: we will grieve together, we will draw strength from one another, we will help each other to heal, and most of all we will never forget the person we lost, the Member for Calgary-Greenway, Manmeet Bhullar.

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

Mr. Jean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A fitting day is the birthday of the first Sikh guru. [Remarks in Punjabi] Greetings. [As submitted] Namaste. It is with great sadness that I rise today to speak on the passing of the Member for Calgary-Greenway, our dear friend and colleague Mr. Manmeet Singh Bhullar.

Death will always carry with it an incredible sense of pain. In all of mankind's endeavours to understand the deepest mysteries of the world, nothing has remained more elusive or out of reach than comprehending the meaning of death. It touches us all. As families, as different communities of faith, as a society we have all learned that there is simply no easy remedy, no tonic, no invention that can mend the grief and brokenness we all feel in our hearts with such a sudden loss of life. So we look to each other, we turn to our individual faiths, we pray for one another, and we remember in our own way this man. We take comfort in seeking and understanding a simple truth. That truth is that we were put on Earth with a meaning and for a purpose, a purpose to love one another, a purpose to serve one another and our fellow persons, and a purpose to make a positive difference in our world for others.

We stand in this Chamber where giants have truly stood, where the dedication of men and women who, with far-reaching vision, have sought to see Alberta be the very best it can be. We are known around the world as a refuge and as a place to be. Manmeet Bhullar brought part of that reputation here. The dedication of men and women from Alberta, people with far-reaching vision, is known. This week we have lost one of our finest, friendliest, and kindly giants – I don't mean in stature although that is true; I mean in purpose, vision, and accomplishment – a man who, with a deep sense of patriotism and commitment to his province and country, sought to bring people together, a man who, in deep commitment to his Sikh heritage and faith, always sought to be the champion of the needs of the afflicted, the needy, and the vulnerable. We could take a great example from him, and we should.

Manmeet accomplished much in public life. Before he became an elected official at the age of 28, he served as an adviser to our former Premier Jim Prentice. Upon his election he promised to be an MLA who bridged people together, and, in my opinion, his ability to stay true to this pledge is among his greatest accomplishments. As Service Alberta minister he made some important reforms. As Infrastructure minister he proudly championed new schools and other important projects right across the province.

But I believe that in the eyes of history he will be most fondly remembered for his work and accomplishments overseeing the Department of Human Services. There is perhaps no ministry in any provincial government that requires such empathy, compassion, and humanity. During his time in office there was perhaps no one who better exemplified these particular traits. Lifting the veil for families and our most vulnerable children will always, without question be one of his crowning achievements. But it is the love he

felt for those without a voice that we will all remember in our hearts. He truly felt it and lived it.

In opposition his service continued. His most recent advocacy work, to help refugees and at-risk minorities in Afghanistan, was just the sort of project he would champion and talk about frequently to his friends.

To his family, friends, caucus, and all of his colleagues here today, our deepest condolences. To his father and mother, Bill and Sukhvir Bhullar, and to his wife, Namrita, my personal sympathies: no greater loss than a son. We all hope and pray for a comfort that is beyond understanding and that will surround them all, all of us, during this difficult time.

2:00

Manmeet truly had limitless potential in what he had to offer our province. We will always be a little less for the silencing of such a large, towering individual. But his family can be reassured; Alberta will forever hear his voice. Mr. Speaker, we are all saddened here today, but the work of this place must continue. He would want that. Manmeet Bhullar's work will continue. We must do that. Let us all strive every day to be like Manmeet and do all that we can to help Albertans, to help Alberta be the best it can be, especially those in need. That would be what he would want.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would seek the unanimous consent of the House so that the leader of the Progressive Conservative party, the Member for Calgary-Mountain View, and the Member for Calgary-Elbow be able to respond to the Premier's statement and that in the case of the leader of the Progressive Conservative party the customary three-minute limit be set aside.

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

Mr. McIver: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. The PC caucus would like to thank all other members of the House for your understanding. As we gather here today, there's a hole in our close-knit caucus. It's not just a physical hole. You can see the flag-draped desk here amongst us. It's a reminder that one of our family members is missing and is missed. There's a hole in our hearts. The Member for Calgary-Greenway, Manmeet Singh Bhullar, was not just our colleague; he was a son, a husband, a brother, a friend, a confidant, a community leader, and the heart of the PC caucus. His death on Monday has left us heartbroken.

Manmeet, Manny or Meeta if you prefer, was first elected to this Legislature in March 2008, but many of us in this House knew him long before. In the hours following his leaving us, we heard from some hon. members who told us that they played sports with Manmeet, they went to school with him, they served on a community board with him, or they campaigned with him long before he ran himself. I knew him when I arranged with him and the then mayor Bronconnier to declare the first-ever Sikh Awareness Week in Calgary. Even then, years ago and not far removed from his teenage years, Manmeet was inspiring young immigrants to dream big and to be part of the solution. He passionately lectured them – believe me: passionately – to embrace Canada and recognize the rule of law, the only thing that protected their quality of life.

At the same time, he was a fierce defender of the underdog and would not stand for the bullying of minorities. I remember him talking about getting taunted for switching from his turban to his

helmet when he was playing high school football. Now, he did crack a bit of a sly smile when he thought about how he could settle his own scores on the football field. Lord help those who brought on Manmeet's ire, but he needed to clear the way for more modestly proportioned athletes to follow.

In the Alberta Legislature the MLA for Calgary-Greenway served on numerous committees and served as the Minister of Service Alberta, Human Services, and Infrastructure. At the time of his first election he was the youngest caucus member. Even then he knew it.

Manmeet the advocate and MLA accomplished more in his short years than some will fulfill in a long, long lifetime. He was involved in helping so many people and organizations, and his philanthropy and advocacy knew no borders. Manmeet was not bound by the borders of Alberta or even Canada. Recently he was on a personal mission to south Asia to find ways to protect persecuted Afghan minorities and refugees. Sometimes – heck, most of the time I didn't even know where he was, and he made this trip at his own expense. We learned yesterday that two families from Afghanistan are now safe in the Punjab thanks to Manmeet's efforts.

I'd like to share some remembrances from our PC caucus members. The Member for Calgary-Lougheed will always remember Meeta as a, quote, spiritual mountain of a man. He loved him like a brother, a very much younger, bigger brother with a much more impressive beard. He particularly notes working side by side with Manmeet to secure assistance for the people of Nepal after its devastating earthquake.

The Member for Calgary-North West laughs when she remembers how often he liked to point out that he watched her on TV since, as he said, he was a very young child – and she joked that this was his way of pointing out how much older she was than him – and how he always wanted her to sing the channel 2 and channel 7 theme songs. She has now admitted that she has never had the heart to confess to him that she didn't know all of the words.

The Member for Calgary-West remembers Manmeet advocating fiercely for him when he decided to enter politics, and he remarked on the way that Manmeet had such a profound effect on any room that he walked into, including this one. Manmeet Bhullar never went anywhere unnoticed.

The Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti remembers two years of sitting beside Manmeet in this Chamber and listening to him belt out *O Canada* with his powerful lungs. He says that Manny was great at many things; singing was not one of those things, and he smiles at the tone-deaf version of our national anthem that he endured on the front bench during that time.

The Member for Calgary-Fish Creek said that he had the honour of working with Manmeet in the community for just causes and through the mutual engagement in the rich fabric of diversity we're all blessed with in Alberta long before he was honoured to serve literally elbow to elbow with Manmeet as a legislative colleague, and he's grateful for the time he has shared working closely with him over the past six months.

The Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster remembers being told that his Movember mustache didn't compare to Manmeet's facial hair when Manmeet was 12 years old.

Dr. Starke: And it's true.

Mr. McIver: Yeah, it's true, too.

He loved Manmeet's sense of humour and admired his energy.

Finally, a message from the Member for Calgary-South East: Manny, I will miss our chats, your quiet wisdom, and your smile; it was so nice to Manmeet you. We have heard that line a lot in the last few days. It was a hash tag trending on social media, and it gave

Albertans a place to share some wonderful memories of our friend. I have picked out just a few.

Since the news broke of Manmeet's passing, we have heard from current and former colleagues, members of the press gallery, constituents, family, and many members of this House. The PC caucus is most appreciative of all the kind words and wonderful descriptions of Meeta, the anecdotes of precious memories of him and the insights into his character that we have seen and heard: a big man with a big heart and, even then, larger than life, a brother, best friend, hero, a passionate advocate for Alberta, a humanitarian. And, apparently, Manmeet gave the very best hugs.

Yesterday our caucus went to pay our respects to the Bhullar family, and it wasn't hard to see where Manmeet got his strength, his pride, and his courage. As they grieved, they told wonderful stories about the boy they loved and the man they were so proud of.

2:10

As Manmeet would say: I've got this.

His grandmother talked about how he always wanted her to tell her stories. He could never get enough of his grandmother's stories. It was only a week ago when he had to leave before one of her stories was finished, and she told us now that they will never get to finish it. His unfinished story is perhaps the saddest thing in our hearts.

Farewell, Meeta. Thank you for the time you gave us. Thank you for the inspiration. We love you, and now it is up to us to continue the great work you have always done.

[Standing ovation]

The Speaker: Hon. member, I'm pleased to say that one of my first remembrances of your peer was in my very novice days in this House. Apparently, he had stood to ask a question, and I saw a shadow come over the room. I wondered where it came from. I then said: Hon. member, I'm sorry; I didn't see you. He looked at himself. He said: we really are going to have trouble with this new Speaker from here on in.

Our condolences to you and your peers in your party. I know that these members are with you.

The hon. leader of the Liberal Party.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. To the Sikh community gathered here today: namaste. I appreciate this opportunity to add a few words and comments on this sad occasion. Like everyone, I was deeply shocked, saddened to hear of the death of our colleague Manmeet Bhullar. Manmeet was a passionate, hard-working, good-hearted servant of the community. This House has lost one of our most respected members. We will feel his absence every day.

Although I did not always agree with Manmeet, I never doubted he was working for what he thought would be the best interests of Alberta. In particular, I'll remember his hard work in making public the names of children who died in government care.

To the Bhullar family: the people of this province extend our deepest thanks for so generously lending Manmeet to public life for these past years. Indeed, everyone in this Chamber knows all too well the sacrifices our families are asked to make so that we can serve here. As you so beautifully described, we understand that with Manmeet and the Bhullar family – the light has gone out of our lives. It's my sincere hope that you know that his light also helped make our province brighter.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the Alberta Party.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is a sad day but a tremendous honour to stand here today and speak about a great

man. The last time I had a long discussion with Manmeet was after he gave his moving speech in celebration of Diwali. The Legislature rotunda was absolutely captivated, and there was silence as he talked about the persecution of Sikhs. Despite the anger that this persecution rightly generates, he spoke of the fact that it is only light that can fight darkness. Now, he was a big man, as we've heard today, and his stature got lots of attention, but much more than that I remember his words. His words were tremendously powerful, passionate, intelligent, meaningful.

A lot has been said about the work he did in this House and the very public way he supported his community and stood up for vulnerable Albertans, but what many don't know, of course, that we've now talked about today, is the work that he did quietly all around the world, helping those people badly in need, not for glory or for personal reward but because it was necessary and he knew that he could help. Manmeet worked tirelessly behind the scenes trying to help Sikh and Hindu families living in Afghanistan who faced constant discrimination and the inability to fully practise their faith in the face of threats of violence.

He spent his own money travelling the world in order to help those who needed his aid, using his significant personal charisma and experience to insert himself into conversations with officials in Brussels, India, and other parts of Asia in order to advocate for his community, and I think it's important to note that he inserted himself into those conversations whether they liked it or not. He stepped in to help because he could, because he knew it was needed, and there really is no more fitting tribute to Manmeet Bhullar than to recognize his work helping others. He is exactly the sort of person we need in public office, and the world needs more Manmeet Bhullar, not less.

His loss is absolutely devastating, and I can't imagine what his family is going through, nor his community, nor his colleagues in the PC caucus and your staff. My team has connections to yours, as I'm sure you know, and on their behalf I offer our sincerest condolences and offer any support you need at any time.

This absolute tragedy has brought members of this House together, though, in a way I think we wouldn't have otherwise. On Monday night we cried together, some prayed together, and we built bonds that cannot be broken.

Manmeet said that politics is still comprised of human beings. We all seem to forget this; Manmeet's legacy means that that is no longer true.

Rest in peace, my friend.

Oral Question Period

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

Provincial Fiscal Policies

Mr. Jean: Mr. Speaker, this question, like all of our questions today, is based on one that was asked by our dear friend Manmeet Singh Bhullar. I'm going to talk about the government's least favourite subject, the economy and jobs. Premier, there are many things that you cannot control in the economy – for example, the price of oil and other countries' oil production levels – but you can control your policy responses to the economy. Do you really think now is the right time to implement tax hikes, that can result in massive job losses?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, first of all, the economy-wide carbon price, which our government announced

that it would be implementing as part of its climate change strategy, a strategy which I believe is long overdue and a strategy that will make Alberta a leader not only on a national stage but on the world stage, will be completely recycled back into the economy because it is those very issues that we are very concerned about. We understand that the economy is vulnerable, and therefore we are committed to ensuring that that carbon pricing is recycled back in and, in fact, will almost inevitably create more jobs, not less.

