



Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, February 25, 2025

Day 79

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 31st Legislature

First Session

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Bouchard, Eric, Calgary-Lougheed (UC)
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Party standings:

United Conservative: 49

New Democrat: 37

Vacant: 1

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, February 25, 2025

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Lord, the God of righteousness and truth, grant to our King, to his government, to Members of the Legislative Assembly, and to all in positions of responsibility the guidance of Your spirit. May they never lead the province wrongly through love of power, desire to please, or unworthy ideas but, laying aside all private interest and prejudice, keep in mind their responsibility to seek to improve the condition of all. Amen.

In Memoriam

The Speaker: Hon. members, please remain standing as we recognize three former members who have passed away since we last met. Today I'd like to acknowledge them by name, as it is our custom, and we will pay a fuller tribute to them individually when their family members are able to join us.

The hon. Gordon J. Graydon was elected a Progressive Conservative member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti, serving two terms from 2001 to 2008. He was the minister of gaming from 2004 to 2006.

The hon. Hugh Lakin Planche served three consecutive terms as a Progressive Conservative Member for Calgary-Glenmore from 1975 to 1986. During the Legislature he chaired the Select Committee Reviewing Intra-provincial Trucking Regulations, which completed its mandate in 1977. He was the government whip in 1979. He was appointed the minister of economic development, a role he held till his retirement in 1986.

Dr. Rajinder Singh "Raj" Pannu was elected as a member of the New Democratic Party for the riding of Edmonton-Strathcona on March 11, 1997. He served 11 years over three successive Legislatures until 2008. After serving as the Alberta New Democrats party leader in an interim capacity, Dr. Pannu was party leader from 2000 to 2004.

In a moment of silent prayer I ask you to remember Gordon J. Graydon, Hugh Planche, and Raj Pannu as you may have known them. Rest eternal grant unto them, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon them. Amen.

Hon. members, it being the first sitting day of the week, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. Sidney Manning. I invite you to participate in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!
True patriot love in all of us command.
With glowing hearts we see thee rise,
The True North strong and free!
From far and wide, O Canada,
We stand on guard for thee.
God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

Indigenous Land Acknowledgement

The Speaker: Hon. members, the Legislative Assembly is grateful to be situated on Treaty 6 territory. This land has been the traditional region of the Métis people of Alberta, the Inuit, and the ancestral territory of the Cree, Dene, Blackfoot, Saulteaux,

Iroquois, and Nakota Sioux people. The recognition of our history on this land is an act of reconciliation, and we honour those who walk with us. We also further acknowledge that the province of Alberta exists within treaties 4, 7, 8, and 10 territories and the Métis Nation of Alberta.

Please be seated.

Presentation to the Assembly of Member Rob Miyashiro for Lethbridge-West

The Speaker: Hon. members, I now invite the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition to proceed to the main Chamber doors. [applause] Order.

Hon. members, I have received from the Chief Electoral Officer of Alberta the report of the returning officer for the constituency of Lethbridge-West containing the results of the by-election conducted on December 18, 2024, which states that a by-election was conducted in the constituency of Lethbridge-West and that Rob Miyashiro was duly elected as the Member for Lethbridge-West.

It's okay. It's your first day.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour of presenting to you Mr. Robert Seiko Miyashiro, the new Member for Lethbridge-West, who has taken the oath as a member of this Assembly, who is inscribed to the role and now claims the right to take his seat.

The Speaker: Let the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West take his seat.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction has a school group, I believe.

Mr. Nally: Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of grade 6 students from Guthrie school, and they are accompanied by their teacher, Colleen Tremblay. I invite them all to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview has two school groups, I believe.

Ms Sigurdson: That's right, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you to all Members of the Legislative Assembly amazing grade 6 students from Parkview school along with their teachers, Veronica Fraser and Alison Palmer, and also students from Patricia Heights with their teacher, Richelle Desjarlais. Please stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Boitchenko: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you a good friend of mine, Jasmine Nuthall, and Jenna Galloway, who is the founder of the Fledge app, that empowers Indigenous children by providing emotional and mental skills to foster resilience and support well-being. Please stand up and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Nadine Meads. I'd ask you to rise. Nadine is an incredible worker with CUPE, and she would rather be in the classroom supporting

kids today instead of fighting for recognition for her hard work by this government.

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to introduce Lina Farag – please rise, Lina – as well as her mother, Sherihan, and her grandmother Nagwa. Lina designed the beautiful card I sent out this holiday season. She is an incredibly talented artist, a very bright grade 9 student, and I'm proud to have her here today as my guest. I'll be tabling her card later this week.

Thank you.

1:40

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

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly Vivian Pastó Arencibia, a CUPE 3550 worker for almost 25 years who is here today on strike, unfortunately, due to the government employer's failure to increase salaries over 10 years.

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

Ms Chapman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly some incredible folks from CUPE: Beritt Moysa, Carlos Capurro, Dorothy Visser, Kelly Salisbury, Carol Rusinko, Amanda Hammond. I know you'd all rather be in the classroom than here, but please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Ms Wright: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you some fabulous constituents and hard-working, deserving educational support staff from CUPE 3550 who are with us today: Marjorie Marshall, Catherine Speed, and Deanne Ruel. If they could please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

Member Arcand-Paul: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce a wonderful CUPE 3550 member from the great riding of Edmonton-West Henday, Wafa Soaadi. Please rise and accept the warm welcome of this Assembly. Thank you for your ...

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

Mr. Deol: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to this Assembly two incredible individuals and essential workers who are also representing local 3550, Heather Jones and Andrea Marciano. I ask: please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome.

Member Irwin: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce Teille Littlejohn. She is a fabulous constituent of mine and member of CUPE local 3550. Along with many other members she is fighting for the respect and fair wages that they all deserve. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-City Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you my constituent Ella Henry, house counsel with Canadian Union of Public Employees here in Edmonton. She's here today in support of educational support workers who are fighting for this government to recognize their

hard work with a fair wage. Ella, please rise and receive the warm welcome.

Member Loyola: Mr. Speaker, it is an absolute honour for me to introduce Mandy Dibus. She is one of the other members of CUPE local 3550, and she's here to express her desire to be treated with respect and get the pay that she deserves from this government. Thank you very much. Please rise and give the warm welcome ...

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

Mr. Wilson: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you good friends of mine Stephanie Eagletail and Natalie Poissant. Stephanie is a distinguished Indigenous designer of Dene and Cree heritage from Tsuu T'ina Nation and Saddle Lake Cree Nation. Stephanie infuses her heart and soul into her unique custom-made pieces, each reflecting her identity and serving as a form of intergenerational healing. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and introduce to you and through you two constituents of mine and also members of CUPE local 3550 who are here to fight for fair wages. They would also rather be in the classroom than fighting this government, but I'd like to ask them to rise as I introduce them. Would Karen Sheydwasser and Jolene Warawa ...

The Speaker: The hon. member for Cardston-Taber.

An Hon. Member: Taber-Warner?

The Speaker: That too.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, it's a pleasure to be able to rise and introduce two friends of mine, Jeff and Angie Nelson, from my constituency, from Stirling. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. She has already been introduced, but I'd like to ask Marjorie Marshall to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House. Not only is she a member of CUPE 3550, but she's also an EA at my kids' school, and ...

The Speaker: Unfortunately, the time for introductions has passed.

Members' Statements

Health Services Procurement Process

Mr. Shepherd: "Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely." So said British politician Lord Acton, and it seems this government is intent on proving him right as the Premier's pursuit of absolute power over every aspect of our health care system has brought us to the corrupt care scandal: damning allegations of political interference rising as high as the Premier's office, involving over half a billion in taxpayer dollars being funnelled to favoured private companies, paying them inflated rates for surgeries, and when the CEO and board of AHS investigated these sweetheart deals and moved to involve the Auditor General and the RCMP, the Health minister had them fired. If those allegations are true – and they grow more credible every day – this represents the worst abuse of public dollars and public office

Alberta has ever seen, a level of arrogance, entitlement, and grift even the PCs couldn't hit after 40 years in government.

Now, the Premier claims she's innocent. She swears she doesn't know a thing. It's all the fault, she says, of those crafty bureaucrats at AHS. Well, she can try to point the finger, she can try to pick a fight, but we all know where the buck stops in the corrupt care show tonight.

Let's be absolutely clear: this Premier, this government, has run through four CEOs, four full boards of AHS; hiring, firing, and hiring again. Under the UCP no one at AHS dares blink without the permission of the Health minister. This is on the Premier, the Health minister, and the UCP.

And now the Premier wants Albertans to trust the UCP to investigate themselves, and then they'll decide how much they want to share of the results. There's no legal conflicts wall high enough to protect against a Premier who was found guilty of attempting to interfere in a criminal case or a Health minister who, with her office, is named 24 times in the statement of claim. Both need to step aside while a judge conducts a full public inquiry to get the answers Albertans deserve, to get the truth, and hold this government to account.

End the corruption. End the cover-up. Albertans deserve better. Call the inquiry now.

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order. The hon. Member for Chestermere-Strathmore has the call.

Addiction Treatment and Recovery

Ms de Jonge: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Regularly Albertans and Canadians are reminded of the sad tragedy of addiction on city streets and in family homes. Addiction is a captivating disease that takes over an individual, often at the expense of jobs, relationships, health, and in the most devastating cases even their life. Let me be clear. There is a way out of addiction, and that way out is recovery. The NDP have also made their position clear, calling for more facilitation through policies like decriminalization or unsafe supply, but what parents need to be told is not that their child in addiction can have access to so-called safe supply of opioids or that they can have access to a clean crack pipe handed out from the Member for Calgary-Currie. They need to be told that there is hope for their family to be reunited and rebuilt with recovery, and Alberta's Conservative government is doing this.

Since 2019 we have focused on building recovery, taking down barriers to make it possible for everyone. Just yesterday our government announced a \$180 million investment to build a foundation for compassionate intervention, another tool that we plan to use in the Alberta recovery model, two facilities that would provide 300 beds to support treatment and recovery for those who have become a danger to themselves because of their addiction or substance use if this House votes in favour of Budget 2025.

There is nothing compassionate about leaving someone in perpetual addiction. This is not a lifestyle choice no matter how much the NDP or activists try to convince you that it is, and our government will not sit back and wait for more lives to be lost. Instead, we are moving forward with compassionate intervention. We are keeping the promise we made to Albertans when our government was elected in 2023, and, Mr. Speaker, it's going to change lives.

Thank you.

Ms Gray: Point of order.

The Speaker: A point of order is noted at 2:48. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Health Services Procurement Process

Mr. Schmidt: Imagine a world where a government picks the leadership of an organization under its purview and then blames that same leader when faced with a corruption scandal. That's today's Alberta, and that's the corrupt care scandal. It's unethical, it's incompetent, and it's the kind of corruption that Albertans hate. So many Albertans are left asking one question: how did we get here?

Let's start with corruption. The Alberta Surgical Group is a private surgery provider, a provider that just happens to charge over double the standard cost of surgeries. You want corruption? The UCP allegedly removed their hand-picked Alberta Health Services CEO's ability to sign surgical contracts so that those deals could be forced into the hands of this group, and then they fired her.

Want more? The Alberta Surgical Group has a significant investor named Sam Mraiche. Remember him? He's at the centre of the \$70 million Turkish Tylenol deal that left Albertans without any useful medication and fewer bottles shipped than we were stuck paying for. Beyond that, he also moonlights as the guy the UCP cabinet ministers go to when they want luxury hockey ticket hookups.

1:50

The Premier wants to blame anyone but herself for this scandal. She says that there's no need for a witch hunt. The Premier should remember that every person who tried to raise a red flag was allegedly fired or silenced by her government. They even went after public servants for their tweets.

Today's bombshell: that the former Infrastructure minister has seen enough. He refuses to stand beside this Premier another day while this corruption is coming to light. He said, quote: I'm not going to stand by and see potential corruption exist within government and be a part of that. End quote.

Every single cabinet minister should be asking themselves what they knew and what they're going to do about it now because Albertans deserve answers. They deserve ethical, competent government, and they're not getting it from the UCP.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition has question 1.

Health Services Procurement Process

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, Albertans deserve ethical, competent government, but instead we've had weeks of media coverage, concern, and speculation about massive corruption. It's so bad that today the Infrastructure minister has now resigned. The Premier and her Health minister are facing allegations that there was political interference, that they gave UCP insiders bloated contracts that cost Albertans hundreds of millions of dollars. Did the Premier direct her Health minister to fire the former AHS CEO, and if not, when did she learn about this action?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite know, because they have been in government before, that the procurement function falls deep within the administration. There is no political involvement in putting out RFPs, choosing proponents, or drafting the terms of contracts. If something has gone wrong within AHS within their own procurement processes, we absolutely want to get to the bottom of it. The AHS knew in November 2023 that they were in a hopeless conflict of interest. Being the entity that provides

services and contracts to the competitors, they knew that we were going to be bringing this into . . .

The Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, it would go a long way for public trust if the Premier would respond to direct questions. On February 12 the Premier claimed that she had just learned about this corrupt care scandal when she read the media reports. She would have known that the AHS CEO her government recruited was fired on January 8, so her claim makes no sense. So I'm going to ask again: when did the Premier direct her Health minister to fire the CEO of AHS, and when did she know why it was happening?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We knew that we were coming to the beginning of the stand-up of the acute-care organization. It had its legal day one on February 1. It will have the transitional role fully instituted by April 1. So we were coming to the end of the refocusing. We now have four different organizations that are stood up, and as a result, we need to have a CEO in that position that is going to be relentlessly focused on being a hospital service provider. That is what we're looking for in our next CEO.

Ms Gray: The Premier's own words on this do not make sense. The Premier would have known about the corrupt care scandal because her former chief of staff is at the heart of the allegations. The Premier's office definitely knew. The former chief of staff definitely knew. The deputy minister to the Premier knew. The hand-picked Minister of Health seems to have known. The Minister of Health and all deputies seem to have understood this. Why does the Premier really think Albertans believe that she had no idea what her top ministers and staff were up to? No one believes that. Will she call a full public inquiry today?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that it's been some time since the members opposite were in government, but I should remind them of how government actually works. When you have a policy that you have put in place as government such as having chartered surgical facilities so that you can reduce the backlogs and increase the number of surgeries, it is completely appropriate, whether it's my staff or whether it's the minister's staff, to say: hey, how are you doing on those contracts that you RFPed and you awarded and you've written up? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

The hon. Leader of the Opposition for her second set of questions.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, the Premier claims she was briefed only after media reports detailed the AHS CEO's statement of claim, yet last month the Auditor General told the Health ministry he would investigate procurement practices. The Premier wants to pretend that she was in the dark until it was all reported in the *Globe and Mail* this month, and that's ludicrous. Either the Premier had no idea what her chief of staff, her minister, and high-level public officials were doing, or this looks like a cover-up. So which is it? Does she have no idea what's going on, or is this a cover-up?

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, the Health minister indicated to me near the end of last year that there were different contract prices that AHS had signed for different facilities. They had a range in prices from a low of \$3,600 at Clearpoint to a high of \$8,300 at ASG. That

looked unusual, so she was looking into it. [interjections] I know the members opposite don't understand how procurement works. Every single one of these contracts were RFPed by AHS, signed onto by AHS, contracted by AHS, and we should get to the bottom of it. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order. The hon. Leader of the Opposition is the only one with the call.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, what looks unusual is a Premier claiming to have no idea what's going on in her own government.

The government needs to stop misleading Albertans about this. When the Auditor General started investigating the largest ministry in government about unethical procurement practices worth hundreds of millions of dollars, the Premier, any Premier, including this Premier, would have known about it. So why did the Premier say on February 12, nearly two full weeks after the Auditor General's notice of investigation, that she learned about it in the media? No one's buying it.

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I can tell you what we find unusual on this side. What we find unusual is that having given 3.5 billion additional dollars to Alberta Health Services over the last few years, they are doing no more additional surgeries today than they were back in 2019. For 3 and a half billion dollars. The only entities that are increasing the number of surgeries are the chartered surgical facilities. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Ms Smith: So, Mr. Speaker, we have to look into whether or not AHS was trying to frustrate government policy by standing in the way of clear direction to contract out to chartered surgical facilities or if there was something wrong with the procurement, and that's what we're going to do.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, the Premier said on February 12 that she knew her Minister of Health had been prodding AHS for information for eight months. The Premier claims she had no awareness of the scandal despite her chief of staff being alleged to be at the very centre of it, despite the Health minister asking questions, despite the Premier herself sitting in playoff box seats – I wonder how much that cost – despite the Auditor General's investigation into procurement practices at AHS. At a certain point the Premier's claim of total ignorance is either a cover-up or ignorance. How could a Premier who is doing their job be in this position?

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, the members opposite now understand why we need to have more direct line of sight into what's going on at Alberta Health Services and how they're spending their money. It's a complete black box. The more dollars we give them, the fact of the matter is they're not performing. That's the reason why we have used chartered surgical facilities to reduce the surgical backlog. We had 40,000 surgeries that were done a few years ago; we're now up to 62,500. We're going to keep on using chartered surgical facilities because it is the only thing that is reducing the backlogs. It is the way we are going to get good, quality care for the citizens of Alberta.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the Official Opposition for her third set of questions.

Ms Gray: Facilities that cost more and do less.

Now, the Premier's hand-picked Infrastructure minister recently stated in a confirmed memo that the Health minister should be reassigned while this matter is investigated. Albertans deserve to know precisely when cabinet had this discussion. Who else in cabinet agrees that the Minister of Health should step aside while investigations take place, something that is completely normal? Now the same minister has quit; not normal. Will the Premier table this memo, will she answer today why she refuses to fire her Health minister, and what is she worried a new Health minister will find?

2:00

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The decision to contract chartered surgical centres was made under the previous administration under two different previous Health ministers. One of the RFPs went out to bid under a Health minister from two years ago in 2021. The others went out to RFP in October 2022, before this Health minister was in place. If there is a problem with procurement, it is a problem internal to AHS. This Health minister is trying to get to the bottom of it. If there are any problems, we are going to correct them, and we're going to make sure that we continue to give the best care to Albertans. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Ms Gray: Your chief of staff calling the CEO of AHS to put on pressure is not business as usual. That is political pressure.

The former Infrastructure minister said that the Health minister should be removed. The former minister suggested the RCMP should know about what's going on, exactly what the AHS board was saying before they got fired. Albertans learned this week that the former Infrastructure minister had asked the Auditor General to investigate suspicious land deals in his department. This is all a circus. Will the Premier call a public inquiry?

The Speaker: The hon. the Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to be fully transparent about the costs. AHS, according to the Canadian Institute for Health Information, charges \$10,500 for a hip replacement; at ASG it was \$8,300; a new negotiation AHS did for Enoch: \$6,300; ASG, the new one: \$7,400; Clearpoint: \$3,600; ASG for Red Deer and Lethbridge: \$6,950.

Mr. Schmidt: Where is the money going? How much did you make off this deal?

Ms Smith: Mr. Speaker, the highest cost provider is Alberta Health Services. That's what we've got to investigate.

Ms Gray: At this point, no one is trusting the Premier on not being able to answer simple questions or the data that is coming forward. The former Infrastructure minister said: call in the RCMP. Instead, the Premier is dithering while she claims to be picking her own investigator, who will report back to her. It's a ridiculous proposal, and it insults the intelligence of every Albertan. The Premier cannot clear her own name if she's the one hiring the investigator and receiving the report. Let a judge and the RCMP have full access. Show Albertans that the government has nothing to hide. Call an independent inquiry. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.
The Premier.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are all concerned about the allegations made by the former CEO, and I have said repeatedly that those concerns are being investigated. We have two different tracks. One is a SharePoint file, where the Auditor General is getting all of the same documentation as will be available to an independent investigator. We're very close to naming that person. They are independent, they have legal training, and they will report publicly. We have as much interest as anyone in understanding what may have gone wrong with AHS's internal procurement process so that we can fix it.

Ms Pancholi: The allegations made by the former CEO of AHS suggest the worst government corruption in Alberta's history. These allegations are not about AHS. They are about direct interference and pressure by the Premier's office and the Minister of Health herself into AHS to secure the money for their friends. To the Minister of Health. The Minister of Infrastructure resigned today because of what's happening with contracts in her department. How can the minister honestly believe she has the trust of Albertans to stay in cabinet when she doesn't even have the trust of UCP MLAs?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I shared last week, I reviewed the statement of claim that was filed. Upon review, the allegations and the claims that have been made against me are false. I want to repeat that: false. While others need to be investigated further as part of the Auditor General's work and the government's external third-party investigation that's being set up, our government will be filing our statement of defence shortly and will be vigorously defending this claim. We need to get to the bottom of this, and we need to be transparent, and we have every intention of doing so.

Ms Pancholi: Well, Mr. Speaker, the minister is right. We do need to get to the bottom of this, but we're not going to get to the bottom of this with this minister still in her place as Minister of Health. We need a judge-led public inquiry. There's never been a government more heavy-handed in AHS than this one. They fired the CEO four times, replaced the board twice, tore apart, created chaos. Not only are the UCP's handprints all over AHS, but now Albertans hear that their thumb is on the scale, too, but only for their friends and not for Albertans. The minister needs to come clean. The Premier claims that she only learned of these allegations in the media, but she knew enough to fire the board a week earlier. When did the minister actually tell the Premier about the allegations?

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, this matter is before the courts, and the government's statement of defence will be filed shortly. However, let me reiterate in the House what I've already shared. Since learning of potential concerns with chartered surgical facility procurement, I repeatedly asked AHS for documentation to substantiate those claims. My understanding is that people are innocent unless proven guilty. It was extremely concerning to me that no substantive information was provided to me.

Ms Hoffman: You sure sound guilty.

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, we're going to get down to the bottom of it.

Ms Pancholi: The minister just proved why she must be removed from cabinet. Staying in cabinet while refusing to answer questions in this House because she is the subject of the court allegations sure

seems like a deliberate attempt to cover up what has happened from Albertans. Every single UCP MLA should know that their reputation is now forever tied to that minister. Let's answer some questions in this House, Minister. When she sent her DM to fire the former CEO of AHS, did she do it because the board refused to, and is that the reason why the minister then asked the Premier to fire the board? Time to come clean, Minister.

The Speaker: My apologies to the Assembly. The Government House Leader raised a point of order at 2:02, which I failed to note, and I'm not sure if there was an additional, and then again at 2:05.

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, again, these are allegations that have not been proven in a court of law. We will be defending against them vigorously, and I mean vigorously. I want to share with this group the fact that since I took office – and I want to remind everybody that it was only in June of 2023 that I took office. All of these contracts are pre-me. But, again, I want to notify everyone that I had to submit 18 directives to AHS to get information and co-operation. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Mr. Sabir: Mr. Speaker, the UCP cabinet is clearly divided on the allegations of corruption and inflated health care contracts. The former Minister of Infrastructure wrote a memo to his cabinet colleagues calling for the Health minister to be reassigned. The former minister also called on the Premier to turn any information over that is criminal in nature to the RCMP, and with no action from this Premier the minister has stepped down. It is clear the Premier didn't take her minister's advice and pass on any information to the RCMP. The question is pretty simple: why not, Premier?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and the keeper of the Great Seal of Alberta.

Mr. Amery: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As we have said time and again on this side of the Assembly, we want to assure all Albertans that the Premier and this government are taking this, in fact, very seriously. We have committed our entire support to working with the Auditor General to make sure that he and his office have everything that they need to conduct a thorough analysis. We've also committed to supporting an independent third-party investigation to get to the bottom of this. We will find out the problem, and we will deal with it.

Mr. Sabir: Given that the Premier has not called in the RCMP and given that this corrupt care scandal is so serious that the former Minister of Infrastructure resigned in disgust, why did the Premier ignore her cabinet minister's advice, who was demanding transparency, and would she appoint a new minister today that will be as transparent about this corruption as the former Minister of Infrastructure?

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, once again, the Premier has been abundantly clear. We are working with and supporting the Auditor General, and we've even gone so far as the Premier asking for an expedited review and providing everything that the Auditor General's office needs to conduct a thorough investigation. We will be supporting an independent third-party investigation as well. All of the answers that this Assembly deserves to know about will come clear in short order, and we will act on it, and we will fix whatever problems we identify.

2:10

Mr. Sabir: Given that the former Minister of Infrastructure recommended an RCMP investigation into the corrupt care and the allegations of corruption and given that the former AHS CEO on the advice of the AHS board was going to turn in the evidence they found of corruption and political interference and given that the AHS CEO and the entire board was then terminated by this UCP government, will the new Minister of Infrastructure commit to the same transparency as their predecessor and turn all problematic contracts over to the Auditor General and the RCMP?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Mr. Amery: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. All members on this side of the Assembly will commit to accountability and transparency. The hon. member needs to take yes for an answer. This is the third time I will say it: we are in full support of the Auditor General's investigation; we are in full support of a third-party independent investigation. We do not direct any police organization to do anything. We'll certainly comply with any and all investigations. We will work to fix the problem, and we will ensure that transparency and accountability are foremost in this.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie has a question to ask.

Addiction Treatment and Recovery

Mr. Dyck: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every day families from across Alberta and Canada are painfully dealing with loved ones suffering from the disease of addiction. Too many parents are at a loss for how to help their children who have gone down this destructive path and are now trapped in the deadly disease of addiction. We know addiction not only ruins lives but it could also end them. To the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction: what is Alberta's government doing to support those suffering with addiction?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Mental Health and Addiction.