Mr. Jean: We are already number one in the world of oil-producing countries with our environment.

Again, from the Member for Calgary-Greenway on June 22: "I represent the people of Alberta, and I'll fight to make sure their jobs are looked after, Madam Premier." Will the Premier please tell us what her plan is to find thousands of Albertans new jobs when their employers pick up and move to Saskatchewan or to British Columbia because of her government's new taxes and bad policies?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think it's really important to understand that even with the implementation of the climate change leadership plan, that I was proud to announce on Sunday, Alberta overall remains the lowest taxed jurisdiction in the country, to the tune of about \$8 billion, and that's not actually going to change. So the fact of the matter is that we're not particularly worried about jobs leaving, nor are we worried about emissions leakage because we worked very hard with industrial and economic leaders across the province to put together this plan. We have the endorsement of many leaders within those communities because they see that this is actually a good way forward for our province.

2:20

Mr. Jean: The Premier forgot to ask the people that pay the tax how they felt about the \$3 billion tax, which is the citizens of Alberta.

Again based on a question from Manmeet Bhullar:

Madam Premier, it is your opportunity now to protect the economic interests of hard-working Albertans. How, ma'am, are you going to protect a dry cleaner, how are you going to protect a pizza shop owner, how are you going to protect your neighbourhood florist by raising their [business] taxes by 20 per cent

or by saddling them by a carbon tax? I added the last part about the carbon tax, but he would've if he was here today.

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, indeed, when we introduced our climate leadership plan on Sunday, one of the things that we talked about was different models for rebating the economy-wide carbon price to particular parts of the economy, and one of those parts is the small businesses that were just outlined by the member opposite. You can anticipate that we will actually be reaching out to small businesses to ensure that any negative consequences from the plan will be addressed and, in fact, that they would be able to benefit from a number of incentives to bring about the kinds of emissions reductions that all Albertans and our children need us to make real.

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

International Humanitarian Aid

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Hon. Bhullar truly lived the spirit of namaste, and one of his final projects was the protection of vulnerable minorities in Afghanistan. When the world's attention

was rightly focused on the Syrian crisis, Manmeet did not forget the critical needs of the 2,500 remaining Afghan Sikhs and Hindus out of over 200,000, most of whom had fled or perished during almost four decades of festering violence. Now, this summer he undertook a personal mission to south Asia, drawing upon his rich, world-wide network of relationships to acquire homes and jobs, medical care, and schooling for asylum seekers abroad. To the Premier: how will humanitarian efforts like these held dear by hon. Bhullar be supported by the government of Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I've always found the advocacy from the Member for Calgary-Greenway for religious minorities incredibly commendable, and a number of the organizations that he thought were important, whether it be Women for Afghan Women, the World Sikh Organization, the Organization of Human Welfare, and a number of different government officials and volunteers, undertake incredibly valuable work in our province and abroad, and our government will continue to support the work of these innovators as they work to promote human rights and as they work to promote effective settlement because they reflect the values that I think all Albertans want to see lived every day.

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Premier. While meeting with Afghan minorities who had fled the country, hon. Bhullar discovered that many of them had been systematically prevented by locals and sometimes by government from practising their religion, obtaining education for their children, and accessing basic health care. He also learned that Afghan authorities could not protect Sikh and Hindu women from forced marriage and religious conversion. Manmeet expressed his passion for helping those most in need through a promise to help Afghan minorities that the world has forgotten. Again to the Premier. Please tell us: what can the government of Alberta and indeed all Albertans learn from Manmeet's commitment to safe and supportive social environments, which will enable Albertans to truly realize their dreams?

Ms Notley: Well, I think that it's fair to say that Manmeet Singh Bhullar's ideas about how we need to reach out and make sure that the fundamental human rights of people all over the world are respected are one of the reasons why people are so moved by and troubled by what happened on Monday. He was a person who spoke for values that are held deeply in many of our hearts, values of inclusion, values of freedom, values of respect for people regardless of their religion and indeed sometimes in respect of their religion. We are a strong and free province because of the diversity we have in this province. Mr. Bhullar knew that, and we will do everything we can to continue that legacy in the work that we do.

Mr. Rodney: One of hon. Bhullar's greatest passions was striving to ensure that all Albertans are treated with the dignity and respect that they deserve, and that includes everyone: citizens, permanent residents, and those seeking to become Albertans. Manmeet sought to bring Afghan refugees to our province with the hope that they would experience and enjoy an environment in which they had the opportunity not just to survive but to thrive and in which they were afforded protection from basic human rights violations and systemic discrimination. Finally, to the Premier: what can the government of Alberta do to ensure that refugees, new Canadians from Afghanistan, Nepal, and all over the world will have the opportunity to live in an open and welcoming environment in the future regardless of where they're from?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member's question underscores the importance of our province doing its part to help those from war-torn areas who face violence, oppression, and poverty every day. The thriving communities that we already have in Alberta demonstrate that our province welcomes people from many faiths and many countries. It also underscores the need to reach out to those people when they come to our province, to include them in our communities, to include them in our institutions, to help them with language support, and to ensure that they are genuinely quickly part of our family. That's the way to make sure that they live in the way that the member has so eloquently described and that Manmeet Bhullar was seeking to have happen.

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

Openness and Transparency in Government

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Member for Calgary-Greenway was a tireless champion for openness and transparency in government. During his time as Minister of Infrastructure he oversaw the creation of a website that tracked the progress of school builds in all communities around the province. This system was designed to show Albertans when and where they can expect new spaces for students. The member said that the interactive website "was a very powerful tool by which people could see regular progress on projects." To the Minister of Infrastructure. In estimates you outlined that this website would be restored as soon as the updating of information is complete, and we applaud that commitment. When will this happen?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Speaker, and to the hon. member. The website that was created when the hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway was Minister of Infrastructure is a great tool to see progress on the development of schools in the province, and I share the member's desire for more openness and transparency. We expect that updated school build information will be loaded on the site in coming weeks. A full list of the schools can be seen at infrastructure.alberta.ca, and we're working with school boards to confirm remaining details and aim to relaunch projects.alberta.ca very soon. I would also like to announce today that we will be expanding the site to include progress updates for all capital projects.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the response. Again to the minister: given that the last motion submitted by the Member for Calgary-Greenway urged the government to accept this policy, the practice of disclosing any relevant legislation and policies upon which it bases decisions affecting Albertans, will your government commit to ensuring that this measure of transparency is followed through by making public this type of information?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. I know that the Member for Calgary-Greenway was a believer in transparency and accountability. He could always be counted on to put forward creative ideas to solve problems. The motion that he put forward is an example of that approach. I want to tell the member and the House that we believe that this is an

interesting idea that is worth consideration as we move forward with our work to strengthen transparency and accountability in government.

2:30

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister, for the response. Again to the minister: given that the Member for Calgary-Greenway was most passionate about child welfare and youth vulnerability and given that the member's vision was to push for continuous improvement of supports for vulnerable children and their families, how is this government ensuring that the Member for Calgary-Greenway's five-point plan is being implemented and strengthened to continuously improve the child intervention system?

The Speaker: The Minister of Human Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. Our government agrees in principle with the five-point plan, which highlighted the need to address the root causes of many issues that affect the safety and well-being of children such as poverty, addiction, sexual abuse, mental health, and family violence. Our government will continue to fund sexual assault centres and will invest in preventative measures and programs such as FCSS, family and community support services, and the like to address these important issues.

Thank you.

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

Legacy of Former MLA Manmeet Singh Bhullar

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all the caucuses for their care, their grace, and their understanding during this difficult time. It means a lot.

Mr. Speaker, in speaking with Manmeet Bhullar's father last night, he spoke a bit about how he raised Manmeet. He referenced Monday's tragedy and said, and I quote: no matter what the circumstances, you must stop and help someone in need. You have to stop and help. End quote. So it's no surprise that Manmeet was such a caring, diligent, and effective advocate for his constituents. To the hon. Minister of Human Services: what improvements have been made in recent years to the ways that this government provides services to Albertans as a result of the many constituency cases Mr. Bhullar had brought to this government's attention?

The Speaker: The Minister of Human Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. We know that Manmeet was a passionate person and that he was passionate about helping others. He served in three different ministries, and because of this he was very skilled at helping his constituents navigate the government system to access supports. While he was Human Services minister, as the hon. Premier and other members of this House mentioned, there were a number of changes that he made to support Albertans to receive and navigate those services, including opening two new Alberta sports centres in Edmonton and Red Deer, the launch of a province-wide mental program, and a welcome to parenting initiative.

Thank you.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Bhullar helped dozens of families establish themselves in Calgary and Alberta, including young doctors, nurses, dentists, engineers, accountants, transportation professionals, day home operators, labourers, researchers, and the list goes on. To the same hon. minister: which government programs have been improved to help attract and retain new Albertans to become established in Alberta based on the amazing work that Manmeet did?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. As many of us shared here today, Manmeet was about helping others, and till the last moment that's essentially what he was doing. If I speak specifically to my department, the Department of Human Services, he made many important changes to this department. Specifically, I can talk about what everybody mentioned today, the publication ban around the deaths of children. There are many initiatives that we can see government-wide that he did when he was minister that will help Albertans, and there are many initiatives which he embarked upon as a community leader, as a member of his Sikh community, that will always be remembered and will set a path for future generations.

Thank you.

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Speaker, I have to say that I didn't realize there were this many people over there. Now that our good friend is gone, there's clearly a void.

You know, we all have a minute in time on this planet, and in that minute that Manmeet had, he did so much for so many. It's been referenced by the Premier and the caucuses and countless Albertans, the work that he's done. We have honoured previous advocates for people in their own right such as the hon. Grant Notley. To the Premier: would you so graciously consider naming the federal building after the hon. Manmeet Singh Bhullar?

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We absolutely believe that there should be an appropriate and ongoing tribute to the Member for Calgary-Greenway. We are beginning that, of course, in this House today, and we'll be talking more with the member's family about what future tributes might be appropriate. We welcome any and all ideas about how to appropriately pay tribute to the member and his dedication to Alberta. We've just been presented with this idea, and we will definitely give it some very vigorous consideration to honour a memory that must be acknowledged.

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

International Postsecondary Students

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Manmeet Singh Bhullar was a passionate advocate for his constituents and for Alberta. In the October 20 meeting of the Public Accounts Committee Mr. Bhullar asked about the operations of international student recruitment. Typically international students pay up to 3.5 times as much in tuition as domestic students because the government of Alberta does not provide them with base grant funding. This incentivizes institutions to heavily recruit international students. To the Minister of Advanced Education: are budget shortfalls in your ministry being filled through international student recruitment?

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Of course, it was the priority of our

government upon being elected, and in our first session right away we put money back into postsecondary education to make sure that it's accessible and affordable and stable for all Albertans. That's been our priority. You know, enrolment is up. Many students are really taking advantage of this, and institutions are grateful for the new funding.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, with respect, I was asking about international students. Mr. Bhullar thought that increased revenues to the system from international students certainly felt like a commercial enterprise. In fact, international students were left out when the government reversed the post-secondary market modifiers and instituted a tuition freeze. Even more, some programs have increased international tuition by up to 30 per cent in this academic year. To the minister: why didn't the government's policies apply equally to all students studying in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We don't have jurisdiction on controlling international tuition. Institutions do this. We are in the process, though, of very quickly rolling out the adult learning review. This is something that we have heard, the concerns about international tuition fees. We're looking at that, and we'll be listening to the community and others who are concerned about this, but right now we don't have jurisdiction over internationals. We did want to make it stable and affordable for our students here in Alberta, and that's why we moved forward very quickly to put back \$133 million in the postsecondary system.

The Speaker: Hon. member, second supplemental.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Obviously, there's a discrepancy here between how we treat certain groups of students in this province, a discrepancy that Manmeet and his constituents were very concerned about. To the minister: will you commit to regulating international student tuition so that Alberta students are entitled to fair treatment regardless of where they come from?

2:40

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I said, we are going ahead with the adult learning review, and this will be one of the things that we're looking at. We welcome people's ideas around this. At this point we're just gathering that information. It's very important for us to hear from all groups regarding this. We look forward to reporting back after that's complete.

The Speaker: Hon. Government House Leader, I understand you may have a motion.

Mr. Mason: Yeah. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would ask unanimous consent from the House to continue the daily Routine past 3 o'clock today.