Mr. Williams: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. To that member, the Alberta government has rejected the idea that has been so prominent in places like East Hastings, Vancouver, and NDP-led provinces across this country that say that they're going to facilitate more addiction indefinitely. Instead, we have the Alberta recovery model which is hope-filled. We believe that health care should be healing, not harmful. We definitely should not be producing the harm of drug consumption sites and unsafe supply on every street corner. Instead, we have the world's best access to opioid agonist therapy. We have 11 recovery communities; five of which are with Indigenous communities. We will continue to bring recovery to every Albertan.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Mr. Dyck: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that thousands of individuals across our nation are suffering from addiction to the point of losing mental capacity to make healthy choices for their lives and given that this has led to too many families feeling hopeless and not knowing where to turn and given that Alberta's government is focused on recovery, what is Alberta's government doing to prepare for compassionate intervention as another tool in the Alberta recovery model?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, for those who suffer from addiction, recovery is the path out of that, and for a small group of Albertans it is incredibly difficult because they are stuck and trapped in the throes of addiction. We had one individual overdose 186 times last year that we have recorded with the provincial health care numbers. The choice is between that 187th time being the death of that loved Albertan or recovery through compassionate intervention, which is why we're investing \$180 million in two new recovery centres in Budget 2025, if passed, so that we can continue to deliver the Alberta recovery model to every single Albertan. [interjection]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order. If the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar wants to ask a question, I encourage him to rise to his feet.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Mr. Dyck: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that there are many individuals who have become a danger to themselves or others as a result of their addiction or substance abuse and given that we have seen too much pain and suffering as a result of their addiction crisis and given that Albertans want healthy and safe communities, does the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction believe it is compassionate to leave someone in addiction, or should families have the ability to intervene?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, for a family member who sees a loved one in addiction, there needs to be recourse. Interventions happen in all shapes and sizes. Sometimes it's the criminal justice system and treatment orders that come through the courts. Sometimes it ends up being family who interact with the hospital. We also have the capacity, through new legislation that I hope to introduce, that will bring forward compassionate intervention.

Mr. Speaker, the truth is that if we do not act, the other side, the tragedy of addiction will continue. I know that this Legislature is going to vote in support of compassionate intervention. I hope the members opposite join.

Health Services Procurement Process

(continued)

Member Eremenko: Mr. Speaker, stunning allegations of corruption have been laid against the Minister of Health and other top members of the UCP government by their own appointee, now the former CEO of AHS. In her statement of claim she reports that the deputy minister of Mental Health and Addiction told the then-CEO that the minister was very concerned about the AHS investigations and internal audit. The minister has since confirmed that that information in the statement of claim is true. He did direct his DM to probe further into concerning rumours, rumours significant enough that a member of cabinet has just resigned. Will the minister, in his genuine concern, also be stepping ...

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Mental Health and Addiction.

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, as I've made clear in the public over the last number of days, when I heard rumours that there may be misuse of public funds ... [interjections]

The Speaker: The hon. the minister.

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, as I said in the public over the last number of days, when I heard rumours that there may be misuse of public funds, I did what every minister in this House would have done, which is speak to their officials to see if it was substantive. No substantive evidence was brought back to me around

allegations, so I passed on my concerns to the minister responsible, and I can tell you that that minister and the Premier have been abundantly clear. There will be co-operation – complete co-operation – with the office of the Auditor General, there will be an independent review, and we take this seriously. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Member Eremenko: Given that Mental Health and Addiction have opened three recovery communities all operated by private providers and given that just yesterday the minister announced \$180 million in capital contracts and given that the Premier's former chief of staff, also named in the statement of claim multiple times, has been intimately involved and intertwined in the Alberta recovery model, why should Albertans believe that this ministry is not included in the corrupt care scandal? Was the minister only concerned out of self-interest that his own ministry would be implicated?

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, yesterday we announced \$180 million for compassionate intervention facilities, and I'm happy and proud that we did because this government ran on a mandate to bring forward compassionate intervention, to say that those who are most in the throes of addiction deserve an opportunity at recovery because recovery is not only possible; it is likely when you provide the opportunity. I will not be distracted from the laser focus that we have on making sure we deliver exactly what Albertans expect ...

Ms Hoffman: Making your friends rich?

Mr. Williams: ... from the election mandate that we received for compassionate intervention in the Alberta recovery model. Do the members opposite agree? Will the member opposite agree that compassionate intervention will save lives, that it's necessary, that the public addiction crisis is getting worse and worse? [interjections]

Mr. Schow: Point of order.

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order. A point of order is noted at 2:17.

Member Eremenko: Given that hundreds of millions of dollars have been distributed by the Ministry of Mental Health and Addiction and they have claimed to be the seventh-largest ministry in this cabinet since taking on Recovery Alberta and given that there is no public reporting about occupancy rates, nothing about resident outcomes, nothing about wait-lists or professional standards and requirements and given that for years I have been fielding questions around speculation in procurement in this ministry, will the minister suspend all contracts in granting discussions until all ministries have been cleared of any wrongdoing through a full public inquiry? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, the independent civil service operated all of the procurement that has gone on, and ever since I've been minister, I've been abundantly clear; we must continue to be above board. The Premier and the Minister of Health have been abundantly clear that there will be an independent review that will be named soon that will comply with the office of the Auditor General, who answers to this body, not to government.

Mr. Speaker, yes, we invested \$180 million in compassionate intervention. Will the members opposite agree that compassionate intervention is the only path forward to care for those in addiction?

Members' Acceptance of Gifts and Benefits

Mr. Ellingson: Mr. Speaker, when questioned about accepting playoff hockey tickets, the Finance minister told Albertans to review his ethics disclosure, a disclosure that has not yet been reviewed or made public. Who specifically gave the Minister of Finance his hockey tickets last spring, and was the minister aware the company providing the hockey tickets was securing hundreds of millions in bloated contracts for chartered surgical facilities as well as fleecing the government for tens of millions in Turkish Tylenol that was never delivered?

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

2:20

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be quite clear. As I stated publicly, I did go to two hockey games, and I clearly stated who I went with. That will be disclosed to the Ethics Commissioner. I will also say that I have never encountered a private individual that has sought out business dealings with me in a social setting. That's my expectation, that that's how we move forward. [interjections]

Speaker's Ruling Matters Referred to the Ethics Commissioner

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order. Hon. members, I'm actually going to intervene on this point. It is important to note that on a number of occasions the Speaker has intervened on matters that are before the Ethics Commissioner. I have been informed that the matter with respect to hockey tickets from MHCare or Sam Mraiche has been referred to the Ethics Commissioner, and as such pursuant to section 24(6) of the act "where a matter has been referred to the Ethics Commissioner . . . neither the Legislative Assembly nor a committee of the Assembly shall inquire into the matter."

Specifically, I reference the ruling from Speaker Kowalski on March 8, 2007, and on December 2, 2022, where those – Speaker Zwodzesky on November 20, 2014, and in 2013 referred to matters that had been referred to the Ethics Commissioner. I have received notice from the Ethics Commissioner that this matter has been referred to him, and as such questions specifically referring to this matter will not be for the Assembly to consider.

If the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills has a second question, he's welcome to ask it.

I can't imagine a scenario where the Leader of the Opposition would be on her feet.

Ms Gray: A point of order under 13(2), Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yeah. We'll hear a point of order at the end of question period.

Ms Gray: Thank you.

Health Services Procurement Process (continued)

Mr. Ellingson: Given that in December the then CEO of AHS was approached by the Deputy Minister of Finance asking about investigation of kickbacks in Alberta Health Services from bloated contracts and given that the then CEO of AHS questioned why Treasury Board and Finance knew of the investigation, when did the Finance minister know about these allegations of kickbacks from inflated contracts of chartered surgical facilities, and who else in his ministry knew of these allegations?

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, not my ministry; the department. I spoke to my deputy minister about this. She sought out the then CEO in a social setting, requesting more information; it's my understanding none was given. When I asked her about this, she had heard through the civil service that there was an internal investigation in AHS. She sought out more information. None was given, and it was not brought to me.

Mr. Ellingson: Given that the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board is responsible for the budget of this province and the stewardship of the hard-earned taxes paid by Albertans and given that the Deputy Minister of Finance was concerned about kickbacks with Alberta Health, does the Finance minister agree that rumours of kickbacks without investigation would constitute a cover-up? And why, upon hearing of allegations of kickbacks, did the Finance minister not immediately notify the Auditor General or the RCMP?

Mr. Horner: Come on, Mr. Speaker. Listen to the answer, pal. I was not informed. I was not informed. Let's be completely clear about this. Allegations; rumour. I do take this job very seriously. Nobody wants to stretch public dollars further than myself. That's why I'm supporting the two paths of investigation. Let's shine a light on this. Let's see if there's any impropriety, and then let's act appropriately. That's what I support. I welcome it, frankly. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Community Grant Programs

Mr. Rowswell: Mr. Speaker, many local organizations across our province are providing credible services to meet the needs of members and industries in their communities. In my constituency this includes supportive services for seniors, schools, and our agriculture sector. Can the Minister of Arts, Culture and Status of Women please tell the House: how is our government creating more support for Albertan organizations that contribute to the well-being of our communities?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Arts, Culture and Status of Women.

Ms Fir: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Our government invests in Alberta's communities with new programs, program enhancements, community events, and services for Albertans through our community facility enhancement program, CFEP, and the community initiative program, CIP. These grants support hundreds of projects that improve the lives of Albertan families. This year I was pleased to provide over \$115,000 to Clandonald Agricultural Society for their multi-use arena and sport facility and over \$24,000 to Vermilion elementary school for updating signage to be more visible and engaging in their community.

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

Mr. Rowswell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the government understands the significant role our local services contribute to strengthening our communities in targeted fields and further given that the community facility enhancement program has supported hundreds of projects in the past, enabling these organizations to expand their reach and better serve more members and industries in our communities, could the minister tell the House and my

constituents how the CFEP funding has made positive impact in the constituency of Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of arts and culture.

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government proudly supports nonprofits to lift community spirit, support local economies, and build an even stronger Alberta. Just this year we provided the Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright constituency over \$1.7 million in CFEP funding for nonprofits in their communities. Our \$1 million grant to the Lloydminster Catholic school creates an outdoor recreation space for children and youth in athletics programs, benefiting over 20,000 individuals. We also awarded Wainwright museum \$112,000 to ensure continued delivery of historic and cultural experiences and \$30,000 for the Vermilion community playground to add a safe and vibrant space for families in their community.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rowswell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister for that response. Given that CFEP has supported my constituency by providing grants to organizations and institutions in the past which have provided a positive impact on my constituents, like the Lakeland College Aquatic Centre construction last year and the upgrade of the Vermilion Agricultural Society grounds and many more similar projects, to the same ministry: could you please inform the House how our government will continue to support Albertan communities in 2025 through programs like CFEP?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Fir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government invests in organizations that enrich communities throughout Alberta with new programs, program enhancements, community events, services for Albertans, and more. We allocate funds to the crowdfunding Alberta program to offer a safe and easy way for organizations and donors to come together to earn matching grants to support fundraising efforts. Our community initiative program, our CIP program, funds nonprofit organizations that contribute to their communities and create opportunities to engage with others, like \$7,500 supporting the 2024 Lloydminster Heritage Day to celebrate local history and local heritage.

Health Services Procurement Process (continued)

Ms Ganley: The Minister of Health was aware of ongoing investigation into contracts in the corrupt care scandal in her ministry for months. The Premier is claiming ignorance. She had no idea about this massive investigation. As a former minister I can tell you that if an investigation under my purview went on for eight months and I never told my boss, I'd expect to get fired. It raises some big questions. Who knew what and when? I would imagine the chief government lawyer would be looped in, so my question is for the Minister of Justice. What did you know about the investigation, and when did you know it?

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, thank you for the question. The information came to me like it came to everyone else. I was not advised by anybody. I learned about it. The moment that we did, we met as a cabinet; we met as a caucus; we discussed the strategies going forward. We confirmed that we would work with all of the bodies, the legislative body of this Assembly, the Auditor General,

and the Premier has made it very clear that she would support that in every way and, in fact, wrote to the Auditor General to ask that it be expedited. I think that sells volumes.

Ms Ganley: Given that an investigation into government contracts alleged to be inflated would be something that would raise serious legal questions and given that any termination, let alone a high-profile one of someone actively investigating allegedly dubious contracts, would undoubtedly involve significant legal questions and advice, surely the Minister of Justice would have had some knowledge of what was occurring, so I'll ask again, this time for specifics. What did the Minister of Justice know about the investigation at AHS, and when did he know it?

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, once again, the investigation was done by AHS. It was not communicated to me at any point in time until after we learned about it as a caucus and as a cabinet. Again, it does raise serious questions. We agree with the hon. member about that, and that's exactly why we are supporting the investigation into the allegations. We're supporting the investigation with the Auditor General, and, once again, we are supporting an independent inquiry to get to the bottom of this, and we will fix it.

2:30

Ms Ganley: Given that the Premier apparently knew nothing about a massive investigation into bloated contracts in the largest department in her government and given this hardly instills confidence in the general competence of the UCP cabinet to run a picnic, let alone an investigation, and given that the Justice minister must surely understand why the UCP investigating allegations of UCP corruption is a problem, will the Minister of Justice do the right thing, admit that a public inquiry is the only solution, and call one immediately?

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, once again, for the second time in this Assembly, the hon. members of the NDP need to take yes for an answer. We have committed to an independent third-party investigation. It's shocking to me that the former Minister of Justice of this province can't grasp that concept. It will be independent. It will take place without any influence from any party, and we're looking forward to hearing those results.

Agricultural Trade

Mr. Wiebe: Mr. Speaker, my constituency of Grande Prairie-Wapiti is home to many farmers, ranchers, and other value-added businesses that support our agricultural sector. They work hard to put food on our tables, ensuring that Canadians don't face a food security crisis. Farmers and ranchers are the cornerstone of our province, and we must protect them at all costs. As the United States threatens us with 25 per cent tariffs on all our exports from Canada to their country, could the Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation please explain how these tariffs would affect our agriculture sector? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

The hon. the Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation has the call.

Mr. Sigurdson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. This is a complex issue with serious implications given our deeply integrated markets. Our government is engaged in discussions with international partners to safeguard our ag industry and maintain vital access to the U.S. market. In 2024 Alberta exported \$9.3 billion in agrifood products to the U.S. This trade supports not only our economy but agricultural industries on both

sides of the border. As a result, tariffs would be devastating to Canadian and U.S. agriculture. The U.S. is by far Alberta's most significant trade partner, and this is a relationship that our government is committed to protecting and growing.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and through you to the minister. Given that Alberta's farmers exported \$9.3 billion in agrifood products to our largest trading partner, the United States, in 2024 and further given that our grains and oilseed products as well as livestock would become less competitive in the American market due to tariffs, to the same minister: could you please share how our government is preparing to protect our agriculture sector in the event of a potential trade war?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of agriculture.

Mr. Sigurdson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for the follow-up question. We have engaged in advocacy with the U.S. even before tariffs were introduced. To highlight the integrated nature of our markets, I travelled to Washington, DC, to push the message that a tariff on Canadian agriculture is bad for U.S. citizens and U.S. agriculture. Alberta's government has been working hard to attract investment and diversify our domestic and international markets, and with the support from our seven international offices, we are expanding markets for our producers.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Wiebe: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and through you to the minister. Given that the United States is our largest and longest standing agrifood trading partner and further given the increasing uncertainty due to tariffs and trade barriers under the current administration, could the same minister inform the House of the government's plan to expand and diversify our trade in the agrifood sector?

The Speaker: The minister of agriculture.

Mr. Sigurdson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's government continues to strike new agreements with other countries. We're working with industry to increase access to new countries and countries where we already have free trade agreements in place. We are also working directly with exporters to help them explore new options, prepare to enter new markets, and make connections with new buyers. Finally, we're committed to reducing trade barriers to make our provincial and Canadian markets more resilient.

Reproductive Health Care Access

Ms Hayter: Women's health care in Alberta is in crisis. Women with high-risk pregnancies cannot see a specialist until 30 weeks, putting both mothers and babies at serious risk. Ob-gyns are overwhelmed with patients waiting seven hours for emergency C-sections. Rural hospital closures are forcing pregnant women to travel hours for care, overwhelming major centres. Yet as this health care crisis unfolds, the health care minister is busy firing a CEO who dared to investigate bloated contracts, procurement awarded to UCP friends. To the minister: how many contracts were fast-tracked for the government's friends while Alberta women were waiting in emergency rooms?

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite needs to get her facts straight here. We just announced the other day, a few weeks ago that we are improving our midwife strategy because of

the fact that it's difficult to get practitioners into our rural communities. We want to make sure that our rural and Indigenous communities have midwives available to them. We need to make sure that every pregnant woman, every woman has health care. It's the reason why we added not just \$10 million but \$20 million for research for women's health issues.

Ms Hayter: Given that midwives do not perform C-sections and surgeries and given that this minister has delayed for over two years implementing fee code changes that would directly improve women's access to essential health care services, changes endorsed by the Alberta Medical Association, and given that while Alberta women wait for these basic improvements, this minister has been awarding private companies lucrative surgical contracts that are now being investigated by the Auditor General and given that the former AHS CEO was fired just two days before she was scheduled to inform the AG about the scandal, to the minister: how many more Alberta women need to be facing a health care crisis before . . .

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, as a woman who's had seven children herself, I think I'm capable of understanding the issues that women face during pregnancy. We are working very diligently to make sure that we improve services right across the province, particularly to our rural, remote, including Indigenous communities where they say they have lack of services. It's the reason why we're upgrading our midwifery program. In fact, we have more midwives now than we've ever had, and we are going to continue to recruit more surgeons as well.

Ms Hayter: Given that announcements aren't doctors, given that announcements aren't more ob-gyns and more surgical spaces and given that hospitals across Alberta from Lethbridge to Fort McMurray need explicit ministerial approval to provide abortion services and ob-gyns are restricted in the care that they can provide despite their qualifications and given that communities have been waiting for these approvals while this government fast-tracks approvals for private surgical facilities, to the minister: is blocking access to essential women's health care just another way of justifying handing over our public system to the UCP's friends?

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, there has been no change in providing services or abortion services for women in this province. That continues to be provided through the chartered surgical facilities that have been providing them even during the time of the members opposite. There's been no change in that. But what we want to do is make sure that women's health issues first are researched and also understood better so that we can address them better. It's the reason why we added much more than the \$10 million that was recommended, that the Premier had promised in our campaign. We've actually got \$20 million out there to do this research so we can address real issues in real time.

Health Services Procurement Process (continued)

Member Brar: The Premier should have known about the massively bloated contracts in the largest department in her government, but she said that she knew nothing. This hardly instills confidence in the UCP cabinet's ability to run a picnic, let alone investigate itself. The service Alberta minister must surely understand why the UCP investigating itself for these allegations of corruption is a problem. Will the minister do the right thing and admit a public inquiry is the only way to get to the bottom of this?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we've repeatedly said over and over and over again, the Auditor General is doing an independent review. There will be a third-party independent investigation as well. We want to get down to the bottom of this just as much as everyone else does . . .

2:40

An Hon. Member: No, you don't.

Member LaGrange: Yes, we do.

. . . because of the fact that AHS is a big black box where nobody has shone a light in for a very, very long time, Mr. Speaker. It's long overdue, and we're going to actually get it done.

Member Brar: Given that the minister refuses to do what the Infrastructure minister has done and called into question these serious allegations, given he must understand that history will not be kind to this government for standing by while the RCMP, the Auditor General, and the Ethics Commissioner look into the most serious allegations of corruption this government has ever faced, did the minister ask his own department to review all contracts for the same alleged corruption being spilled into other ministries?

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, I don't know where the hon. member has been for the past question period, but I want to assure all Albertans that we take this incredibly seriously. We are taking seriously all of these allegations that have been put forward. That is exactly why the Premier has called on the Auditor General to conduct an expedited report. That is why, once again, to the hon. member, we are supporting an independent third-party investigation. Take yes for an answer; we agree.

Member Brar: Given that Albertans aren't fooled by deflections – they want the truth – and given that the only way the minister can make things more efficient is searching his own department for any kickbacks and bloated contracts for the UCP's friends, why is the only thing that's running smoothly in this government the gravy train for UCP insiders? Or is dodging accountability just another UCP efficiency strategy? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.
The Minister of Justice.

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, again, the hon. member needs to learn how to pivot when he gets the answer that he's looking for. He needs to be able to ask appropriate questions. We've answered the question time and again. I'll answer it one last time for the hon. members on the other side of this House. Yes, we are supporting the Auditor General's investigation. Yes, we are supporting an independent third-party review, and yes, we will find the problems, and we will fix it on this side of the House.

Thank you. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Hon. members, that concludes the allotted time for Oral Question Period. In 30 seconds or less we will continue to the remainder of the daily Routine.

Members' Statements (continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod has a statement to make.

Rowan House Emergency Shelter 25th Anniversary

Mrs. Petrovic: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to recognize Rowan House as they celebrate 25 years of service in breaking the cycle of abuse and providing a safe haven for women and children fleeing domestic violence in southern Alberta. What began in 2000 as a tiny two-bedroom basement shelter near Black Diamond has now grown into a state-of-the-art high-security facility in High River, serving communities from Calgary to Claresholm and Vulcan.

Over the years Rowan House has provided life-saving emergency shelter, outreach services, and preventative education, transforming countless lives. Their impact extends far beyond providing a safe place to stay. Rowan House empowers survivors with counselling, support programs, and advocacy and helping them rebuild their lives with dignity and hope.

Their healthy relationship program, which now reaches over 3,000 students annually, is working to prevent domestic violence before it starts. This program plays an essential role in creating a future where families can live free from the fear of violence and teaching young people vital lessons about respect, safety, and kindness.

The road hasn't been easy, though. In 2013 Rowan House was severely impacted by the High River flood, forcing them to rebuild. But like the survivors they support, they emerged stronger, expanding their services and reinforcing their commitment to trauma-informed care. Today they continue to evolve, adapting to the growing and changing needs of those they serve, ensuring their impact is felt across generations.

Mr. Speaker, this milestone is a testament to the dedicated staff, volunteers, and community supporters who make Rowan House's work possible. Their efforts have saved lives, strengthened families, and built a safer Alberta for all, and the compassion and dedication they offer is a shining example of the power of community.

I extend my heartfelt congratulations to Rowan House on 25 years of hope and healing, and I thank them for their continued commitment to supporting vulnerable women and children. May they continue to inspire us all with their unwavering dedication.

Health Services Procurement Process

Ms Hoffman: I quote: it's not private medicine; it's simply corruption. That was the 2013 opposition leader calling out political interference in Alberta's health care system. She was furious. She demanded accountability. She wanted answers, and who wouldn't? Well, that was then, Mr. Speaker. Now that she's the Premier and there's a far bigger scandal, now that she has the power to call on the courts to get to the bottom of this corrupt care cover-up, she says that there's nothing to see here.

Let's review the facts. Sweetheart deals for well-connected UCP insiders; more than half a billion taxpayer dollars into U.S.-style private care with no oversight; luxury NHL playoff box seats for the Premier, her favourite cabinet ministers, and their staff; tickets gifted by those same insiders whose companies received millions in government contracts and failed Albertans, delivering unsafe supplies and medicine; political pressure on staff to sign off on even more expensive, inflated contracts with these same companies despite warnings that it was wrong; government staff working both sides of the fence, including senior officials overseeing contracts who had e-mail addresses with one of the companies that they were negotiating with, a blatant conflict of interest.

What happened when the AHS CEO started digging deeper, Mr. Speaker? Well, she and the board said to call the RCMP, so the UCP fired them all, and they said that there's nothing to see here. Well, Jason Kenney's hand-picked Finance deputy cries: corruption in health. The current Premier's hand-picked Infrastructure minister quit

today, saying that this corruption is across multiple ministries. If the Premier is telling the truth, she'd have no reason to fear a full, public inquiry led by a judge, but she does, because it's simply corruption.

Provincial Music Commissioner Proposal

Member Ceci: Corrupt care allegations of corruption in every nook and cranny of the UCP government have actually stopped the government from getting anything done. What's worse is that instead of standing up for ethical, competent government, cabinet ministers are silent while the Premier tries to sweep these corrupt care allegations under the rug. I want to remind the government that it's Albertans' tax dollars at the heart of this mess, and it's hundreds of millions of dollars on bloated contracts for their friends and insiders.

We understand what Albertans are dealing with, and that's why we're working on building prosperity for all Albertans. The UCP will say anything to distract from their horrible record, but we know that these funds could have made substantial investments in our creative economy, Mr. Speaker, and I know that for stakeholders in the arts and culture sector there are a lot higher priorities than bloated contracts for UCP's friends.

I've been listening to stakeholders, and the minister has confirmed that she'll announce the creation of an Alberta music commissioner very soon. It's a promising idea, but it's taken so long that one wonders why. Perhaps it's because the government has failed to invest in the priorities of Albertans, like ensuring a diverse arts economy and a thriving arts scene.

A music commissioner will no doubt help nurture and promote Alberta's wildly talented musicians, support and increase the number of venues for musicians to play at as well as develop good jobs for our skilled production workers. A music commissioner, Mr. Speaker, would need stable funding and a clear plan of action, something that this government seems incapable of achieving.