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

Violence against Indigenous Women and Girls

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We're all very familiar with the statistics that show that indigenous women and girls are three

times more likely to experience violence than nonindigenous women. Earlier this month in my own constituency of Calgary-Cross we lost Janel Squirrel to such violence. She was 26 years old and a mother of three. This needs to change. Can the Minister of Aboriginal Relations tell us what the government is doing to ensure that indigenous women are safe?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to the member for the question. We know that too many indigenous women are going missing and being murdered. Each one of these women deserves to be honoured and mourned and has a family in need of healing and a community in need of answers. Alberta was proud to join these families and other provinces in the call for a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women. I have had the opportunity to speak to my federal counterpart in Prime Minister Trudeau's new government, and I'm eager to get started on this important work.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We can call for a national inquiry, but we need to see action now, and we need to see the dollars that are going to be invested in programs here in Alberta. Can the Minister of Aboriginal Relations tell us what initiatives are already under way that take a stand against violence towards indigenous women and girls?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to the member for the question. Of course, I'm proud to see so many people today in this Legislature wearing the moosehide swatch in support of this important issue. The Moose Hide campaign was launched a year ago by the Alberta Native Friendship Centres Association, one of our community partners. This powerful campaign asked indigenous and nonindigenous people to wear the swatch to show their commitment to standing up against violence to indigenous women and girls. We know we can be a part of the solution, and this is one way to show that commitment.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Moose Hide campaign was launched a year ago, and I truly believe in its power. We want to know what the government is doing now to show our commitment to keeping indigenous women and girls safe. To the same minister: what are we investing in today?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to the member for the question. Well, this campaign was started a while ago. As we know, many of our friends across the House, including the hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway, were advocates for minorities. Certainly, our government has recently provided funding for an additional campaign. We provided \$125,000 to support the I Am a Kind Man program in nine communities across Alberta. The Alberta Native Friendship Centres Association is leading this initiative, which is based on traditional teachings, to help restore and repair family relationships in the indigenous community.

Thank you.

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

Human Services

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my colleagues today for all your kind words. My friend the Member for Calgary-Greenway was someone who had a great passion for fighting injustice. He fostered a sense of hope wherever he went, asking the difficult questions, holding everyone to account, and making sure that the attention of the government was always squarely focused on the lives and needs of Albertans. When he saw a problem or someone who needed help, he would act. It's an example that we in this House should all strive for. To the Premier: how will you ensure that your government and your ministers remain focused on accountability and achieving the best possible outcome for Albertans, as Manmeet Bhullar did?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. As has been mentioned before but I think bears repeating, Manmeet Bhullar, of course, took a very major step forward in terms of releasing the publication ban and moving forward in terms of reporting and the scope of reporting of fatalities and injuries that occurred to children in care or receiving services. That information is the first part of accountability, so I think that we need to remember that and, of course, move on from that, which we will do and I'll talk about more in another question.

But I'd like to just say one thing, which I didn't have a chance to say before. When we talk about Human Services – you know, back when I was in opposition, it was a critic area for me, and it is arguable at the time that I had more access to front-line workers and information from front-line workers than those in government at the time might have had. I think it's important for all of you to know that I heard from most front-line workers that there was a tremendous level of respect for the work that Manmeet Bhullar did at that time. He was very much seen by the people who worked for him as a champion for their cause.

Ms Jansen: Thank you to the Premier. One of the great successes, as the Premier just mentioned, of Minister Bhullar's tenure was the ending of the publication ban on children who died in care. The Member for Calgary-Greenway moved immediately to take action to open up the system to Albertans. To the Minister of Human Services now: what steps will you take to build on those accomplishments?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. As has been mentioned in this House, removing that ban was a huge achievement and a huge step forward in Human Services. Building on that, we will try to improve those services to take it another step forward by bringing in an independent mechanism to independently investigate all deaths of children in the care of the province.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Finally, in February of last year the Member for Calgary-Greenway announced that the government would be putting up \$5 million to ensure that children facing mental health issues can get help as quickly as they can. Again to the Minister of Human Services: given the rising issues we have seen with addiction amongst our young people, can the

minister assure this House that the plan and the funding committed by the Member for Calgary-Greenway are still in place?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member. We know that children involved with the intervention system are at higher risk to develop mental health disorders, and the funds committed by Manmeet Bhullar will continue within the children intervention division of Human Services. We have also added \$37 million back into the intervention system, which will also help us improve the lives of these children and youth. We have also launched a mental health review, which will also help us assess our needs and determine the path forward.

Thank you.

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

Diversity Initiatives

Mr. McIver: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Bhullar was Mr. Community Initiatives. Some members and staff remember accompanying Manmeet on one of his many mid-session trips between Edmonton and Calgary to unveil a facility in Calgary in the morning, attend question period, a community fundraiser in the afternoon, and back to Calgary for a community event that night. Many of us remember Manmeet – and he has some fame – as the first turban-wearing Sikh minister in the Alberta Legislature, and who can forget his emotional address during the recent Diwali celebrations here in the Legislature. To the minister of culture: what can you do to assist MLAs in this House and their staff to learn to best support Alberta's increasingly diverse population to establish success and, in so doing, strengthen all of Alberta?

2:50

The Speaker: The hon. minister of culture.

Mr. Eggen: Thanks, Mr. Speaker, and thank you so much for the question. I know that Manmeet was a tireless community advocate and had an amazing capacity to – I saw him, at one point, appear in two gurdwaras in two different cities in one single day. I know that he worked very hard to not just access the community development funds that we have through the ministry of culture for northeast Calgary but for the whole province as well, and you can see his work made manifest on many plaques around the province and you see where he's got the money for the important community work that he does. This year, for example, in northeast Calgary there was \$50,000 at the Cornerstone Youth Centre, which, I think, is very, very well done.

Mr. McIver: Again to the same minister. Given that Mr. Bhullar and the respective leaders of dozens of cultural and religious organizations – he supported them and helped troubleshoot their efforts to establish applications to the government. Mr. Bhullar along the way frustrated several Alberta agencies, boards, and committees by demanding that they treat ethnocultural organizations with the same due consideration as anyone else. In what ways is this government making sure that agencies, boards, and committees and government departments, for that matter, become open to Alberta's many diverse community organizations?

Mr. Eggen: Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, I think it's a very fitting tribute to the continuation of Manmeet's work that we look to ensure that we have cultural diversity in agencies, boards, and commissions and that we look at the grant structure. Of course, we have a long history of grants and institutions going in a certain

way, but to move and to expand past some of the Eurocentric tendencies to invest in certain cultural institutions and look to having our investment as a government reflect the diversity of Alberta in 2015: certainly, all of us endeavour to do so.

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, Manmeet Singh Bhullar didn't always wait for government policy to do what had to be done. He helped many young Albertans learn about and enter into the community development policy worlds in health, health care, law, public service, justice, and other careers, including using the STEP program, which the government is going to bring back, and sometimes, lots of cases, worked with parents in children's cases, that he helped resolve in the system. How will this government continue to support Mr. Bhullar's passion for fostering diversity and supporting Albertans who don't necessarily fit into the current government programs?

The Speaker: The minister of culture.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, Manmeet's tenacity and capacity to advocate for not just his constituents but for all Albertans is a good example to many of our new MLAs, to simply not take no for an answer, for one thing. If you perhaps didn't quite equal the physical stature of Manmeet, you could certainly work to have that tenacity in your heart. For all Albertans and for vulnerable Albertans especially, you know, I know that Manmeet would not stand down. I always like to lead by example, so I will endeavour to do so in my own personal life.

Thank you.

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

Dr. Starke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to preface my comments by stating that, certainly, the PC caucus and Manmeet's family have been greatly appreciative of the support that they have received outside of this Chamber, but I also want to say that the PC caucus is highly appreciative of all of the support we've received from inside of this Chamber, particularly from the House leaders from government, from the Official Opposition, and also from our independent members, to modify the rules under these extraordinary, exceptional circumstances – we appreciate it – and especially to the Official Opposition caucus for affording us four additional questions so that we might be able to all ask questions.

Midwifery Services

Dr. Starke: Mr. Speaker, amongst Manmeet Bhullar's many passionate causes – and there were many of them – one that is perhaps a little bit less known is that he was a passionate advocate for midwifery. Midwifery has been recognized under Alberta's Health Professions Act since 1998. One year after Manmeet was first elected, midwifery was funded by Alberta Health Services. He was a passionate advocate for the expansion of midwifery services in Alberta. He understood that a good life began with a good birth, and he knew that skilled and compassionate midwives would provide these services to women across Alberta, the women he so affectionately called his mothers and his sisters. To the Minister of Health: what expansion of midwifery services has Alberta seen since 2008?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and to the member for the question. The number of midwives in Alberta in the initial year, 2009, when it became publicly funded, was a 37 per

cent increase in that year alone. Now there are approximately 90 midwives and midwifery staff appointments through Alberta Health Services, which is great. You know, in the very first year it was funded, my niece, Anika, is proud to say that she was helped out by a midwife. It's certainly impacted our family in a personal way, and I want to say thank you for the contributions.

Dr. Starke: Mr. Speaker, one need only speak with Manny's mother and his sisters or his beloved wife to know how much he honoured and valued the role of women in our society. Now, his love for children is also very well known, and the fruits of his efforts as a role model and mentor to hundreds, if not thousands, of young people will be seen for many years to come. To the Minister of Health. In September additional funding for midwifery services was announced. How many additional courses of care will be provided this year, and how will women be able to access these expanded care courses?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much for the question. More than 2,700 families will be receiving midwifery care in the coming year. That's an expansion of more than 400 supported midwifery births. There's actually a centralized database now through the midwifery website, and there are a number of communities that it's been expanded to. Some, actually, are still accepting new registrants this year. So good news: we haven't totally exceeded our capacity yet. Obviously, the demand is going to continue to grow with the expansion of this great service.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Starke: Mr. Speaker, Namrita would want to see us to continue expansion of midwifery services, not just in the number of courses that we offer, courses of care, but also in the opportunities for training new midwives in Alberta and for expanded availability of midwifery to all geographic areas of the province, including rural and urban areas. Could the Health minister share with Albertans her plans for fulfilling Manmeet's vision?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to the member for the question. We are certainly working closely with Mount Royal University and with the College of Midwives of Alberta to understand their needs and ensure that they understand the needs of women throughout Alberta. The expansion of midwifery services: I'm really proud to say that just this November we expanded to the community of Plamondon. That's great news. Additional midwifery services have also been recently added in other communities in addition to Edmonton and Calgary, which are the two where we currently have the greatest demand. We also have expanded services in Cardston, St. Albert, Medicine Hat, and underserved communities in northeast Calgary and surrounding areas as well.

Thank you.

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

Registry Services

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When he was Minister of Service Alberta, Manmeet Bhullar oversaw many services, including those offered by more than 200 registry agents. He always sought to ensure Albertans received efficient services while providing fairness to private-sector partners. To the Minister of Service Alberta: given that many rural-based registries are providing services at a loss to ensure rural residents have convenient access to them and given that these agents were slated to receive a dollar

fee increase on July 1st, how is your government assuring the stability of rural-based registries, and will you be establishing a formula-based model for future increases?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I know that the Member for Calgary-Greenway believed that Service Alberta needed to continually move forward in providing quality services to the people of Alberta at the best value. Like him, we certainly value the role that registry agents play in delivering those services on behalf of the government. So we continue to work productively with registry agents to ensure that Albertans do receive the quality services they deserve, and we continue to be committed to ensuring that rural Albertans have access to the quality government services that they need.

3:00

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Minister, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that the province plans to offer more services online and has built the MyAlberta e-services portal to do so and given that Alberta has a proven partner which continues to offer convenient services to all citizens, will your government commit to offering registry agents the ability to participate in the government of Alberta's future plans for expanded online services?

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you once again to the member for the question. I certainly know that the Member for Calgary-Greenway recognized that our world is changing rapidly, and it's important that our government services keep up with the opportunities and demands that come with that. So we continue to seek opportunities to strengthen our registry services, including expanding our online services so that Albertans who choose to access services that way will have the convenient access that they are looking for. As we move forward, I can commit to proceeding with the option that will best meet the needs of Albertans, that they have convenient services at the best value.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Same minister: given that the number of registries has not increased since 1993 and given that in estimates you indicated to Manmeet that you are looking into issuing requests for proposals for new registries when your ministry issues the new RFPs, will you guarantee that the government of Alberta is provided with the best value possible by ensuring the highest bidder is awarded the contract?

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for the question. The procurement process that the government of Alberta established is open, transparent, and committed to ensuring that Albertans get the best value possible. So in terms of any possible changes to registry services I certainly can guarantee to follow that process to ensure that we can continue to serve Albertans efficiently and effectively at the value that they expect and deserve.

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

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to start out just adding to some comments by my colleague by thanking not only all the members of this House but you, Mr. Speaker, and all of the LAO staff for accommodating us in the House but also on the committee level as well. That's been very deeply felt by us. Thank you.

International and Local Relationship Building

Mr. Gotfried: Born in Calgary, Manmeet grew up in an environment where the value of social and cultural fluency, in both the local and international contexts, was instilled in him at an early age. Former Premier Prentice recently mentioned meeting Manmeet when he was just 10 years old, following closely behind his father as he worked tirelessly to build a gurdwara in Calgary. His parents' example of hard work and community leadership stayed with Manmeet through his life, leading to his negotiation of a memorandum of understanding and further bridge building between the government of Alberta and the state of Punjab in India. To the minister of economic development: in what ways was this agreement to facilitate trade, enhance relationships and socioeconomic partnerships important to both postsecondary education and agriculture between the two jurisdictions?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the hon. member for the question, recognizing that today has been quite an incredible day of learning about all the different successes that the hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway had and all the ways he touched Albertans' lives and those of the international community as well. I know that Alberta and India both share a co-operative and mutually beneficial trading relationship, and they are an important international partner for us. This agreement that the hon. member speaks of was announced in January of 2014, and it focuses on the aspects of agriculture, animal genetics to help increase trade in the areas of dairy production and swine genetics. It also established an agricultural working group to encourage communication between our jurisdictions. Our government is focused on looking at ways to increase market access and trade, and this trade agreement was made with a very similar focus, and I thank the member.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you. Again to the minister: given that relationships with a wide variety of people from Alberta, Canada, and beyond were critical to Manmeet's success at home and abroad on topics as diverse as improving government services, domestic violence, and local entrepreneurship, what are the most important improvements this government is planning to ensure that its network of local and global relationships is grown and sustained in the broadest context?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. Currently Alberta has 11 international offices, with one that is located in New Delhi. I'm working with my department to look at all of our foreign offices with an eye to efficiency, effectiveness, and productivity. We are very supportive of diversifying Alberta's economy and expanding new and existing markets, which includes a strategic and cost-effective international presence. These offices are key to sustaining these global relationships, and, again, I know that the Member for Calgary-Greenway

was a very strong advocate and had a very strong hand in getting this office set up, which I look forward to adding to in my next response.