There's no doubt a candidate can be found from the ranks of Alberta's musicians, club owners, and industry professionals to serve in this role. So many Albertans have spent their careers developing their talent in navigating the music industry to create memorable, world-class music right here in Alberta.

Thanks to the people behind West Anthem, Alberta Music, NMC, the Rozsa Centre, CADA, and many others for pushing for a commissioner for Alberta's music sector. Your efforts have paid off. Now let's get to work.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give oral notice that, at the appropriate time, I will request leave to move, pursuant to Standing Order 30, that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely the issue of proposed U.S. tariffs on Canadian products and the impact this will have on Alberta consumers and the Alberta economy.

The Speaker: Are there others?

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction.

Bill 37

Mental Health Services Protection Amendment Act, 2025

Mr. Williams: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I ask to give leave to rise and move first reading of Bill 37, the Mental Health Services

Protection Amendment Act, 2025. Through this bill we would amend the Mental Health Services Protection Act, which supports safe, quality mental health and addiction care across our province.

[Motion carried; Bill 37 read a first time]

2:50

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat has a tabling.

Mr. Wright: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table three articles I'm going to be referencing later today. One showcases that surveillance operations have raised alarms after placing Prime Minister Trudeau and a former cabinet minister in close connection to Asian organized crime suspects. Another one is putting the border blame on Trudeau by CBSA officers, and the third one is a former Biden administration Secretary of State warning a British Columbia mayor that the U.S. agencies have lost faith in the Canadian system, because of withholding of evidence and legal loopholes.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore, followed by Edmonton-West Henday.

Mr. Haji: Mr. Speaker, I've received a ton of e-mails from educational assistants across the province, and I would like to table a copy from Virginia Hartley, an educational assistant, who lives in my riding, who has expressed the current situation that educational assistants are facing across the province.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-West Henday.

Member Arcand-Paul: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite copies of an opinion piece in *Sherwood Park News* by the Minister of Tech and Innovation, where he admitted that his office has been helping O'Leary Ventures and his Wonder Valley AI data centre.

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

Ms Chapman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of a letter from an Alberta mom whose dyslexic child isn't able to attend school while the EA can't be present. She calls on this government to properly fund our education system so her child can return to school.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Five copies from the St. Albert *Gazette*, February 20, written by Tristan Oram: Town Hall Attendees Want More Detail on New Disability Program.

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

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table today five requisite copies of an e-mail I received in my office from Vivian Pastó Arencibia, who is currently taking job action as a result of the government employer's failure to increase their salaries for over 10 years for CUPE 3550.

The Speaker: Are there others?

Seeing none, I do have a tabling. That's very handy. Hon. members, Members' Services at its January 9, 2025, meeting of the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services directed me as its chair to table the requisite number of copies of the Final Report of the Members' Compensation, Benefits and Allowances Review

Subcommittee for the benefit of all members. The report is also available publicly on the Legislative Assembly website.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of hon. Minister LaGrange, Minister of Health, pursuant to the Health Professions Act, College of Chiropractors of Alberta 2023-24 Annual Report, College of Registered Psychiatric Nurses of Alberta 2023-24 Annual Report, Alberta College of Paramedics 2023-24 Annual Report, College of Respiratory Therapists of Alberta 2023-24 Annual Report; on behalf of hon. Mr. Nixon, the Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services, pursuant to the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities Act, Advocate for Persons with Disabilities 2023-24 Annual Report.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader, seeing a number of points of order before the Assembly and the requirement to move to an SO 30, perhaps you might entertain the opportunity to extend the daily Routine?

Mr. Schow: That is good advice, Mr. Speaker. I do wish to advise the Assembly that pursuant to Standing Order 7(8) the daily Routine may continue past 3 p.m.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we are at points of order. At 1:48 the Official Opposition Leader and the Official Opposition House Leader rose on a point of order.

Point of Order

Members' Statements

Allegations against a Member

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise under 23(h), (i), and (j) as well as *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, specifically on page 619. At the time the Member for Chestermere-Strathmore was delivering a member's statement, and we do not typically call points of order during Members' Statements, but with the benefit of the Blues I believe you will confirm that the member said, "What parents need to be told is not that their child in addiction can have access to so-called safe supply of opioids or ... have access to a clean crack pipe handed out [by] the Member for Calgary-Currie."

Mr. Speaker, this is a disgusting comment, and I would draw all members' attention to Speaker Kowalski's ruling December 1, 2010, where he made comments about points of orders during Members' Statements and needing to use language responsibly but, more specifically, Mr. Speaker, your memo sent days ago, wherein you said:

I would like to remind all Members of the rules respecting Members' Statements. Although a great deal of latitude is provided to Members in what they choose for the content of their statements, Members' Statements may not be used for personal attacks, nor may Members' [statements] use language that might cause disruption or disorder. It also has been the tradition ... that no comments be made by [others] during these statements.

The idea of accusing a Member of this Legislative Assembly of handing crack pipes out – something that is demonstrably false, has never taken place, is completely inappropriate – is an insult to this member, should be apologized for and withdrawn with no question in my opinion.

I will say that the member in question did join a street outreach team as part of her job as shadow minister for Mental Health and Addiction. Has the minister ever considered doing the same? Doing

outreach and talking to important stakeholders is an important part of the shadow minister's job. But at the crux of it the member has never handed out clean crack pipes, and having that as part of a member's statement is wildly inappropriate.

The Speaker: The Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Williams: Well, Mr. Speaker, this is going to be slightly awkward for the members opposite. I'm going to cite a publication from the Member for Calgary-Currie from January 31:

Last week, I joined the Street Cats on a patrol in downtown Calgary, meeting people who were preparing to spend the night on the street. In a five-block [radius] loop along 7th and Stephen Avenue, we encountered dozens of people who asked for clothes, hygiene packages, warm food, drinks, and clean drug pipes.

Continuing on:

And we gave it to them, no questions asked.

Mr. Speaker, not only is it disgusting and wildly inappropriate; it's not that you should point to the rhetorical cannons at this side. It's the members in your own benches that are doing this, and it is deeply inappropriate. But I will rest my case there because I'm accidentally entering into debate, which is exactly what this is, a matter of debate which unfortunately is absolutely factual.

The Speaker: Are there others? [interjections] Order, order. I offered the opportunity. If there are others to provide comment, you're welcome to do so. If you don't want to do so publicly, perhaps you can refrain from doing such.

Hon. members, I do have the benefit of the Blues, and I am prepared to rule. The statement that the Leader of the Official Opposition made with respect to what the hon. Member for Chestermere-Strathmore said is in fact accurate. The words that they both reported are the words that were used in the Assembly.

I do want to point out that in that ruling from December 1, 2010, Speaker Kowalski went on to say:

I'll repeat what I've said before. Civility, decorum, respect are very important. This is not an opportunity for someone to personally attack someone else. If it is, I would strongly recommend to the members of the Assembly: eliminate Members' Statements from our Routine. I would stand up as the Speaker and say that.

He proceeded to remind members:

Civility, decorum, and policy, not personality, and things work.

While I can accept that this is a matter of debate with respect to the conduct of a member of the Assembly, I might draw the attention of all members of the Assembly to, say, the statement made by the Member for Livingstone-Macleod. At no point in time will we ever have a point of order if ... [interjections]

Order. Order. Order. Perhaps the member's not listening. I was suggesting that if you referenced that member's statement, you would see that there was no level of personal attack, merely celebrating things that happen in our constituency and doing so in a very civil manner.

While this isn't a point of order and it is a matter of debate, I would just remind members of the principle of what Members' Statements were originally made for. This isn't a point of order but a matter of debate. I consider the matter dealt with and concluded.

At 2:02 the Government House Leader rose on a point of order.

Point of Order

Insulting Language

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do have a couple of points of order here. I'll try to be quick. At the time noted, the Premier was answering a question from the members opposite, and while

answering their question about AHS procurement, the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar was heard saying: how much did you get paid? This is clearly language that would cause disorder; this is a point of order under 23(h), (i), and (j). I'll leave it in your hands, Mr. Speaker.

3:00

The Speaker: The Official Opposition House Leader.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I do not have the benefit of the Blues, and I was not able to hear that heckle, so I cannot speak to this item.

The Speaker: I do have the benefit of the Blues. The hon. Premier was outlining payments made to surgical centres: "AHS did for Enoch: \$6,300; ASG, the new one: \$7,400; Clearpoint: \$3,600; ASG for Red Deer and Lethbridge: \$6,950."

The Blues report, "Where is the money going? How much did you make off this deal?"

I would suggest and I'll admit to the Assembly that while it's often very easy to hear the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, on this occasion I didn't hear exactly what he said. I do have a report of it; it sounds different from what the Government House Leader provided comment on. What I will say is that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar can't make accusations from a sedentary position, nor can he from a standing position, and I have the sense that we may be here on a number of occasions over the next number of weeks.

I'll encourage him today that perhaps we can curb our enthusiasm and stick to the matters at hand as opposed to making accusations. I won't consider this particular point of order one, but certainly will hope that the member will conduct himself accordingly in the future. I consider this matter dealt with and concluded.

The hon. member at 2:06 also called a point of order.

Point of Order Imputing Motives

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At the time noted, the Minister of Health was answering a question, again in the same vein, and as the member was sitting down, the Member for Edmonton-Glenora clearly shouted: you sound guilty. That is again language that would create disorder in this Chamber. It imputes false motives against a member, so under 23(h), (i), and (j) I do believe this to be a point of order.

The Speaker: The hon. Official Opposition House Leader and the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, without the benefit of the Blues I did not hear that point of order that has been raised around the quote: you sound guilty. But it does sound like a matter of debate to me.

The Speaker: Are there others?

Seeing and hearing none, I do have the benefit of the Blues. The hon. the Minister of Health was saying, "My understanding is that people are innocent unless proven guilty. It was extremely concerning to me that no substantive information was provided to me," and the hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora did say: you sound guilty. I can confirm that the Speaker also heard those words uttered.

I might say that while this language is wildly unhelpful and certainly could raise to the point of order if the hon. member had made the accusation that she is guilty – that 100 per cent would be a point of order – "You sound guilty" may be a matter of debate. For today I won't consider this a point of order. I consider the matter dealt with and concluded.

At 2:17, the hon. Government House Leader rose on a point of order.

Point of Order Imputing Motives

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I guess the Member for Edmonton-Glenora is on a roll; at 2:17 I did rise on a point of order when that member, in response to the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction as he was speaking, again, about issues on AHS, said, "Making your friends rich?" Now, this, of course, is directed specifically at the Minister of Mental Health and Addiction suggesting that he is doing something inappropriate to make his own friends rich. That, of course, I think, would be imputing false motives against a specific member, a minister of the Crown and a member of the government House, so I do suggest this is a point of order under 23(h), (i), and (j).

The Speaker: The Official Opposition House Leader.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I did hear this particular heckle, and I agree with the Government House Leader that accusations to individual members are unparliamentary. It should be making UCP friends rich, not an individual member. On behalf of that member I will apologize and withdraw.

The Speaker: I do agree; that was a point of order. I accept the apology and consider the matter dealt with and concluded.

Point of Clarification

The Speaker: At 2:23 the Leader of the Official Opposition rose on a point of order.

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It was under 13(2), because something was happening in the House that is certainly not of normal practice, and I just wanted to ask some clarifying questions. You were informing the House that the Ethics Commissioner is investigating, perhaps, hockey tickets, and as such under the legislation – I believe you quoted 24(6) – this item could no longer be discussed in the Legislature.

My quick 13(2) to you is: will the correspondence be tabled so that all members, including the Official Opposition, can understand the limits to this? Does it apply because the question was about ethics disclosures of members, or is it specific to playoff box tickets from MHCare? If there are other tickets, are those off limits? Again, we need to understand what we are being prevented from asking about in this Chamber and in committees.

The Speaker: I can't imagine a scenario where anyone else would have comments to be made. Here's what I will confirm: the Speaker never confirmed that a matter was under investigation by the Ethics Commissioner. What the Speaker confirmed is that under 24(6) of the act where a matter has been referred to the Ethics Commissioner, neither the Assembly nor a committee of the Assembly shall inquire into the matter. What I can also confirm is that I received correspondence from the Ethics Commissioner confirming that a matter had been referred to the Ethics Commissioner, and that matter specifically referred to the accepting of hockey tickets from MHCare or Sam Mraiche.

There is no requirement for that correspondence to be tabled inside the Assembly, and as such it will not be, but I can confirm that a matter has been referred to the Ethics Commissioner, confirmed by notice from the Ethics Commissioner, and that neither the Assembly nor a committee of the Assembly shall inquire to the

matter specifically with respect to the gifting of tickets of MHCare or Sam Mraiche. I consider this matter dealt with and concluded.

We are at Notices of Motions.