Thank you.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you again to the minister, with our deepest appreciation. Given Manmeet's long-standing passion for community-building based on mutual respect and understanding and given that his success in this area was an integral part of the successful signing of the aforementioned MOU with the state of Punjab and given the importance of postsecondary education and agriculture to both Alberta and Punjab, in what ways have residents of the two provinces benefited from the improved trade and partnerships, and how do you see those being strengthened in the future by this government?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member again for the question. Our strengthened ties and MOU with the state of Punjab that Manmeet worked so hard to see signed have had many benefits for the people of Alberta and Punjab. Again, I don't want to understate the role that the Member for Calgary-Greenway played in building the relationship between the state of Punjab and the government of Alberta, and for that we thank him. Punjab has benefited from an increased export market for agriculture. Approximately 72 per cent of India's population lives in rural areas, with 65 per cent employed in agriculture. The Indian agrifood industry is estimated to be worth about \$180 billion and is expected to grow to \$310 billion by 2020. Agriculture currently accounts for 17.4 per cent of India's GDP. These ties will be strengthened as we continue to utilize our international offices to diversify Alberta's economy through expanding and existing markets.

Thank you.

[Standing ovation]

3:10

The Speaker: Hon. members, I would make this observation, and I will be referencing it in my years ahead in this House. In my mind, it's going to be called the Bhullar phenomenon because today I heard people speaking, and it is a wonderful, wonderful event that we ought to repeat yet again many, many times. If you hear me mention his name in the future, you will know of what I speak.

Hon. Government House Leader, I understand that we may have a motion.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I hope you don't get too fond of this.

I would like to ask for unanimous consent that, notwithstanding Standing Order 7(4), the Member for Calgary-McCall be allowed to participate in Members' Statements today.

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

Members' Statements

Mr. Manmeet Singh Bhullar

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in the House today to pay tribute to our beloved friend and colleague Manmeet Bhullar. He was a shining star of Alberta. Manmeet was a dedicated public servant. He went to work day in and day out representing the great

people of Calgary-Greenway. Manmeet exhibited the core principles of Sikhism, the faith he practised and the religion that grounded him.

Mr. Speaker, today is Prakash Purab, birthday of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the first of the 10 Sikh gurus. He was the founder of Sikhism, and his birthday is celebrated world-wide as Gurburab. [Remarks in Punjabi] What this means is that when Guru Nanak was born, the darkness all around vanished, and there was amazing light everywhere. His main message of Sikhism is to spread the message of kindness and peace and to promote the equality of all human beings and for equal rights for women.

Manmeet Singh Bhullar was able to live a life that Guru Nanak Dev Ji called for, and all of us should be proud of this. His educational background, character traits, and his personal appearance always gave the comfort and confidence anticipated from an authentic and brave sardar ji.

When Sikhs and Hindus were persecuted in Afghanistan, the ones that could afford to managed to get out. The poor and the weak remained stuck there. Of late Manmeet had been working tirelessly to get them out also and to settle them in a safe country.

Looking at what he accomplished in his brief 35 years, it is not difficult to understand how much potential was taken away so soon. Although he is not physically with us anymore, that star will forever be enshrined in this province's history. Sir William Osler once said, "We are here to add what we can to life, not to get what we can from life." Manmeet Bhullar died doing what he always did, helping others.

In closing, I would like to extend my deepest condolences to Manmeet's family and friends here and all over the world. Our thoughts and prayers are with them. I hope that they'll find comfort in knowing that their loved one made all the difference to his community, to his province, and to his country. He served this province, and for that we are forever grateful. May he rest in peace. [Remarks in Punjabi]

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Holodomor Memorial Day

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On this sad day I also rise on another sad occasion, on Holodomor. The word "Holodomor" comes from the Ukrainian words for "hunger" and "plague." In Canada the fourth Saturday of every November is marked as the official day of remembrance for the people who died in the Ukrainian famine, known as Holodomor. An estimated 10 million men, women, and children died of starvation in this famine. To put that in perspective, this is more than double the population of all of Alberta. It was truly a horrific period in Ukrainian history.

Mr. Speaker, more than 300,000 persons with Ukrainian ancestry call Alberta home. Many of them are constituents of Stony Plain, the riding that I represent. Many of them are descendants of those who suffered or are survivors of the famine itself. The Ukrainian community makes up an integral part not only of my riding but of Alberta. They are our teachers and doctors, our MLAs and our ministers, our neighbours and our friends. The stories they share of the horrors that occurred must be remembered. They remind us of the courage and strength of the human spirit and inspire us to continually promote the acceptance of all people and all cultures. We must work every day to ensure that crimes like Holodomor never happen again. We must work hard to respect and honour the memory of those who died in this senseless famine.

Mr. Speaker, I would encourage every member of this Assembly to honour the memory of those who suffered by redoubling our efforts to fight persecution, racism, violence, and discrimination.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Manmeet Singh Bhullar

Mr. Ellis: Thank you. As Manny would say: don't worry; I've got this. Mr. Speaker, this has been a hard one. For us, losing Manmeet is like losing a partner in the line of duty. When we're up here in Edmonton, we spend more time with each other than we do with our own families. One of the reasons Manmeet and I got along so well was because the doors of both our constituency offices are always open to the people, and Manmeet listened to the people. He did not hear; he listened. And after listening, he tried to find a solution, and that's why he was so beloved. Regardless of who they were or what their background was, Manny knew that the people knew that they could go to Manmeet and that he would listen and that he would try to find a solution for you or for your people.

His work at the Legislature was equally impressive. Manmeet was the first turbaned Sikh to hold a ministerial position in Alberta and, although I don't have confirmation of this, in Canada, I've heard. The symbolism of that appointment was not just significant for the Sikhs and other ethnic communities; it was important for all of us. He became Canada's most visible minority, and in doing so, he inspired anyone and everyone. For youth he was a particularly powerful symbol because they saw that in growing up in Canada, they could be who they are and could still achieve greatness.

He was a man of influence in his community, and he took that responsibility to heart. Because of his physical stature – let's face it; he was a mountain of a man – we never expected the gentleness that we saw. Within moments of meeting this gentle giant, he won you over with his warm smile and his huge heart. That doesn't mean that he was a pushover. Manmeet was a force of nature, with a strong will to match his big heart. He took charge of his ministries, and he was passionate about ensuring their work was ethical and efficient. He led by example, had high expectations of the people that worked for him, and he was a natural leader. Public consultation was the hallmark of every initiative he prompted.

Along with his ministries Manmeet was passionate about other causes close to his heart. He was an advocate with regard to violence against women. In fact, on the day of his passing he had spoken on that very same subject in Calgary. I've already mentioned his constituency work, which set a fine example for all of us. His constituency office was a champion for all cultures. He had a level of understanding of a person's struggles no matter what background they came from.

Now, as a former police officer I have to take a moment to address the people involved in Monday's accident. Please don't carry the burden of guilt for the events that unfolded on that day. You've got to know that Manny would not have wanted that because he was a generous soul, and he was doing what he loved. He was helping people.

I will leave you with one final quote. As I embraced his father yesterday and we hugged and we cried, he said to me: God needed him more. But it was nice to Manmeet you. We love you, and we miss you.

Thank you, all.

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

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First off, I just want to commend my colleagues in the PC caucus. The way that you're honouring your colleague today is really remarkable.

3:20

Violence against Women

Ms McPherson: I'm committed to a world where women and girls can walk alone without fear, free from fear of harassment, free from fear of assault, free from fear for their personal safety. I'm wearing an orange scarf today for a brighter future in honour of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women. This day, proclaimed in 1999 by the United Nations, commemorates the Mirabal sisters, who were political activists from the Dominican Republic assassinated in 1960 for their opposition to the dictatorship.

We are all diminished by violence against women, and we all lose out when half of the population finds it necessary to walk alone at night with their keys gripped in their hand like a weapon in the futile hope that they can fend off any would-be attackers, when women need to develop the skill of avoiding angering a man in order to keep ourselves safe. All women have ignored offensive comments, laughed off inappropriate invitations, and swallowed their anger at being belittled or talked down to because they don't know what might happen if they object.

World-wide 1 in 3 women has experienced physical or sexual assault. That means nine members of this Legislature, including me. In Canada indigenous women are seven times more likely than nonindigenous women to be killed by serial murderers. Alberta has the second-highest rate of self-reported sexual violence in Canada.

Violence against women is a human rights violation. It happens in our province every day, and it is up to all of us to change that and to take a stand. Raise awareness. Challenge the behaviour and the language that keep violence hidden. Speak up when you see harassment. Give generously to those groups that are working to end this violence. Wear an orange scarf, a moosehide swatch, or a white ribbon to show your support. Let us take care of one another.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Services.

Mr. Manmeet Singh Bhullar

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, colleagues, for allowing me to speak. It is with a sad heart that I rise today to speak about the untimely passing of a fellow member of this Legislature, Sardar Manmeet Singh Bhullar. A life that was dedicated to public service, to helping others, and to representing the constituents of Calgary-Greenway has been cut tragically short. Mr. Bhullar had a drive to do better for Alberta, which he showed during his seven years as a member of this Assembly and in his capacity as a minister of government, including the portfolio of Human Services, that I hold today. Manmeet wanted to make a difference in people's lives, and that's what he was doing at the time of Monday's tragic incident.

Mr. Speaker, I met Manmeet recently at various events, where he shared with me very passionately his work around Afghan Sikh refugee resettlement. In his remarks at the Diwali event here in the Legislature rotunda and at the Genesis Centre in Calgary he discussed the symbol of lights from the Diwali festival – and I paraphrase – as a metaphoric reference to stress that light must be shone in all dark corners around this globe against all oppression and against all violations of basic human and democratic rights. He certainly has shone light on many lives and worthy causes, and his work will live on in our province. His efforts will be remembered by Albertans and all those whose lives he touched.

It's beyond imagination to think of the devastation of Mr. Bhullar's family. I would just say that my thoughts and prayers go to Mr. Bhullar's family and to all those who knew and loved him, and I will join all my colleagues here to offer my heartfelt condolences to all of them.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Families First Society

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am reminded today of what a privilege and honour it is for me to be able to stand and speak in this House. Today I speak about the Families First Society, located in my home of Fort Saskatchewan, and recognize the efforts of the executive director, Heather Boonstra, and staff.

"Through improving the lives of our children, youth and families today, we help create a resilient healthy community for tomorrow." Founded in 1998, Families First has been using this foundational statement to grow the many ways they serve and educate the community. Serving more than 950 families last year alone, Families First became a parent link centre, providing evidence-based parent education programs to Fort Saskatchewan and Sturgeon county. They also provide family support programs, including community kitchens, home visitation, and the angel whispers program for couples suffering the loss of a child. They also staff a family violence prevention co-ordinator thanks to the support of Fort Saskatchewan's mayor and council.

The community they serve continues to grow. Fort Saskatchewan has a population that grows as much as 6 per cent year over year, with a 20 per cent increase in five to 14-year-olds and a 37.5 per cent increase in children aged zero to four. This growing demand has meant that Families First was looking for a new home. With leadership from Mayor Gale Katchur and councillors that advocate for the health of their communities, Fort Saskatchewan city council agreed to lease their former RCMP building to Families First for \$1 per year.

The new space will provide them with the ability to grow and meet the needs of a broader community of parents seeking safe, strong, and happy families. Families First does an amazing job fundraising through community events such as the Touch-a-Truck event and the Take Back the Night walk. Taking to the streets in support of the White Ribbon campaign – I wear the ribbon today – aims to end violence against women. On Monday morning the hon. Manmeet Bhullar was speaking about the role that our men and boys play, that important role, in ending violence against women. I thank him for his efforts.

Again, I just want to thank these women in my community for mobilizing their community to help make it a better place, and I look forward to seeing them in their new home.

Thank you.

Tabling Returns and Reports

Mr. Ceci: This is a report from the hon. Minister of Seniors. She wants to address the questions that were asked of her in the main estimates for the Ministry of Seniors. She has the appropriate copies here.

The Speaker: Hon. minister, I thought you were going to be wearing another, different colour today. When is that going to happen?

Mr. Ceci: The Stampeders don't seem that important.

The Speaker: The Minister of Infrastructure.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, on behalf of the hon. Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour I would like to table the appropriate number of copies of additional information and follow-up to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future. These are questions that she received, I believe, in estimates.

Mr. Speaker, I also have two other tablings. I'd like to table responses to questions that I received at the Committee of Supply meeting for the Department of Transportation. As well, I'm tabling five copies of the responses to questions raised by the Member for Little-Bow and Mr. Bhullar, the Member for Calgary-Greenway, on November 4 at the Ministry of Infrastructure's main estimates.

3:30

Orders of the Day Committee of Supply

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

The Chair: I would like to call the committee to order.

Hon. members, prior to beginning, I would like to outline the process for this afternoon. The Committee of Supply will first call on the chairs of the legislative policy committees to report on their meetings with the various ministries under their mandate. No vote is required as per Standing Order 59.01(10) when these reports are presented.

Members are reminded that there were amendments introduced during legislative policy committee meetings, so the committee will vote on all proposed amendments.

The committee will then proceed to the vote on the estimates of the Legislative Assembly as approved by the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services. The vote on the main estimates will then take place.

Finally, I would like to remind all hon. members of Standing Order 32(3.1), which provides that "after the first division is called in Committee of Supply during the vote on the main estimates . . . the interval between division bells shall be reduced to one minute for any subsequent division."

Committee Reports

The Chair: I would now like to invite the chair of the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future to present the committee's report.

Miranda: Thank you, Madam Chair. As chair of the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future and pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(10) I am pleased to report that the committee has reviewed the 2015-2016 proposed estimates and business plans for the following ministries: Executive Council, Ministry of Advanced Education, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, Ministry of Infrastructure, Ministry of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour.

I'd also like to table amendments to the following ministries that were introduced during our meetings for the Committee of Supply's consideration: Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, one amendment; Ministry of Infrastructure, one amendment.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

I'll now call on the chair of the Standing Committee on Families and Communities to present the committee's report.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Madam Chair. As chair of the Standing Committee on Families and Communities and pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(10) I am pleased to report that the committee has reviewed the 2015-16 proposed estimates and business plans for the following ministries: Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Human Services, Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General, Ministry of Seniors, Ministry of Service Alberta, Ministry of Status of Women.

I'd also like to table amendments for the following ministries that were introduced during our meetings for the Committee of Supply's consideration: Ministry of Education, one amendment; Ministry of Service Alberta, one amendment.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Now the chair of the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Madam Chair. As chair of the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship and pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(10) I'm pleased to report that the committee has reviewed the 2015-16 proposed estimates and business plans for the following ministries: Ministry of Aboriginal Relations, Ministry of Energy, Ministry of Environment and Parks, Ministry of Municipal Affairs, Ministry of Transportation, and Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance.

I'd also like to table amendments for the following ministries that were introduced during our meetings for the Committee of Supply's consideration: Ministry of Transportation, one amendment; Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance, one amendment.

Thank you.

Vote on Main Estimates 2015-16

The Chair: The next item of business will be the vote on the amendments introduced during the legislative policy committee meetings. There are in total six amendments, and they will be identified as amendments A1 through A6. Members will have received copies of these amendments on their desks. We'll begin with amendment A1 and continue in sequence.

A1. Mr. Hanson moved that the 2015-16 main estimates of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry be reduced for the minister's office under reference 1.1 at page 40 by \$50,000 so that the amount to be voted at page 39 for expense is \$1,128,139,000.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:37 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hanson	Smith
Anderson, W.	Hunter	Stier
Clark	Loewen	Strankman
Cooper	MacIntyre	Taylor
Cyr	Panda	van Dijken
Fildebrandt	Schneider	Yao
Gotfried		

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Gray	Nielsen
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Bilous	Hinkley	Payne
Carson	Horne	Phillips
Ceci	Kazim	Piquette
Connolly	Kleinsteinuber	Renaud
Coolahan	Littlewood	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Schmidt
Dach	Luff	Shepherd
Dang	Malkinson	Starke
Drever	Mason	Sucha
Eggen	McKitrick	Sweet
Feehan	McLean	Turner
Fitzpatrick	McPherson	Westhead
Ganley	Miranda	Woollard
Goehring		

Totals: For – 19 Against – 43

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

A2. Mr. Smith moved that the 2015-16 main estimates of the Ministry of Education be reduced for the minister's office under reference 1.1 at page 88 by \$141,000 so that the amount to be voted at page 87 for expense is \$4,314,684,000.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A2 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:55 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hanson	Starke
Anderson, W.	Hunter	Stier
Clark	Loewen	Strankman
Cooper	MacIntyre	Taylor
Cyr	Panda	van Dijken
Fildebrandt	Schneider	Yao
Gotfried	Smith	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Goehring	Miranda
Bilous	Gray	Nielsen
Carson	Hinkley	Payne
Ceci	Horne	Piquette
Connolly	Kazim	Renaud
Coolahan	Kleinsteinuber	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Schmidt
Dach	Loyola	Shepherd
Dang	Luff	Sucha
Drever	Malkinson	Sweet
Eggen	Mason	Turner
Feehan	McKitrick	Westhead
Fitzpatrick	McLean	Woollard
Ganley	McPherson	

Totals: For – 20 Against – 41

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

A3. Mr. Hunter moved that the 2015-16 main estimates of the Ministry of Infrastructure be reduced for the minister's office under reference 1.1 at page 162 by \$185,000 so that the amount to be voted at page 161 for expense is \$546,446,000.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A3 lost]

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

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hanson	Smith
Anderson, W.	Hunter	Starke
Clark	Loewen	Stier
Cooper	MacIntyre	Taylor
Cyr	Panda	van Dijken
Fildebrandt	Schneider	Yao
Gotfried		

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Gray	Miranda
Bilous	Hinkley	Nielsen
Carson	Horne	Payne
Ceci	Kazim	Piquette
Connolly	Kleinsteinuber	Renaud
Coolahan	Littlewood	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Schmidt
Dach	Luff	Shepherd
Dang	Malkinson	Sucha
Drever	Mason	Sweet
Feehan	McKitrick	Turner
Fitzpatrick	McLean	Westhead
Ganley	McPherson	Woollard
Goehring		

Totals: For – 19 Against – 40

[Motion on amendment A3 lost]

A4. Mr. W. Anderson moved that the 2015-2016 main estimates of the Ministry of Service Alberta be reduced for the minister's office under reference 1.1 at page 218 by \$164,000 so that the amount to be voted at page 217 for expense is \$315,582,000.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A4 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:05 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Gotfried	Smith
Anderson, W.	Hanson	Starke
Clark	Hunter	Stier
Cooper	Loewen	Taylor
Cyr	MacIntyre	van Dijken
Fildebrandt	Panda	Yao
Fraser	Schneider	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Gray	Miranda
Bilous	Hinkley	Nielsen
Carson	Horne	Payne
Ceci	Kazim	Piquette
Connolly	Kleinsteinuber	Renaud
Coolahan	Littlewood	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Schmidt
Dach	Luff	Shepherd

Dang	Malkinson	Sucha
Drever	Mason	Sweet
Feehan	McKittrick	Turner
Fitzpatrick	McLean	Westhead
Ganley	McPherson	Woollard

Totals:	For – 20	Against – 40
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[Motion on amendment A4 lost]

4:10

A5. Mrs. Aheer moved that the 2015-16 main estimates of the Ministry of Transportation be reduced for the minister's office under reference 1.1 at page 234 by \$72,000 so that the amount to be voted at page 233 for expense is \$850,463,000.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A5 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:11 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hanson	Smith
Anderson, W.	Hunter	Starke
Clark	Loewen	Stier
Cooper	MacIntyre	Swann
Cyr	McIver	Taylor
Fildebrandt	Panda	van Dijken
Fraser	Schneider	Yao
Gotfried		

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Gray	Miranda
Bilous	Hinkley	Nielsen
Carson	Horne	Payne
Ceci	Kazim	Piquette
Connolly	Kleinstauber	Renaud
Coolahan	Littlewood	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Schmidt
Dach	Luff	Shepherd
Dang	Malkinson	Sucha
Drever	Mason	Sweet
Feehan	McKittrick	Turner
Fitzpatrick	McLean	Westhead
Goehring	McPherson	Woollard

Totals:	For – 22	Against – 39
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[Motion on amendment A5 lost]

A6. Mr. Stier moved that the 2015-16 main estimates of the Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance be reduced for the minister's office under reference 1.1 at page 248 by \$386,000 so that the amount to be voted at page 247 for expense is \$150,430,000.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A6 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:17 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hanson	Smith
Anderson, W.	Hunter	Starke
Clark	Loewen	Stier
Cooper	MacIntyre	Swann
Cyr	McIver	Taylor
Fildebrandt	Panda	van Dijken
Fraser	Schneider	Yao
Gotfried		

4:20

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Gray	Miranda
Bilous	Hinkley	Nielsen
Carson	Horne	Payne
Ceci	Kazim	Piquette
Connolly	Kleinstauber	Renaud
Coolahan	Littlewood	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Schmidt
Dach	Luff	Shepherd
Dang	Malkinson	Sucha
Drever	Mason	Sweet
Feehan	McKittrick	Turner
Fitzpatrick	McLean	Westhead
Goehring	McPherson	Woollard

Totals:	For – 22	Against – 39
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[Motion on amendment A6 lost]

The Chair: We shall now proceed to the vote on the estimates of the Legislative Assembly as approved by the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services. Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 59.03(5), which requires that the estimates of the offices of the Legislative Assembly be decided without debate or amendment prior to the vote on the main estimates, I must now put the following question on all matters relating to the 2015-16 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016.

Agreed to:

Offices of the Legislative Assembly	\$152,407,000
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The Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

We shall now proceed to the final vote on the main estimates. On all matters relating to the 2015-16 government estimates for the general revenue fund and lottery fund for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016, those members in favour please say aye.

[The voice vote did not indicate agreement]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:23 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For:

Anderson, S.	Gray	Miranda
Bilous	Hinkley	Nielsen
Carson	Horne	Payne
Ceci	Kazim	Piquette
Connolly	Kleinstauber	Renaud

Coolahan	Littlewood	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Schmidt
Dach	Luff	Shepherd
Dang	Malkinson	Sucha
Drever	Mason	Sweet
Feehan	McKittrick	Turner
Fitzpatrick	McLean	Westhead
Goehring	McPherson	Woollard

Against:

Aheer	Hunter	Smith
Anderson, W.	Loewen	Starke
Cooper	MacIntyre	Stier
Cyr	McIver	Swann
Fildebrandt	Panda	Taylor
Fraser	Rodney	van Dijken
Gotfried	Schneider	Yao
Hanson		

Totals: For – 39 Against – 22

[The estimates of the general revenue fund and lottery fund were carried]

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That motion is carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I will now move that the committee rise and report.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

4:30

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions relating to the 2015-16 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates and the 2015-16 government estimates for the general revenue fund and lottery fund, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

The following resolutions for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2016, have been approved.

Offices of the Legislative Assembly.

Support to the Legislative Assembly, \$68,199,000; office of the Auditor General, \$26,754,000; office of the Ombudsman, \$3,282,000; office of the Chief Electoral Officer, \$31,685,000; office of the Ethics Commissioner, \$1,153,000; office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, \$6,843,000; office of the Child and Youth Advocate, \$13,242,000; office of the Public Interest Commissioner, \$1,249,000.

Government main estimates.

Aboriginal Relations: expense, \$204,588,000; capital investment, \$117,000; financial transactions, \$77,071,000.

Advanced Education: expense, \$2,567,294,000; capital investment, \$217,340,000; financial transactions, \$579,000,000.

Agriculture and Forestry: expense, \$1,128,189,000; capital investment, \$21,666,000; financial transactions, \$1,860,000.

Culture and Tourism: expense, \$301,645,000; capital investment, \$2,342,000; financial transactions, \$1,618,000.

Economic Development and Trade: expense, \$278,767,000; capital investment, \$25,000.

Education: expense, \$4,314,825,000; capital investment, \$1,240,116,000; financial transactions, \$12,987,000.

Energy: expense, \$371,399,000; capital investment, \$5,999,000; financial transactions, \$86,156,000.

Environment and Parks: expense, \$510,277,000; capital investment, \$117,394,000; financial transactions, \$100,000.

Executive Council: expense, \$25,013,000.

Health: expense, \$18,602,000,000; capital investment, \$64,587,000; financial transactions, \$64,400,000.

Human Services: expense, \$4,297,145,000; capital investment, \$6,801,000; financial transactions, \$680,000.

Infrastructure: expense, \$546,631,000; capital investment, \$1,023,730,000; financial transactions, \$49,162,000.

Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour: expense, \$206,666,000; capital investment, \$1,200,000.

Justice and Solicitor General: expense, \$1,282,888,000; capital investment, \$70,109,000.

Municipal Affairs: expense, \$1,398,365,000; capital investment, \$4,630,000; financial transactions, \$452,026,000.

Seniors: expense, \$575,271,000; financial transactions, \$9,500,000.

Service Alberta: expense, \$315,746,000; capital investment, \$45,921,000; financial transactions, \$15,000,000.

Status of Women: expense, \$1,447,000

Transportation: expense, \$850,535,000; capital investment, \$1,616,411,000; financial transactions, \$78,124,000.

Treasury Board and Finance: expense, \$150,816,000; capital investment, \$2,725,000; financial transactions, \$10,702,000; lottery fund transfer, \$1,547,716,000.

Madam Speaker, that concludes my report. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Does the Assembly concur with the report?