Emergency Debate

The Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader provided notice at the appropriate time of his intention to rise on a Standing Order 30.

Proposed U.S. Tariffs

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to the motion, which I read into the record earlier, requesting that the ordinary business of the Assembly be adjourned pursuant to Standing Order 30 to discuss a matter of great urgency, namely the issue of proposed U.S. tariffs on Canadian products and the impact this will have on Alberta's consumers and Alberta's economy. Albertans are concerned with the looming threat of U.S. tariffs on Alberta goods. Many are filled with uncertainty, anxious about the cost of living and even job security.

As elected representatives our primary concerns are those of Albertans. It is our responsibility and a privilege to address and discuss their worries, and as such we owe it to Albertans to have this debate. They need to know that their representatives understand the impacts of this situation that we face as a province. The urgency of this matter and the negligence from our federal government compels us, I hope, all to seek the earliest opportunity to discuss it.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, Standing Order 30(7) lists the conditions which must be met in a request for emergency debate. The first is that the matter must call for immediate and urgent consideration. The Assembly has not yet had an opportunity to discuss this issue, and given the level of concern which Albertans have expressed in addition to the President's intention to implement the tariffs in March and the lack of stable leadership from the federal government, I believe it is necessary to move to discussion on this. The same standing order requires that the matter not be considered at any previous point in the same session. I can say again that while the topic has been broached in Oral Question Period, the question itself has not been given due consideration.

3:10

I would also draw attention of the Assembly to *House of Commons Procedures and Practice*, page 700, where it states that provisions for emergency debate cannot be used to discuss matters which will in the regular proceedings of the legislative program come before the Assembly in other ways. Mr. Speaker, at the time of this request there are no opportunities to discuss U.S. tariffs on the Order Paper, and none can be foreseen; it is for this reason that I believe an emergency debate is necessary. Finally, I should briefly note that historically Speakers have accepted requests for emergency debate when in their opinion the request is in line with the disposition of the House, end quote, even if the matter itself is not of absolute urgency.

I hope that you will take the general will of the House into account today. I ask you to consider this request, Mr. Speaker, and should you decide it be in order, I urge all members to take into account the anxieties of Albertans and support this request for emergency debate. Thank you.

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition has the ability to respond to the motion, should she choose to use it. Or another member of the opposition.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Official Opposition certainly agrees that the threat of tariffs that has apprised our country since the election of Donald Trump is a matter of urgent interest. We would also make the argument that there are other items of urgent interest that there should be emergency debates held on, and we look forward to saying more about that tomorrow. But in this particular case given what we are seeing from Donald Trump and given the existential crisis both to our economy and in many ways to Canadian identity, we agree.

The Speaker: Hon. members, the Government House Leader has made a request under Standing Order 30(1) for leave to move to adjourn the ordinary business of the Assembly to discuss the issue of proposed U.S. tariffs on Canadian products and the impact that this will have on Alberta consumers and the Alberta economy. Notice of the Government House Leader's intention to move forward with this request was provided to my office on Monday, February 24, 2025, at 11:20 a.m.; therefore, the Government House Leader has met and provided the required notice of at least two hours prior to the afternoon sitting.

I am now prepared to rule on whether the request for leave is in order. The request reads as follows. Be it resolved

that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely, the issue of proposed [United States] tariffs on Canadian products and the impact this will have on Alberta consumers and the Alberta economy.

The relevant parliamentary authorities on this subject are on pages 695 to 704 of the *House of Commons Procedures and Practice*, the third edition, and *Beauchesne's* paragraphs 387 to 390.

Members, let me point out that there's no question that the prospect of U.S. imposing tariffs possibly as early as March 4, 2025, on Canadian products and especially oil and gas products constitutes a significant threat to Alberta's economy. Given that this is the first day of the 2025 spring sitting, today is the first day that the Assembly has had an opportunity to debate this matter. Further, I see no items on the Order Paper under which this matter could otherwise be dealt with.

Finally, pursuant to *House of Commons Procedures and Practice*, third edition, at page 700, "the Speaker may take into account the general wish of the House to have an emergency debate and grant a request." Based on the submissions of members this afternoon, there appears to be a willingness of the Assembly to set aside the regular business in order to constitute that matter today. Accordingly, I find that this request is in order.

I will now ask the question on whether the debate of this urgent matter shall proceed. If there is any objection to the question in accordance with the procedure outlined in Standing Order 30(4), I'll ask members who support the motion to rise in their places. If there is no objection, the debate will proceed. The question is: shall the debate on the urgent matter proceed? All those in favour, please say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Speaker: Any opposed, please say no.

Having heard no objection, the debate on the matter shall now proceed. The hon. Government House Leader to move the motion.

Mr. Schow: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity today to speak on U.S.-Canada trade relationships and the looming threat of U.S.-imposed tariffs on Canadian exports. Alberta's trade relationship with the United States is the backbone of our economy and a key driver of prosperity on both sides of the

border. I want to be clear. Alberta's government does not support tariffs on Canadian exports or U.S. imports.

[Mr. van Dijken in the chair]

Alberta and the U.S. share a mutually beneficial trade relationship. Our partnership with the U.S. supports tens of thousands of jobs, fuels North American energy security, and ensures a stable supply chain for industries across the continent. With these tariffs we are seeing a direct threat to our critical partnership. The impacts of tariffs on Canadian and American jobs really hit home. Hundreds of thousands of workers across North America depend on Alberta's energy sector to put food on the table. Tariffs jeopardize livelihoods and the economic stability of entire regions.

Every direct oil and gas job creates two indirect jobs in businesses that supply oil and gas producers. More than 900,000 American jobs are supported by trade with Alberta. The oil and gas industry provides high-paying jobs, with average salaries in the sector exceeding the national average by more than 50 per cent. And it's not just Canadian jobs tied to trade; the oil and gas industry alone supports more than 500,000 workers across the U.S., many of whom rely on stable imports from Alberta. Over 25,000 American jobs rely solely on importing Alberta crude. The United States has approximately 130 refineries, many of which are dependent on Canadian oil to keep their operations running and their workers employed.

The jobs linked to U.S.-Canada trade aren't just statistics; they represent real people and families who feel the direct weight of every tariff imposed. The consequences of tariffs hit home not just for workers but for every consumer whose daily life depends on affordable goods made from these essential materials.

The U.S.-Canada trade and security relationship is the definition of mutually beneficial. The increasing energy market access between the U.S. and Alberta would strengthen the U.S.'s energy leadership globally, reduce reliance on hostile regimes, stabilize global energy markets, and expand North American influence.

Canada buys more from the U.S. than Germany, Italy, France, the U.K., and Vietnam combined. When our oil and gas is excluded, the U.S. actually has a U.S. \$58 billion trade surplus with Canada, and the oil and gas is already sold at a discount to U.S. refineries, where over 1 million American workers triple its value by turning that oil and gas into fuel, plastics, and other products that U.S. companies sell around the world.

Alberta's energy exports are essential to the North American economy. In 2024 Alberta's total exports to the U.S. reached \$162 billion, with energy products alone accounting for \$133 billion. Canada is the largest foreign supplier of oil to the United States, with Alberta providing roughly 86 per cent of that crude. More than 3.5 million barrels of Alberta crude oil are exported to the U.S. every single day. The U.S. Midwest and Gulf coast refining sectors are specifically designed to process heavier crude like that from Alberta, ensuring cost-effective and efficient refining processes. The U.S. is Alberta's largest trading partner, and Alberta is the second-largest provincial exporter to the U.S.

Beyond oil and gas, Alberta plays a critical role in North American industries. In 2024 Alberta exported \$815 million worth of iron and steel and \$239 million Canadian worth of aluminum to the U.S. These industries alone employ approximately 5,000 Albertans. Tariffs on these essential materials would disrupt supply chains, increase costs for manufacturers, and threaten jobs in both Canada and the U.S.

The Canadian energy sector contributed approximately 10 per cent of Canada's total GDP in 2023. Canada's oil and gas industry generated over \$13 billion in revenues for governments across the

country, funding critical public services. Alberta's energy sector accounts for roughly 75 per cent of Canada's total energy exports, and Alberta's diverse industries fuel North America's economy, from steel to petrochemicals, creating jobs and boosting productivity for businesses.

3:20

Tariffs on Canadian goods would make life more expensive for both Canadians and Americans. Tariffs don't just raise prices; they threaten the livelihoods of families, disrupt communities, and undermine the very stability that makes North American trade a success. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has warned that tariffs on steel and aluminum could cost the American economy over \$3 billion annually. Increased costs for manufacturers in both countries will lead to higher prices for consumers on everyday goods, from vehicles to household appliances. The auto industry, Mr. Speaker, is particularly vulnerable as Canadian steel and aluminum are critical components in vehicle manufacturing across North America, and supply chain disruptions caused by tariffs can increase production costs by as much as 20 per cent for some industries. North American trade integration ensures lower consumer prices; tariffs would undermine this advantage.

Alberta's industries contribute over \$15 billion annually to Canada-U.S. trade relations. These economic ripple effects of increased tariffs could reduce GDP growth both in Canada and the United States. By imposing tariffs, we risk more than just a rising cost. Tariffs for businesses threaten job security and destabilize industries that have flourished for years under a strong North American partnership. Tariffs on vital trade undermine decades of collaboration and threaten the very partnerships that have made North America a global economic leader.

Alberta's government has taken a diplomatic approach to addressing tariffs, engaging directly with our allies in the U.S. to emphasize the mutual benefits of free trade with our neighbours. I would love to applaud our Premier for taking the time and making Alberta trade and the economy a priority by visiting the United States multiple times, including visiting with President Trump to make the case for Alberta, make the case for Canada. Where there is clearly a void in leadership in Ottawa, our Premier, Mr. Speaker, is stepping up. Alberta remains committed to strengthening our trade relationship with the U.S. and ensuring that our industries, our workers, and our families continue to thrive.

These efforts are a stark contrast to the negligence, as I've mentioned, of the federal government and Justin Trudeau. Where have our federal leaders been all this time? Where has our Prime Minister been? Certainly not out addressing the concerns of Canadians, especially not addressing the concerns of Albertans. But that is nothing new, Mr. Speaker. With the federal government so caught up in their internal affairs that they fail to present anything resembling cohesive leadership, it is vital that we comprehensively address the concerns Albertans have with U.S. tariffs, and I hope that we take advantage of the opportunity that we have right now.

As always, Alberta stands strong in defending our workers, industries, and the prosperity of our province, ensuring that we will continue to lead North America in innovation and economic growth.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Are there any others wishing to speak? Each member is able to speak for a 10-minute period. The Premier has risen.

Ms Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to join the emergency debate on the impact of U.S. tariffs on the Alberta

economy and the Alberta consumer. Unfortunately, this has been a topic that has been very much top of mind for me and my cabinet, my caucus, and all Albertans since President Donald Trump announced on November 25, 2024, that he intends to bring in 25 per cent tariffs on all Canadian products.

While we received a 30-day reprieve on February 3, that, of course, was not the end. On February 10 and 11 the President signed orders to bring in 25 per cent tariffs on steel and aluminum effective March 12. Unfortunately, just yesterday the President announced that the 25 per cent tariffs originally announced would come into effect next week although, in part because of effective advocacy by us, our allies, and aligned businesses and industry groups in the United States, energy products will be subject to a 10 per cent tariff. I think recognizing the important integration that the U.S. and Canada have, whether it's oil and gas, critical minerals, or electricity.

But from the beginning, Mr. Speaker, I have been relentless in my efforts to try to reason with and persuade American officials not to implement these tariffs in Canada. Alongside my provincial counterparts we reached out to as many elected officials south of the border as we can to make the case. I've encouraged all of my colleagues in the Legislature to do the same because we really do have a strong case to make.

Canada is a strong trading partner for the United States, and our trade and security relationship in particular is the very definition of mutually beneficial. The important thing for the Americans to know is that Canada is America's best customer. We buy more from the United States than Germany, Italy, France, the U.K., and Vietnam combined despite the fact that we only have one-tenth the size of their economy. And, as the hon. House leader has mentioned, when you exclude our oil and gas, the United States actually does have a trade surplus with Canada, meaning we buy more from them than they buy from us in goods and services. It is critical that we do all we can to protect that relationship, and that is equally true on both sides of the border.

Mr. Speaker, in my conversations with American lawmakers and officials I have highlighted the negative effect that tariffs would have on the American people because tariffs aren't just a tax; they're a burden on everyday families. At a time when the cost of living remains higher, when we have an inflation crisis in both of our countries, they hurt even more. That is not just true south of the border; that's true all across Canada and right here in Alberta as well.