Hon. Members: Concur.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

Introduction of Bills

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

Bill 9

Appropriation Act, 2015

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being the Appropriation Act, 2015. This being a money bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

[Motion carried; Bill 9 read a first time]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I will seek unanimous consent of the House that notwithstanding standing orders 64(2) and 77(1) the House should proceed immediately to second reading of Bill 9.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 9 Appropriation Act, 2015

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

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to move second reading of Bill 9, the Appropriation Act, 2015.

This act will provide funding authority to the offices of the Legislative Assembly and the government for the 2015-16 fiscal year. The schedule to the act provides amounts that were presented in greater detail by the 2015-16 government and Legislative Assembly estimates tabled on October 27, 2015. These estimates were subsequently debated in Committee of Supply and standing committees.

Madam Speaker, as we're all aware, Albertans are facing tough economic times. Budget 2015 serves as a temporary shock absorber to shield Albertans from the worst effects of the oil price crash. The measures we introduced are based on three priorities: stabilizing front-line public services, setting out a plan to return to balanced budgets, and stimulating economic development and diversification.

4:40

As noted, stability is at the top of that list because I think we can all agree that what Albertans need most during this economic downturn is stability. Now is not the time to bring chaos to hospitals, classrooms, or cut front-line staff. Alberta's population is still growing. This budget ensures that we'll have the doctors, nurses, teachers we need to provide the public services Albertans rely on.

Madam Speaker, as I mentioned, returning to balanced budgets is another priority we'll move forward on. This will be achieved by limiting spending growth, finding savings, and investing in infrastructure now, when costs are lower. Between cost-saving measures, a gradual rise in oil prices, and a new tax structure, revenue will grow by about 6 per cent a year over the next four years while spending will be held to 2 per cent. Our plan will put Alberta back into the black by 2019-2020 or sooner if the economy recovers stronger than anticipated.

We're also shifting the province away from a failed experiment with regressive flat taxes. We're moving towards progressive taxes, like every other province and the federal government have. We have instituted a modest rise in the corporate taxes, from 10 per cent to 12 per cent, which puts Alberta in the middle of the pack among provinces in this country. Our government believes that creating the conditions for success is not about a race to the bottom on taxes. It's a matter of investing in the infrastructure, programs, and services that allow businesses to thrive and stay competitive and Albertans themselves to enjoy a high quality of life. Everyone who benefits from those advantages should pay a fair share, just as they do everywhere else in Canada, because being able to make these investments is crucial, especially during a downturn. Investments in infrastructure will help maintain jobs in the short term while building a more efficient and competitive economy in the longer term.

But, Madam Speaker, our government realizes that growth alone isn't the solution. Where that growth comes from also matters if Alberta is to be insulated from future oil price shocks, and that's why the third priority in our budget is economic development and diversification. We're responding to the fiscal challenges of today

by developing a plan for economic growth and diversification that supports job creators, entrepreneurs, and workers. As part of that plan we created a new Ministry of Economic Development and Trade to lead efforts to steer Alberta's economy in a different direction so that it becomes less prone to commodity-fuelled boom-and-bust cycles. Because we know that it's businesses and investors that create jobs, not government, we'll be a good partner to industry, providing support through a number of initiatives, including a new job-creation incentive grant, which will provide up to \$89 million per year for the next two calendar years to Alberta employers who create jobs.

We're providing an accelerated capital plan which increases infrastructure investment by 15 per cent over three years, and it'll create 8,000 to 10,000 new jobs. We're also enhancing access to capital for entrepreneurs to help them take their bright ideas from conception to design to the market.

Madam Speaker, we're also putting money in the hands of smart lenders and investors who know what to do with that money. ATB Financial will see a \$1.5 billion increase in the amount it can borrow in the capital markets, allowing it to make more loans to small and medium-sized enterprises in Alberta. The Alberta Enterprise Corporation will receive an additional \$50 million to invest in venture capital funds, helping innovative businesses with a strong presence in Alberta to access new capital that will help them achieve commercial success. Our investment arm, the Alberta Investment Management Corporation, or AIMCo, is being encouraged to invest up to 3 per cent of the heritage fund in growth-oriented companies in this province. Altogether we are mobilizing over \$2 billion to support economic growth and diversification to make Alberta the best place in Canada to launch and grow a business.

Madam Speaker, to recap, Budget 2015 achieves three important things. First, it stabilizes public services by providing long-term sustainable and predictable funding, which is what Albertans asked of us and what we are going to deliver to them. Second, it puts us on a path towards balanced budgets in a reasonable time frame without radical cuts or front-line service layoffs. Third, it ensures our government is a good partner to our province's entrepreneurs and job creators, the keys to diversifying our economy.

Madam Speaker, Budget 2015 is a responsible plan that addresses our short-term economic challenges and stabilizes the programs that Albertans depend on while growing the economy over the long term. I would ask all members of this Assembly to support this bill.

Thank you.

Mr. Cooper: Madam Speaker, I'm hoping that if you seek it, you will find it, unanimous consent for the remainder of the evening for the House to go to one-minute bells.

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. When I wrote this speech, I was in a slightly more aggressive mood than I am today, but I'll do my best to address the budget in the light in which I had originally written my remarks.

Today I rise to speak to Bill 9, which allows me yet another enjoyable chance to speak against the budget. Everything I have to say about this budget has pretty much already been said in this Chamber before. Most of the points I'm about to make have been made by myself, by my colleagues, and by Albertans in every possible forum. I've received phone calls, e-mails, and snail mail telling me that this budget will destroy the Alberta advantage. I've

had town hall meetings in Brooks, in Bassano, and in Strathmore where constituents have told me that this will hurt their businesses and their livelihoods. At these town halls my constituents have told me to fight this budget at every turn.

This government has gone out of its way to make people forget about what we used to call the Alberta advantage. We have discussed at length how this government has a chronic spending problem, a problem that existed long before they were elected, but while previous governments had a spending problem, this government has elevated it to a spending crisis, a crisis of such magnitude that spending and debt levels in this budget are not even legal under the current budgetary framework.

That is why the government is also proposing Bill 4, allowing not just consolidated deficits to be financed with debt but now even structural/operational deficits to be financed with debt. It attacks the last line of defence that Alberta has had against spendthrift politicians. That line of defence was established long ago to protect Albertans from politicians that lack restraint. Over the last decade successive governments have watered down and weakened those walls of fiscal defence every time they have run into them. It took the NDP just five months to propose tearing down yet another wall. Bill 4 will allow this government to pass this budget, allowing them to take on more than \$50 billion of debt.

I'll give this much to the NDP: at least they are not trying to hide their intentions. They didn't wait until year 3 or 4 to raise the debt ceiling after three or four years of pretending that they would even balance the budget. No. They are proposing to break the bank in their very first year. This budget expects to run at least four consecutive cumulative deficits. That is under the best-case scenario, with predictions for years 4 and 5 that we will see an incredible 16 per cent growth in revenues those years. As we wander out of the 12 years in the deficit desert, the Minister of Finance believes that he can part the sea and lead us to the promised land of oil and honey.

4:50

If I was doing the books for a business in Brooks, would they renew my contract if I told them that they would see a 16 per cent growth in revenues years 4 and 5 out with zero data to back it up? During the estimates process I asked the Minister of Finance to give us his numbers for years 4 and 5 of the budget. I asked him repeatedly, and he provided us with nothing more than the ministry's talking points. When pressed into a corner, the minister flat out refused to provide the data. I asked for these numbers in this House repeatedly. I asked that the numbers be tabled in this House. I asked that the numbers be given to us in estimates. Nothing.

They say that this is a three-year budget. Fine. We can deal with that. But if this is a three-year budget, then they should take years 4 and 5 out. Remove the two outlying years, that project a balanced budget without a shred of data whatsoever detailing how they actually intend to get there. Otherwise, this is not a three-year budget; it is a five-year budget that doesn't do its homework. Either the crystal-ball predictions for the next four and five years need to be removed from the budget, or the revenue and spending breakdowns must be provided. You can't have your cake and eat it, too, Madam Speaker. The government can't give these highly unlikely but very good for publicity numbers and not tell us how they plan to actually achieve them. This budget does not deserve to be passed without full details.

But since I've asked the minister dozens of times and not gotten any answers, I'll have to take my best guess about where the money is going to come from. On Sunday morning, while most Albertans were at church or watching football or taking the kids to brunch, the Premier announced her new ND PST, a massive, new, \$3 billion

carbon tax that will hammer every single small business and family in Alberta. During the election the Premier promised Albertans that she would never implement a PST, but this carbon tax is the equivalent of a 3 per cent PST. In June the NDP brought down the biggest single tax increase in the history of Alberta. Just a few months later they beat that record again. The ND PST is how the government plans to part the red ink sea: more taxes on Albertans, who are already struggling.

During estimates I asked the Minister of Finance if he had any further plans to raise taxes. He said: no, not unless the economy took a further severe downturn. Yet here they are, raising taxes just a few weeks later. I'd be fascinated to see a single piece of economic literature that says that during times of economic downturn governments should increase taxes as a way to fix the economy. I must admit that I have a hard time finding any economic theory to back that up. The only example I can find is what the NDP are doing to Alberta right now.

While the big five oil companies might be happy to pay a carbon tax, it will be devastating to the hundreds of medium- and small-sized oil producers and drillers like those in my constituency. It will hammer Alberta taxpayers and Alberta families and Alberta small businesses when they can least afford it. It's kicking people when they're down, Madam Speaker. The Premier promised during the election till she was blue in the face that she would never impose a PST, and she never once spoke during the campaign saying that she would implement a carbon tax, but that is exactly what they are doing right now. This government has no mandate for an ND PST carbon tax.

A \$3 billion, backdoor PST would be bad enough on its own, but it's not. This budget taxes and taxes some more, in fact raises over 60 new or higher taxes, not including the tax on everything, that we've just learned about. This budget is reckless not just for its wanton tax hikes, but it is reckless also because the numbers don't even add up. A few weeks ago the Parliamentary Budget Officer released a report detailing their predictions for WTI oil prices over the next five years. As far as reputable, reliable, and respected sources go, the PBO is all of the above. Their numbers were a little different than the government of Alberta's. By a little, I mean a hell of a lot. In fact, the numbers were so different that it opens up an \$8 billion hole in the revenues of this province for the next three years alone.

I want to know how the government managed to book a difference per year of \$11.60 per barrel compared to the PBO's projections. The NDP cannot have a multibillion-dollar rounding error every six months. Every \$3 change in the price of oil is a half-billion-dollar change in revenues for the government. This is not a small rounding error. A \$2 billion hole per calendar year is not acceptable. Before the budget is passed, it must be amended with realistic oil projections. In 2018 the PBO projects oil to be \$53.80 per barrel. This government projects \$72; it doesn't even come close. It is nearly 50 per cent higher than the PBO's projections. It's not even in the same ballpark, Madam Speaker.

Additionally, we don't even have oil projections for years 4 and 5 in this budget whatsoever. The PBO projects oil to be at \$59 in 2020, which, by the way, is the price that the NDP projects it will be next year. The PBO projects \$59 in 2020, but the NDP don't even show their numbers for that year. All the minister could tell me in estimates was that it would be in the, quote, mid-70s range, yet the NDP project their revenues to increase by 16 per cent in those two years.

The Premier's claim that the ND PST will be revenue neutral should be judged with some obvious suspicion by the Albertans who will pay for it. Oil predictions are through the roof. Taxes are

through the roof. The breakdown for revenue numbers in years 4 and 5 simply doesn't exist.

Just the other week I made a friendly bet with the Member for Calgary-Currie that without tax hikes, unbudgeted in the NDP's platform, this budget would not meet its revenue projections of a balanced budget by the next election. Well, I thank the Premier and the Finance minister for making me the easiest \$100 I've ever made in my life.

When we are standing in this place in a few months for the next budget, I'm sure that the Minister of Finance will have all sorts of excuses for why his optimistic numbers never came to fruition. But we don't have to wait a few months to fix the mistakes we're making right now. We don't have to wait four months for the minister to say: oops, I didn't see it coming. It's as clear as day, and every member on this side of the House sees it coming. Let's do the responsible thing with this budget for Albertans and send it back, to the shredder.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other hon. member wish to speak? The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Dr. Starke: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to my colleagues. I think I'm going to ask for a certain degree of forbearance as we try to sort of get back into the swing of things. If my comments seem a little bit scattered, you'll have to excuse me. All of us are operating on fairly limited sleep this week, but we'll get back at it, and we'll be banging on all cylinders soon, all eight cylinders, as it turns out.

Madam Speaker, I do want to address some of the issues that we've talked about over these past couple of weeks with regard to the budget. It certainly is a far-reaching document, and there can be no question whatsoever that this budget is very different and represents a significant departure from past practices. There is no question that this government is a clear departure from past practices and past courses of action, so that should not come as any surprise to Albertans. Some are heralding that, some are hailing that as being a brave, new frontier, but I will tell you that others are concerned and are not nearly as joyful about this.

Now, I do want to state here and now that there are some things in this budget that we find entirely laudable, and we want to make sure that the government knows this. To the Minister of Finance: it's a short list, so he may want to stay around so he can hear it. I should be done by 5.