In fact, the Conference Board of Canada issued a report on February 11 that stated that the most impacted jurisdiction in Canada would be Saint John, New Brunswick, and second to them would be Calgary, as the second-most impacted jurisdiction in the country at 81.6 per cent. Lethbridge as well rounds out the top 10 most negatively impacted Canadian cities, and that is a distinction that nobody wants. A follow-up piece from February 19 states that "Alberta would be one of the hardest hit provinces [on] tariffs." The Bank of Canada in a January 2025 monetary policy report highlights through general examples how tariffs would impact both Canadians and Americans.

In short, Mr. Speaker, U.S. tariffs would make our exports less competitive, which would lead to a decline in exports. Lower demand would result in lower production and job losses. That job loss would result in less discretionary spending, so less shopping, less dining out, and fewer extras. GDP would decline, inflation would increase, all of which hurts investors, job creators, workers, families, and consumers. We cannot afford U.S. tariffs, and I know that my Finance minister will have more to say about this. It's been very much on his mind as he's been putting the budget together, which will be presented on February 27.

Just to give you an example of the impact that these tariffs will have on the first case of aluminum and steel, 25 per cent tariffs, in 2024 Alberta exported \$815 million worth of steel and steel products to the United States and \$239 million worth of aluminum. In 2024 that meant that there were approximately 5,000 people employed in Alberta steel and aluminum manufacturing sectors. Those jobs could potentially be at risk.

Another huge impact on agriculture and cattle: Alberta ships more than 300,000 head of cattle and 600 million pounds of beef to the United States every year. That's about two pounds of beef for every American, or about 3 per cent of the U.S. beef supply. U.S. cattle inventory is the smallest since 1951, and U.S. consumers still eat about 60 pounds of beef each year. Industry-wide a 25 per cent tariff would cause operators to lose about \$1,000 on each head of cattle that they have. To give you an example, for Driland Feeders in Warner, Alberta, a 25 per cent tariff could cost them \$16 million. This would bankrupt their business potentially, put 36 employees out of work, and being the largest employer in the area, it would have a ripple effect throughout the whole community. Same story on potatoes. Alberta exports more than 600 million pounds of processed potato products to the United States each year. That's nearly two pounds of potatoes for every American, 8 per cent of their supply, or 1 in 10 french fries.

If you go into looking at timber, we also have Western Archib and Northland Forest Products, that have been operating in Alberta for decades, with three manufacturing facilities, a team of over 130 skilled Albertans. They've contributed to over a thousand U.S. projects, including the Catalyst building in Spokane, Washington, and the Fastenal headquarters in Winona, Minnesota, built with Alberta spruce.

Manufacturing as well: Propak, located in Airdrie, Alberta, is one of the largest engineering and fabrication businesses in Canada. They employ 1,500 skilled professionals and tradespeople. They're a trusted partner of U.S. energy developers with recent and ongoing projects in Alaska, North Dakota, Wyoming, Montana, Oklahoma, Kentucky, West Virginia, and Florida. They also buy tens of millions of dollars' worth of U.S. equipment from suppliers like Caterpillar engines, Solar Turbines, Ariel compressors, Emerson, Rockwell Automation, and other national brands, just going to the integration of our two economies.

3:30

I will just make a note, Mr. Speaker, that part of the reason why we absolutely stood firm on opposing export tariffs or cutting off oil to the United States is because in the 1980s, when former Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau imposed an export tax on Alberta energy, it crippled Alberta's economy and destroyed lives. Unemployment quadrupled, home values plummeted, thousands lost their jobs, bankruptcies rose over 150 per cent, and tens of thousands left the province, plunging us into a multiyear recession. We believe we lost somewhere in the order of \$50 billion to \$100 billion. So we are not going to support a ban on these types of products.

I should also mention, of course, that Alberta crude in U.S. refineries is the largest export product Canada has. There are approximately 130 refineries in the U.S. At least 25 of these rely on Alberta crude on a consistent basis, and this is part of the reason we can use oil and gas as a point of leverage. You may have seen the U.S. President talk about how unfair it was that Keystone XL got cancelled and that he wants to now have a conversation about how we might be able to restart a conversation on pipelines. That is the conversation we should be having with the United States.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I should just say that we were relentless in also pointing out that we had to meet the U.S. President in areas of

mutual interest, especially when it came to border security. We know that that is the reason for these 25 per cent tariffs. That's why we introduced a \$29 million border plan to combat drug smuggling, gun trafficking, and other illegal activities. We've added a new interdiction patrol team with Alberta sheriffs, four canine patrol teams, 10 weather surveillance drones, and four narcotics analyzers to test for illicit drugs. We're also pleased that the federal government has named a fentanyl czar on top of a \$1.3 billion border security plan. These are actions that have to be continued.

I do want to repeat that I and my government will not stand idly by when illegal activity puts Albertans' lives and livelihoods at risk. We will not stand by as Alberta consumers and families, as job creators and investors are faced by uncertainty around increasing costs and job insecurity because of tariffs. As I've said and have been doing for several months, I will continue along the path of diplomacy with my counterparts in the United States, and I will do that alongside my Canadian counterparts. Albertans should expect no less. Mr. Speaker, for decades Alberta has been the economic engine of Canada, and I will do everything in my power to keep it that way.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: I see the Member for Edmonton-Manning has risen to speak.

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've been looking forward to having this discussion since the President was elected in the United States. I want to start off by acknowledging that although I appreciate what the Premier has said opposite about why it is that the President has decided to discuss and try to implement these tariffs, it is flawed. For the President to say, "Well, the reason that these tariffs have to come in is because of border security and all of those things": it's not actually the reality of what is happening on our borders. These tariffs existed when the President was elected the first time.

Tariffs on aluminum and steel were implemented when he was President last time. Regulation changes on our agriculture industry and being able to get agriculture across the border was impacted the last time that President Trump was the President. These are not new initiatives by this President. So for the Premier to stand and say, "Well, the reason he's doing it is because of border security, and therefore we must negotiate," is a flawed argument to be talking about how we protect the Alberta economy.

Let's be very clear. The Premier went to the United States and only discussed a deduction in tariffs in relation to oil and gas. There will be a 10 per cent and it will be less than 25 per cent and, sure, we can say that's a win. The reality of it is that we're already selling our product to the United States at a discounted price where then it is being upgraded and sold to other countries at a higher price. We're already behind when it comes to oil and gas. But the reality of it is that we have another economy. Actually, we have quite a few other economies in this province that are directly being impacted by the decisions that are being made by President Trump.

I appreciate that the Premier said Calgary is second in the country for being impacted by tariffs, but Lethbridge is number 10. Lethbridge is number 10 because it is a mass agricultural export hub for our province and for our country. What we know is that the annual export from the region out of Lethbridge is \$2.2 billion, or just over \$15,000 per capita. That is significant for that region. Have I heard the Premier come forward and say that we need to negotiate around what's going to happen for the tariffs for our agriculture industry? Absolutely not. In fact, I would say that the House leader that just stood up and spoke for the last 10 minutes didn't even say the word "agriculture" in his speech, period.

So there are other industries, and what I'm hearing from the people of Alberta and from the people that are driving our economy is that this government isn't talking about any of those other industries. We are not just oil and gas. Softwood lumber is potentially going to go to 30 per cent for tariffs. That will cause such a significant impact to the forestry industry in our province that it is a potential that it's not viable. I was just in Grande Prairie at Growing the North, and that was one of the conversations they were having.

Paper pulp: what's going to happen if 30 per cent tariffs come in on softwood lumber? Nineteen thousand people in this province are employed in the lumber industry. We have about an additional 5,000, maybe, which are also secondary to the economy, and another 24,700 people that have secondary industries that are attached to the forestry industry. Those are huge rural jobs. Huge.

Agriculture: significant. We saw that when the President was in last time, the regulatory changes about trying to get beef across the border became significantly impactful. It wasn't just about tariffs. It was about whether or not the regulatory changes were making it so that the inspection requirements were different at the border, whether or not things could go to a different market. What did it look like in relation to auctioneering and different things like that? Those things were happening before.

What I don't understand is that we know that this is coming in a week. We know the budget is coming on Thursday, we know the GDP is going to be significantly impacted, we know our general revenue is going to be significantly impacted, yet we haven't seen a signal from this government whatsoever about what's the plan.

I wrote to the minister of agriculture, and I offered to him that we could work together on both sides of this House to address this very issue because it is a serious issue. It is an issue that addresses all Albertans and it addresses the future of our province, and there are things that can be done. We should be looking at diversifying our markets. I heard from both speakers on the government side so far that we are overly reliant on our U.S. export markets and that there's no other market that makes up for it, yet there haven't been any major announcements of any new export markets being opened up. There haven't been any conversations about diversification in investment. These are all conversations that have been encouraged to happen, value-add, all of these different things.

The government will talk about oil and gas, but they don't talk about biofuel or biodiesel and the opportunity of using our agriculture industry to create fuel. Increasing even a simple regulatory change in Alberta and allowing more biodiesel in our mixed fuel would drive our economy locally, would diversify our economy, and would support our agriculture industry. It's an easy fix. Minister, I have ideas. We should talk.

Like, there are opportunities here where we can be working across the aisle, where I'm hearing from the same people as the minister is and as the government is about opportunities that exist. There are opportunities here from what is going to happen in the next week or so that the government can embrace and help drive our economy: localize diversification, looking at technology and innovation, looking at working with our other partners to be able to use the innovative, entrepreneurial spirit that Albertans have to be able to diversify our local economies and become less reliant on having to worry about doing more value-add manufacturing in the United States.

I recognize there are many speakers that want to speak to this issue, but I would encourage the government: it's not just oil and gas. I know that the ministers are hearing it from their stakeholders: it is not just oil and gas. The forestry industry needs help. They need to know what's going to happen. They need to know how this government is going to advocate for them. The agriculture industry

needs to understand what this government is going to do to advocate for them.

3:40

I will tell you that Albertans want to make sure that this government doesn't use the 25 per cent tariffs to start slashing services in the next budget on Thursday. It's not an excuse to not provide services. It is not an excuse to not fund education. It is not an excuse to not fund health care and to not provide the services to Albertans that they deserve. I would expect that on Thursday the assumptions that this government is making about the impact to our economy over the next 12 months do not include: how do we slash services that we don't believe we should pay for because now we have to be able to do it under the guise of a 25 per cent tariff? Education needs to be funded, health care needs to be funded, and all the supports and services that Albertans deserve need to be funded.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: The Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Services, followed by Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate it. I thank the members who have contributed already and those who are going to contribute for the remainder of this debate. I would say that I would agree. It is not just oil and gas. I know the minister of agriculture and other ministers within this House, I'm sure, are happy to speak because they have been dealing with this and trying to help with their stakeholders.

This is certainly a concern that we as Canadians are facing right across this country. I can tell you that I appreciate and I'm sure most if not all Albertans appreciate the advocacy of our Premier to defend not just Alberta but be there at the forefront, trying to defend Canada and trying to ensure that we don't get tariffs and working collaboratively with our neighbours right across this country.

I also think that we should not ignore the fact that the President of the United States has – I think we have to take him at his word for this, that fentanyl is an issue, that fentanyl is a crisis, that the borders need to be secure. We should never minimize – never minimize – the amount of fentanyl that is being produced in this country and in this province, that is being exported. When the President made this announcement, as the Premier noted – I think it was November 24, 2024 – it's something that we took very seriously.

As the RCMP have actually confirmed, there are over 4,000 – let me say this again: there are over 4,000 – organized crime groups here in Canada right now. That's a concern, and that should be a concern for everyone in this country. They have also confirmed, as I have stated in the past, that we have now become a net exporter of fentanyl. The RCMP have confirmed this. That is a concern for us as well.

The soft-on-crime policies, as I have been saying for years now, do not work. We have allowed, as a country, organized crime to thrive with little to no consequences, and you're seeing, unfortunately, the result of that. It doesn't mean that we minimize this. It doesn't mean that we don't take this seriously. We need to take this seriously, and that's why we immediately – immediately – got started on an interdiction team that we have deployed into southern Alberta to protect our 298 kilometres of Alberta.

I would say this, Mr. Speaker: provinces right across this country have followed our lead on this, from Manitoba to Ontario to Quebec, who have redeployed resources to also protect their borders. I'm proud of the work that our sheriffs have been doing with the CBSA, with the RCMP in order to protect our borders. And

for those on the opposite side who may not understand this – or maybe a lot of Albertans don't quite understand this – just understand that Canada Border Services control a border point, and we have six of them on our southern border. But in between those border points, points of entry, as we call them, is where you have these vast, wide open spaces. Unfortunately, in those vast, wide open spaces is where the intelligence has been indicating that we have drugs that might be going to and from Alberta into the United States and from the United States into Alberta.

I have spoken with the Attorney General in Montana, who, of course, expressed his concerns. There are concerns that, you know, he legitimately verified that I have – right? – when it comes to human trafficking, when it comes to drugs that are coming across the border, when it comes to illegal guns that are coming across the border. We're working collaboratively with them to make sure that that stuff isn't coming into Canada but also trying to make sure that we do not have drugs that are being exported into the United States as well.