First of all, we are glad to see the reinstatement of the STEP program. The STEP program is a useful program, and it was a program that, certainly, we cut from the budget with a significant amount of trepidation because we know it was important to nonprofit organizations, to cultural organizations, to communities, who would often hire STEP students to do programs in the summertime that would assist with recreation and culture and tourism events.

So we're glad that STEP is back. I'm a little bit puzzled by the continuous reference to STEP being now available to small businesses. STEP, to my knowledge, was always available to small businesses. Well, I had a small business, and I hired STEP students, and I don't think I was breaking the law. If I was, I think I'm past the statute of limitations. We had a small business. We hired STEP students for many years. I'm a little bit puzzled by that, but perhaps you could offer some clarification.

5:00

The second area that I'm actually very glad to see – it wasn't directly in the budget; it was a previous announcement that was made – is the increased funding to women's shelters. We believe

that this is an important step. It's a step, certainly, that our colleague the hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway would have supported, and I'm also especially encouraged to see the expanded funding for second-stage shelters. These are critical in terms of the transition of women who are fleeing family violence situations back into the community and doing it in a way that becomes successful. I'm pleased to see it. I know that in Lloydminster, for example, we have a very active women's shelter. I know the director of that shelter very well, and she has come and met with me about second-stage funding, so I know she was glad to see this.

The third area. You know, for me personally, I'm glad to see the expanded funding for midwifery. I mentioned it earlier, during question period. As most of you know, during the course of the rural health review one of the areas that came up again and again was that people in rural Alberta want to be able to be born in their community, they want to be able to live in their community, and they want to be able to die in their community. In order to do that, there has to be the kinds of supports for the various services in the communities that they need: health supports, social service supports, educational supports.

Above all, they have to have rural communities that are economically viable and, in fact, economically thriving. I will argue with this government that nearly every step that they take is working towards the destruction of rural Alberta. They may refuse to see it, or they may not wish to see it, but I know from what I'm hearing from my constituents and the personal – and it is anecdotal information, granted. I know. I think I was one of the people that coined this term: the plural of anecdote is not data. But anecdotal information is still important because it is important to each and every one of those people's lives, and you cannot ignore anecdotes when people tell you how things like a carbon tax will affect them.

There is no public transit in rural Alberta. I know that the Minister of Transportation wants to expand rural bus services, but I will tell you right now that the option of getting on the LRT in Streamstown, Alberta, is not there today, it won't be there tomorrow, and it won't likely ever be there in my lifetime, nor should it because it would never be economically viable. By necessity rural Albertans travel longer distances to get to work, to get to recreational activities. They burn more fuel because they have to, in order that they can feed Albertans and, indeed, feed the planet, and when you put a carbon tax on things, it makes that more difficult.

Madam Speaker, those sorts of things are being told to me on a regular basis. Ultimately, that accumulation of individual situations and anecdotes is what we need to keep track of as members. It's what our colleague did such a great job of, why he has been so loved over his time in this Chamber. That is why we are paying very close attention to it as we all should in all situations.

Now, Madam Speaker, I want to turn to four specific areas of the budget that are of concern to me, and I want to talk about each one of them separately and the associated budgeting process overall, that we just reviewed in estimates.

The first is a refusal by this government to seriously address government expenditures in the name of stability. We heard that word uttered by the Minister of Finance several times. Well, really, it's a matter of definition. It's a matter of definition as to what you view stability as being. A former leader of our party and a former Premier, Premier Hancock, used to like to say that the NDP approach to everything is: just add money and stir. I will invoke those words as well because certainly that is the approach that this Finance minister has taken with his budget: just add money and stir.

The idea that stability is simply spending more and changing nothing is, to me, akin to having a plane in a nosedive and simply keeping the throttle open full and doing nothing to pull back on the

stick. That's a stable situation because nothing is changing, but the outcome won't be very good. The refusal of this government to recognize that we are indeed in a nosedive and their refusal to recognize that we need to pull back on both the throttle and the stick indicate to me that there is a problem with their basic financial and economic, fiscal literacy.

I have a significant concern, for example, when the Health minister, in the name of stability, does not want to at least look at how AHS is operated, the single most expensive line item in our budget. I know that AHS, for example, has a new board of directors, and these are all excellent individuals, but a good board of directors and good individual directors does not guarantee good governance, and it certainly does not guarantee good outcomes for Albertans. It is well documented that although Albertans spend more than any other jurisdiction in Canada on health care, our outcomes are not what they should be. When Minister Horne was the Health minister, he freely stated that if adding more money was the solution, we'd have solved the problems by now, so I cannot see simply adding additional funds as being the solution to this. I do not see a sufficient commitment to restraint in this budget whatsoever. All I see is additional spending.

That then leads me to my second area of concern, and that is the depletion of the contingency account. Now, the contingency account is one of those things that doesn't get a lot of chat. A lot of people won't talk about the contingency account, but it is, in fact, a vitally important way to manage the ups and downs that we know occur within a resource economy. Now, our contingency account has gone up, and it has gone down, but as of March 31, 2015, before this government came into power, the contingency account balance was some \$6.5 billion. By the time the fourth-quarter financial results were completed and the surplus from the last fiscal year was added into the contingency account, the contingency account balance at the end of June this year was approximately \$8.3 billion, or, put another way, roughly \$2,000 for every man, woman, and child in Alberta.

Well, less than a year and a half from now that calculation is going to be much, much easier to perform because, thanks to this government, that \$8.3 billion number will be reduced to zero; \$8.3 billion will be spent by this government in less than a year and a half in the name, I assume, of stability, and there is no plan whatsoever over the course of this budget to replenish the contingency fund. Now, in terms of household finance we all know that most financial planners recommend that you keep one to two months' worth of your salary on hand as an emergency fund in case of something happening, in case of damage to your car, a very expensive veterinary bill, those sorts of things. Now, we also unfortunately know that Albertans don't always necessarily have that on hand, but zero contingency account: Madam Speaker, we have no savings. We have no emergency fund.

That then will get us into the area that I think is very concerning to us, and that is the abandonment of the principle that you pay for operations and that you pay and keep a balanced budget on operations. When we're borrowing to pay day-to-day operations, we step onto an extremely slippery slope, that we haven't been on for over 20 years in this province. I think that that is something we have to avoid.

5:10

The third area of concern. This came up in estimates, and this is a big area of concern for me. Now, it maybe doesn't deal directly with numbers, but I think it deals with how, then, those numbers are spent, and that is what in committee after committee, in department after department we went through in estimates, the total abandonment of long-term strategic planning documents that were

prepared, we'll say, by the previous government, but in truth they were prepared by Albertans. These strategic documents were put together usually after broad-based, province-wide consultation and were largely written by panels that were led by experts in the field, that had involvement from elected officials but were not run by elected officials.

I know because I was involved in at least two of those processes. One was a rural health review that we completed in March; the other was the recreation plan that guided fitness in amateur sport. We consulted broadly across the province with stakeholders. We got their input, and – trust me – their input was not always complimentary of government. We recognized it, we wrote it down, and we said: we will take action on these things. I can tell you that if you read the health review, it will show you clearly that people had a number of things and were very concerned about how rural health care was being delivered in Alberta.

For example, the tourism framework, the tourism framework act of Alberta, the Alberta cultural plan, the rural economic development action plan, the rural health review are all not even showing up in the business plans for the various departments of this government. If you don't have a plan, how can you expect to go forward and spend wisely and judiciously? I think it's fair to say that there is no plan, and what plans that were there have been abandoned.

I would like to make one specific exception to that that I'm aware of, and that is the Minister of Environment and Parks. The plan for parks, a 10-year plan that started in 2009, is being continued. It was referenced in the business plan for that department, and a number of very important initiatives, including an inclusion plan, which we announced last summer, to increase attendance at Alberta's provincial parks by those groups that are underrepresented in terms of park attendance, were maintained. I am pleased to see that.

There's one other area, and maybe this is just a personal concern that I have. But it is an area that I am very familiar with, and that is with regard to the use of the tourism levy. Now, back in 2005 Alberta passed the Tourism Levy Act. What it did . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, 29(2)(a) is available. The hon. leader.

Mr. McIver: I was actually on pins and needles wanting to know about how this act affected the tourism act, particularly because the hon. member speaking is a former tourism minister, and I can think of no one more qualified in the House to elucidate on that than the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster. I was hoping that he could expand upon that thought.

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

Dr. Starke: Madam Speaker, thank you very much, and I appreciate the opportunity to do so. The tourism levy that was established, called by some the pillow tax, is the 4 per cent levy that is added onto your hotel bill or any fixed-roof accommodation anywhere in the province. It has been by far, across Canada, the most successful form of stable funding for tourism promotion and development in any province in this country. It is the envy of all other provinces. Other provinces have developed tourism levies to emulate ours, but I can tell you that in every case they go and they say: you know, this is great.

What is one of the things we hear about so often in terms of government funding? Stable, predictable funding. Well, the tourism levy provided that. I say "provided" in the past tense because it used to provide that. The tourism department as well as Travel Alberta would know what kinds of allocations they were getting because

they knew how much was collected by the tourism levy in the previous fiscal year, and they knew that that was being allocated to both the department and to Travel Alberta. But no: this year, in this budget some \$9 billion of the tourism levy is being sucked out of the tourism business, is being drawn away, siphoned away and put into general revenue by this Minister of Finance and this government.

It is perhaps the greatest betrayal of our tourism industry in more than a decade, and when the Minister of Economic Development and Trade and others say how important tourism is to this province, it is a hollow gesture. It is a hollow gesture that they do not back up with their actions because they have siphoned off some \$9 million of the tourism levy, money that's supposed to go into tourism promotion, money that's supposed to go into the building of tourism in this province, and put it into general revenue. Madam Speaker, I find that to be particularly disturbing.

You know, we're hearing it get trumpeted that they created a new Ministry of Economic Development and Trade. They didn't create it; they just brought back a ministry that wasn't used for a number of years, partly because the economy was banging along on so many cylinders that it was hardly necessary. Now the 13th Minister of Economic Development and Trade stands up regularly in the House and trumpets how important his ministry is. Well, it is an important ministry, but it is not new, and he's the new minister, but he's hardly the first minister.

Madam Speaker, in concluding my comments, I'd like to thank the hon. members for their attention. We cannot support this budget because of a number of reasons. I mean, I'm sure that all the members of my caucus and other members within the House could find a number of shortcomings and insufficiencies in this budget, and they are many. But this budget is not one that we can support, certainly not one that I can support, and I believe that it creates a number of very dangerous precedents, that I will not celebrate, nor will the constituents of Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. Still under 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Cooper: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm just curious to know if the member would provide some context. You know, you mentioned about the leadership of the organization being very important. This evening the government even voted down only amendments that would reduce spending, albeit not very significantly in total number values, on the minister's office itself, a total of less than a million dollars in the whole budget, but I think that could have been a real signal on the direction and the leadership that ministers were taking. I wondered if you might add some comments to the lack of desire to save.

Dr. Starke: Well, Madam Speaker, it's entirely indicative of the entire budgetary process, the fact that ministers need to show by example and lead by example and demonstrate that they are prepared to take some cuts themselves, just as we MLAs will probably take a freeze once the Members' Services Committee makes the decision. Back in February we took a 5 per cent rollback in the wages of MLAs. It was because leaders need to show leadership.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other hon. member wish to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Okay. Madam Speaker, I appreciate this opportunity. My colleague the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster was quite eloquent in his remarks, and I'm just going to add one thing.

I've been thinking about this thing, and one of the things that disturbs me the most about the budget, one of the things that makes it hardest for me to support it, is the amount of debt that we will be in and the almost nonexistent capacity that we'll have to pay it back at the end of four years, five years.

I got to thinking about it, and I got to thinking about it in terms of my own minuscule family budget, a budget, I'm sure, in the order of magnitude of probably a lot of Alberta families. Most Alberta families do not have at their disposal \$47.4 billion, which will be the debt the government will be in, by their own numbers here, in five years. But they do understand that lots of times the family will borrow money – it might be for a car; it might be for a home – and they also understand that there has to be a plan to pay it back.

5:20

In terms of what I think is a fairly reasonable comparison to a family budget, let's just say that the budget was \$47,000 a year, \$47,400, because the \$47.4 billion, Madam Speaker, is not that far from the government's annual provincial budget. We're talking about a one-year budget. That's the comparison I'm trying to draw here. The government is going to put themselves in debt by about one year's full expenditures on a budget. That's not unusual for a family to do because sometimes a family that makes \$100,000 a year will have a \$200,000 or \$300,000 mortgage.

But I'll tell you what they don't do. They don't make those payments for the whole year based on one week's pay. According to the government's budget, four or five years from now, when they say that they're going to start paying it back, they're going to pay it back in the first year that they have a surplus, and that surplus will be \$1 billion. So if the annual budget is, you know, \$47 billion – it's about 52 weeks, about a billion a week – they'll have just a little more than a week's pay to pay back the whole mortgage for the whole year. I'm trying to draw this comparison, but in numbers, in terms of how Albertans relate to it, if you were going to pay back your mortgage on one week's pay, your \$1,000 on your \$47,000 loan or mortgage, well, that's monthly payments of – what? – 80 bucks. I mean, I'm not sure what size of home you could get to do that.

I know members might say that, well, a family would never do that because they would normally budget sometimes up to 20 or 30 per cent of the annual take-home pay to pay the mortgage except that this government in four or five years will not have the capacity to do that because they've made it quite clear that they're not going to cut any government jobs, any wages, any salaries, any front-line expenditures, hold the line on anything. They've been quite clear about that.

I'm doing my best not to put words in their mouth, Madam Speaker, but the fact is that I think the average Alberta family will see it doesn't add up. You can't pay a mortgage the size of your annual revenue on one week's pay without supplementing with 10 or 20 or 30 per cent of the rest of your income. It's just not there. The government is not doing it. When you think about that – and I hope members opposite will think about that – I think that financially it's kind of a crash-and-burn plan. I'm not sure how it could be paid back except by taking on more and more and more borrowing – and those banks and those people that lend money will at some point say: enough is enough – or by having to take at some point in the future draconian measures to cut back on expenditures.

I think what we're suggesting is that the government now take reasonable measures to control expenditures, reasonable measures to control growth, reasonable measures to make sure that you can afford to provide. The government is right about one thing, a few things, but I'm going to give them credit right now for one thing. Albertans depend upon their services, and they want them. One of

the important things about that is that if they're that important today, they're still going to be that important in five years, and it's important that we're going to be able to afford them in five years.

If I haven't explained it well enough for everybody, I apologize. I'll call that a weakness in my ability to express it, but to me it's pretty clear that they're headed for a brick wall, where it's going to have to be either draconian cuts or massive debt, something that eventually, finally, you'll say no to. And what's at risk? Those very services that the government says – and I agree with them – are so very near and dear to the hearts of Albertans. As long as that's true, I couldn't possibly support a budget that puts Alberta on an absolute collision course with those services that Albertans depend upon. All Albertans, but particularly those that are educating their kids, will need those teachers five years from now. Those that have family members that get sick will need those services five years from now. Those who are weakest and poorest amongst us will need social services and social supports five years from now. This budget puts all of that at risk, all of it.

It's going to be fine probably for five years, but my goodness, Madam Speaker, I believe it's our duty to look beyond five years. I think it's our duty to look to the long-term welfare of our children and our grandchildren. While there are a lot of other things for me to complain about with this budget, this one issue is so overwhelmingly disastrous, in my opinion, that I'm going to take all my time to talk about that because I think that it really accentuates how this budget is putting Alberta on a disastrous course, a course that I implore the government to turn away from.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, any other hon. member wish to speak to the bill?

If not, then the hon. minister to close debate.

Mr. Ceci: Closed.

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

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:26 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Nielsen
Bilous	Horne	Payne
Carson	Kazim	Piquette
Ceci	Kleinstauber	Renaud
Connolly	Littlewood	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Loyola	Schmidt
Dach	Luff	Shepherd
Dang	Malkinson	Sigurdson
Drever	Mason	Sucha
Feehan	McKittrick	Sweet
Fitzpatrick	McLean	Turner
Ganley	McPherson	Westhead
Goehring	Miranda	Woollard
Gray		

5:30

Against the motion:

Anderson, W.	Hunter	Smith
Cooper	Jansen	Starke
Cyr	Loewen	Stier

Drysdale	MacIntyre	Swann
Fildebrandt	McIver	Taylor
Gotfried	Panda	van Dijken
Hanson	Schneider	Yao
Totals:	For – 40	Against – 21

[Motion carried; Bill 9 read a second time]

Bill 7

Alberta Human Rights Amendment Act, 2015

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my honour to rise today to move Bill 7, Alberta Human Rights Amendment Act, 2015.

Bill 7 amends the Alberta Human Rights Act by adding gender identity and gender expression to the list of prohibited grounds of discrimination. For clarity, gender identity refers to a person's internal, individual experience of gender. Gender expression refers to the varied way in which a person expresses their gender through a combination of dress, demeanour, social behaviour, and other factors. Protection from discrimination on the basis of both grounds is relevant to transgender and gender-variant people. Their gender identity and expression may differ from the sex they were assigned at birth.

Currently Alberta human rights law includes gender in the list of prohibited grounds of discrimination, which is interpreted as covering gender identity and expression. Nevertheless, trans and gender-variant people continue to be a highly marginalized and discriminated group within our society. In my consultation with members of the transgender and gender-variant community I heard numerous stories of discrimination. I heard of people who had lost their jobs and people who could not keep a job once they came out. Others told me about their safety concerns while staying in shelters. More told me about how hard it was to find a doctor who would treat them, even for conditions unrelated to their gender identity. Even something many Albertans take for granted, using a washroom on a road trip, can be an issue that creates anxiety and safety fears.

I also heard how much work lies ahead of our government. We need to reflect on whether gender needs to be provided on administrative forms. We need to think about wayfinding within the health care system for trans and gender-variant individuals who are looking for a doctor, and we need to find ways to respect the names that people choose to give themselves.

Madam Speaker, more than anything, we need to continue to listen. We need to continue to listen because all Albertans should be able to have the same opportunities to be treated with equal dignity and respect. This proposed amendment will ensure existing rights are clearly reflected in the legislation. It will empower the trans and gender-variant community as they confront stereotypes and discrimination. We know there are still people we haven't heard from, and we're committed to reaching out to hear those voices. The Alberta Human Rights Commission is supportive of the amendment.

Madam Speaker, this is a critical issue. Trans and gender-variant people are still subject to discrimination. Many still struggle with suicidal ideation, and many are still subjected to violence. This government is committed to upholding the rights of all Albertans. We want trans and gender-variant people to feel welcome not only in Alberta but in this Legislature. It's my pleasure to welcome feedback from the Trans Equality Society of Alberta, the Pride Centre of Edmonton, Outreach Southern Alberta, the Institute for

Sexual Minority Studies and Services, and the Centre to End All Sexual Exploitation.

Thank you to the MLAs for Strathcona-Sherwood Park, Calgary-Hawkwood, and Calgary-Cross for their work, passion, and dedication to this issue. Most of all, I would like to thank the individual members of the trans and gender-variant community who shared their stories with us. It's your stories and strength that have brought this legislation forward. Madam Speaker, we have heard their concerns, and Bill 7 is one way we are acting to help address them now.

I would now move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Bill 5

Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Attorney General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to move second reading of Bill 5, the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act.

This bill follows through on a promise to increase transparency in our public sector, Madam Speaker. If passed, the bill will significantly expand disclosure of public-sector compensation. Disclosure will include employees of public-sector bodies governed by the Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act, including AHS. Disclosure will also apply to employees of Covenant Health, and the legislation can be expanded by regulation to include other entities that receive significant public funds. These bodies will have to disclose the names and compensation of all employees who earn more than \$125,000 in total compensation, including overtime, severance, and bonuses. By including bonuses and other forms of remuneration, we will ensure that compensation cannot be withheld from disclosure.

In addition, these bodies will be required to disclose all remuneration for all members of their boards and other governing bodies. These positions have sometimes been criticized as patronage appointments, so this government, in addition to reviewing ABCs and appointments, will ensure that compensation for these positions is publicly available.

Disclosure for government of Alberta employees will stay the same, but the bill will move the rules from the existing Treasury Board directive into an act. The threshold for these employees will remain at the current level of \$104,754, excluding overtime.

Madam Speaker, the act will also enable regulations to require disclosure of physician compensation. Because physicians and other medical professionals are compensated through a variety of funding mechanisms, unique rules need to be applied. Details will be developed after consultation with physicians and laid out in regulations.

For municipalities and school boards we are providing some flexibility. These two groups are accountable to their electorate and will be able to decide for themselves what best fits the public interest in their community. This act enables but does not require disclosure of names and compensation paid to employees, including teachers. To be clear, this act does not mandate the disclosure of a single teacher's salary.

The threshold for public-sector bodies and other entities is set at \$125,000. Madam Speaker, the number was chosen in order to capture high-income earners. This will also reduce the administrative burden on various groups in that they will not need to extract

the overtime hours from the threshold calculation. All thresholds for compensation disclosure will be adjusted annually for inflation.

If passed, this act would come into force on royal assent, and the first disclosure under the act would be on June 30, 2016.

Overall, this bill will help Albertans understand how public funds are used by agencies, boards, commissions, and other bodies. The government has committed to ensuring that Albertans know how public money is spent, and this is another step on this path.

Madam Speaker, I'd now like to move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

5:40

Bill 6

Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education and of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am honoured to rise and speak to Bill 6, the Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act. Farmers and ranchers have long been the heart and soul of our province. Long before our cities were cities, these people were the pioneers who sowed the seeds of what we have become today, a province that embraces the same values that have always been held dear: integrity, ingenuity, and a love of the land. There's no question. Those who work in agriculture have always recognized opportunity and work hard to make the most of it.

On a farm or ranch the hours are long, the chores can be exhausting, and the outcomes are often unpredictable. In those ways it might be similar to working in many other types of jobs or industries, Madam Speaker, but there aren't many jobs where rain followed by a hard frost can make the difference between profit and loss. Despite this ever-present uncertainty farmers and ranchers keep doing the job because they love the land, the lifestyle, and the feeling of pride in producing products that help feed the world.

Madam Speaker, I think that we can all agree. These folks face enough uncertainty without having to worry about what would happen to their families if they were injured or, worse, killed on the job. When most Albertans go to bed at night, they don't need to worry about that, and that's because most of us are covered by laws that protect our health and safety on the job. Most Albertans are covered by workers' compensation to support them and their families if they are hurt while working. But not every Albertan has this support. Unlike the same basic protections workers in other industries have had for decades, Alberta's farms and ranches are not covered by any workplace legislation. To be clear, Albertan workers have been covered by occupational health and safety legislation since 1976, nearly four decades ago, yet farms and ranches remain exempt.

What does that mean? That means workers cannot refuse to perform unsafe work or do work they're not trained for without guaranteed protection against being fired. It means if a farm worker is seriously injured or dies on the job, an occupational health and safety officer cannot investigate the incident to see what went wrong or work with the employer to prevent future incidents. In 2014 17 people died in farming-related accidents. Madam Speaker, those are 17 devastated families who may not have the answers as to why or how their loved one died. Those are 17 missed opportunities to have an OHS officer work with the employers to learn from the incident and to provide support to help prevent future incidents. Those are 17 heartfelt reasons why I support Bill 6, the Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act.

Bill 6 proposes changes to several pieces of Alberta's current labour legislation that cover occupational health and safety,

workers' compensation, employment standards, and labour relations. If passed, this bill will remove the exemption of farms and ranches from labour legislation, and workers in this sector will be able to access protections all other Alberta workers are already entitled to. As it currently stands, Alberta's workers' compensation is optional for farm and ranch workers. We have only minimal employment standards for those employees, and they have no right to unionize or bargain collectively. Madam Speaker, it's time for this to change.

Farming and ranching is one of Canada's oldest industries. Certainly, it dates back to a day and age where most Canadian jurisdictions didn't include the agricultural industry under their respective labour legislation. Back then things were different. Over time farming operations have grown bigger and paid farm workers have become more common. There is also a growing public awareness and willingness to ensure that workers, regardless of the industry, enjoy basic workplace rights. Alberta farms and ranches remain one of the last sectors that don't have access to any form of labour relations coverage for farm and ranch employees, something other Albertans have been able to access since 1938, before the Second World War.

Employment standards are more complex. Employment standards legislation relates to such issues as hours of work, overtime and overtime pay, holidays and general holiday pay, vacations and vacation pay, restrictions on employment of children, and minimum wage. We should support this bill because every worker is entitled to basic rights and protections. Every worker should have a safe, fair, and healthy workplace. Every worker should be able to return home safely after work and should be able to sleep at night knowing their families are protected if something were to happen on the work site.

Madam Speaker, what this bill asks for is that Alberta's farm and ranch workers have the same protections and rights that most of Alberta's other workers – you and I and the vast majority of workers – take for granted. This bill asks for fairness across industries and protections for both workers and employers, no matter the profession.

What this bill does not ask for is one-size-fits-all legislation that would force farms and ranches to follow rules meant for a vastly

different industry. That's why consultation is a key component of how changes will happen if the bill passes. Our government understands that farming and ranching is not the same as oil and gas or construction. Our government is seeking the input of those who will be affected by the bill so that any changes will make sense for the industry and will be practical and enforceable.

We all want workers to have rights and protections. We all want job sites to be fair, safe, and healthy workplaces. Bill 6, if passed, will ensure this is the case for the farmers, ranchers, and their workers. It's basic common sense, Madam Speaker. It's the right thing to do.

With that, Madam Speaker, I move that debate be adjourned.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Deputy Speaker: Just before I recognize the hon. Government House Leader, I just wanted to once again acknowledge the wonderful spirit of co-operation and support that we saw today from both sides of the House as we paid tribute to our colleague from Calgary-Greenway. We heard very eloquently about his strength of spirit, his huge heart, his caring, and his larger-than-life personality. He'll be greatly missed in the days ahead, but for today, this afternoon, he was very much with us here in the House.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you for those comments, Madam Speaker. It's been a very hard day, I think, but a very good day in many ways. I would also like to add my thanks to all members of the House for the compassion and care that they have shown, regardless of stripe. I think it is much appreciated, and it is itself a tribute to the hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

I think we have made good progress. I want to thank all members of the House for their co-operation and their contribution, and I will move, Madam Speaker, that we call it 6 o'clock and that we adjourn until tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:49 p.m. to Thursday at 9 a.m.]

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