The concern that President Trump has, certainly, when it comes to fentanyl is a legitimate concern, and I have mentioned that. This is why we had the \$29 million investment for our interdiction patrol teams, 51 uniformed officers working very closely with the CBSA and the RCMP, 10 surveillance drones, K-9 units. You know, these are all things that we have been doing to assist and secure our border, and I can say, Mr. Speaker, that in Alberta our border is secure.

But that doesn't mean that we don't have other concerns, and this is why we have investment that we are doing. We've already invested \$55 million into ALERT, making sure that they are co-ordinating with all the police services in Alberta to deal with the organized crime aspect of things. I think we can't ignore that as well. As you heard me say, we've allowed organized crime within this country to explode to over 4,000 in this country alone. The money that we're investing in there is going after the best.

We secure the border. We're going after those bad guys who are dealing those drugs and creating not just labs but super labs, Mr. Speaker, which is another thing we have to be concerned about, the super labs that are being produced right here in Alberta, quite frankly. I'm proud of the work that those officers are doing, and I can tell you that in October 2024 ALERT actually shut down the largest ever fentanyl super lab near Valleyview, seizing more than \$300 million, including seven kilograms of processed fentanyl and 4,200 precursor chemicals as well as equipment.

But, Mr. Speaker, we also have to concern ourselves with those who are afflicted with the illness of addiction, which is why we are going to be making an announcement very shortly, but making sure that we are collaborating in a Team Canada approach with our municipalities so that we deal with social and civil disorder. That doesn't mean that we're putting handcuffs on people; that means we're helping people with the illness of addiction.

Think about this, Mr. Speaker: all the work that we're doing making sure we're securing the border – we have secured the border – making sure that we're putting cartels and organized crime members in jail – we have evidence that our great law enforcement community is doing that as well – and then working with our municipalities to make sure that we are dealing with the social and civil disorder to make sure those who are afflicted with the illness of addiction are actually getting the help that they need.

I also want to state one more thing, and I think it's very important. You heard me talk about not just the organized crime aspect of things but human trafficking. Human trafficking is another scourge in society that I can tell you that organized crime has really got their grips into. I want to commend, actually, our sheriffs who are at the border, and I want to commend the work that they were doing,

because I can tell you they did an intervention, and they stopped somebody who was trying to smuggle a female across the border into the United States.

So kudos to them, Mr. Speaker. Kudos to our centre to combat human trafficking and all the work they were doing and, I would say, all the great work that is being done by these not-for-profit organizations who are trying to help those, who are typically women, who are victims of organized crime and victims of human trafficking. I can say that I'm very proud of the work that this government is doing in regard to that.

I also want to note, Mr. Speaker, that in that specific human trafficking incident, you know, \$12,000 was seized in a hidden compartment within that vehicle, so Lord knows what else that person was up to. I can also tell you that since January 20, when we got that interdiction team, narcotics arrests have been made, impaired driving arrests have been made. I can tell you that the work that is being done is top tier and second to none.

I can also tell you, Mr. Speaker, that having been down at the Coutts border and watching the great work being done by the sheriffs, this is my message. I would say to all organized crime members that you are going to get checked by our sheriffs when you are going into the United States or coming from the United States into Canada. You are going to get stopped by the CBSA when you are going into the United States or coming into Canada, and you're going to get stopped by the border services of the Americans when you're going into the United States or, of course, coming into Canada. My message to all organized crime members is: you will be caught. I have complete faith in our CBSA, our RCMP at the border, those border services, and our friends in the United States. I also have faith in our sheriffs, who are doing a great job, and I think they even made a recent arrest regarding another shipment that was caught in hidden compartments within a commercial vehicle.

3:50

With that, I know my time is coming, but I can tell you that we are taking this extremely seriously. We're putting all the necessary resources in place to let the Americans know that here in Alberta and working with our federal counterparts – sorry; I should take one moment here – working very closely with Minister McGuinty, I can tell you that I have a good relationship with Minister McGuinty. He takes this very seriously. I have met via Zoom our new border czar. He is taking this very seriously, and I appreciate the work that we're doing to make sure that we don't get tariffs in this country.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, followed by the minister of agriculture.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and offer some thoughts on the emergency debate regarding tariffs this afternoon. First of all, let me say that I'm pleasantly surprised that for the first time in my memory the Premier has identified a problem that really exists. We've seen in the time that the Premier has been in office that she chases imaginary problems and comes up with imaginary solutions for things that aren't really happening. Today we finally have the admission that the tariffs are happening and that they will have a significant negative impact on the people of Alberta. So I'm glad that we at least finally have some recognition of reality from the members opposite.

But what concerns me is that they don't understand the reasons why we're facing this issue. They continue to talk about Trump's complaints about fentanyl crossing the border, and the reports that

I've seen is that in 2024 we saw a grand total of 19 kilograms of fentanyl leave Canada and enter or attempt to enter the United States. That's a small fraction of the amount of fentanyl that crosses the southern border between Mexico and the United States, Mr. Speaker. So I think that this is a problem that the President of the United States has created to justify what he wanted to do.

Not only that, Mr. Speaker; I would say that the fact that this is a problem that the President has made up also explains the fact that the minister for public safety had announced the additional border security measures long before Trump even announced that he was going to put a pause on these tariffs, and he is still committed to the tariffs in spite of the fact that the minister for public safety has claimed that he is ramping up border security. In fact, when the President of the United States was told that Canada was going to increase border security nation-wide and appoint a fentanyl czar, what the Canadian government was simply doing was reiterating commitments that we had already made on border security when Biden was President.

That tells me, Mr. Speaker, that the President is not serious about his reasons for imposing tariffs because if it were genuinely about fentanyl and genuinely about border security issues, then he would have been pleased by these border initiatives that the provincial government has initiated and he would have dropped the threat of tariffs right away, but that's not the case.

In fact, when pressed, the President of the United States tends to offer a different reason on any given day for the reason that he's imposing these tariffs. One day it's the issue of fentanyl that he's imagined is happening across the border. On another day it's the fact that Canada doesn't spend enough money on NATO. I'm surprised that the government hasn't taken that fake problem seriously and written a cheque on behalf of the government of Alberta to NATO. Maybe we'll see that in the near future. Maybe it'll be in the budget. You know, on a different day the Trump administration says that the American people are tired of subsidizing the people of Canada, but of course, as the Premier herself pointed out, that's not a real problem. The United States actually has a trade surplus with Canada.

The one thing that the President of the United States has been consistent about is his desire to make Canada the 51st state of the United States. That is something that he has said consistently since the time that he was elected, and we have to take that threat seriously, Mr. Speaker. This isn't about fentanyl. It's not about how much money Canada spends on NATO. It is not about trade surpluses. It is about President Trump's world ambitions, and Canada is not the only country in his sights. He has set his sights on Greenland, he has set his sights on Panama, and he's also set his sights on the Gaza Strip.

If we are to respond to this issue of tariffs, then we need to understand clearly the reasons why, and that reason is to subsume Canada into the United States. If we appreciate the threat that these tariffs pose to our sovereignty, to our nationhood, to the very existence of Canada, then we need to meet the threat with a commensurate response, and I don't think the Premier understands that, because she continues to undermine Canada's response to the issue by taking our most powerful weapons in a trade war off the table.

We know that energy exports are going to be a significant hit to the Americans if we respond appropriately with measures designed to punish the Americans for the tariffs that they impose on us, but the Premier has said no, we cannot do that. Right from the beginning she's tying our hands behind our back and making it even more likely that Canada lose this trade war and potentially lose our sovereignty.

Now, I know that the Premier is not a big fan of the government of Canada, and maybe the issue of sovereignty isn't one that's important to her. I don't know. But it is very important to the constituents of Edmonton-Gold Bar, and they want a Premier and a cabinet that is willing to stand up in defence of Canada and do everything possible to defend our sovereignty, and they are disgusted that the Premier continues to hamstring the Canadians' efforts to fight this existential threat.

Now, Mr. Speaker, what we have heard is what the government is not willing to do to fight the threat of tariffs and to stand up for Canadian sovereignty. What we haven't heard from any members is what the government is willing to do. We have heard no solutions or proposals for fighting and winning this trade war, and there are plenty to be had. You know, a lot of people, including the current Premier's predecessor, Jason Kenney, have talked about improving Alberta's access to Canadian markets by reducing interprovincial trade barriers. That's something that the Premier maybe should spend her time talking more about with her colleagues rather than alienating them by throwing them under the bus and trying to curry favour with the President of the United States.

You know, maybe we should encourage Albertans to buy local. It has been interesting to me to see that other Premiers across Canada are jumping on the buy-local bandwagon. We've seen the Premier of Ontario pull American-made liquor products from government-owned liquor stores in that province. We also saw the Premier of British Columbia pull American-owned products from their liquor stores. It would be interesting if the Premier would do something with the millions and millions of dollars of government procurement from American sources to at least make a symbolic gesture to the people of Alberta that they are standing up to the Americans, but they won't even do that, Mr. Speaker.

4:00

I certainly hope that throughout the debate this afternoon we hear more solutions from the government rather than an explanation of the problem and a lengthy discussion of why they fail to address it, because all of the people of Alberta are desperately waiting for answers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

The Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation, followed by Calgary-Klein.

Mr. Sigurdson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and of course I just want to thank the Government House Leader for suspending the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly to be able to discuss this matter of urgent public importance; of course, the proposed U.S. tariffs on Canadian products and the impacts that this could have on Alberta consumers and overall the Alberta economy.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't surprise me that when I hear a bit of the debate happening on the other side of the aisle from the opposition, they seem to want to defend the current Liberal government and Trudeau over the past nine years. I will tell you how I feel and what I hear broadly travelling across this province, that it's more than obvious that the broad-based 25 and 10 tariff is a result of the poor policies of the current federal Liberal government and the complete and utter lack of leadership over the last nine years. Now, of course, I'm very proud of our Premier because in the void of that leadership she has stepped up, and I do believe because of what she has been doing, advocating on behalf of Alberta and subsequently all of Canada, that we have seen a delay to the implementation of the tariffs on the majority of

Canadian products. Of course, there are still many unknowns, and this is a situation that's progressing day by day.

As ag minister, they've also made comments that we're not talking about agriculture at all. Well, I'm going to zone down right onto agriculture right now and talk about what we've been doing in our department. I can assure Albertans that my entire department is fully engaged in ongoing discussions with federal and international partners to safeguard Alberta's agricultural industry and preserve our vital access to the U.S. market while also looking at opportunities through this to diversify our markets. This is something I've been communicating as a minister with the Premier directly on, and though they say that she's only focused on oil and gas, I know that's not true. The conversations I've had with the Premier, the work that she's been doing down in the U.S.: she's been advocating on behalf of all industries here in Alberta.

With that, also we've had discussions and we have had conversations over the last two years about the importance as well of diversifying our markets. We just heard the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar saying that we haven't moved forward with any initiatives to be able to increase trade even within our own country here in Canada. That's not true. Of course, based on the Lloydminster pilot that we've just concluded, as a result of that we're working with CFIA to be able to expand trade for processed meats across different provinces. That has been a great result. We continue looking forward to continuing to expand more pilots to increase trade between provinces.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Also, when it comes to being proud Albertans, our ag department as well has the made-in-Alberta labelling system and program in which made-in-Alberta products can get labelling so that people here know that they're buying products that are made and sourced locally here in the province.

As well with that, we talk about diversifying the market and how important that is. As the ag minister I totally agree with that. This is why this government has been advocating for more pipelines. That may not seem like it is a benefit to agriculture, but as we continue to advocate for more pipelines in our country, that provides more rail access to our agricultural industry to get more of their commodities to ports so they can ship internationally.

Now, with that, of course, as we progress through this situation, it's very important that at the same time the minister and our entire government continue to be committed to connecting with our producers and processors to make sure that we understand fully their concerns and that we are working together to ensure that we maintain a strong and vibrant economy, especially our oil and gas and our agricultural industry here in Alberta among all industries.

As we look at the broader context, we can't overstate how important it is to continue to have strong trade relations with the United States, especially as it relates to agriculture. The U.S., of course, is Alberta's most important trading partner as it relates to agriculture. They are a friend and ally. This is a relationship that we are committed to protecting and something we know we want to continue to grow.

In 2024 Alberta exported \$9.3 billion in agrifood products to the U.S., including cattle, beef, canola, processed potatoes. You heard the Premier talk a little bit about how much is happening in processed potatoes in the agricultural space, among other commodities. This is just a fraction, though, of the total value of trade between our two regions, and it underscores the deep integration of our agricultural industries. Agriculture itself, I would state, when you look at Canada-U.S. relations, is probably one of our most integrated industries in North America.

Now, the benefits of this mutually beneficial relationship go beyond just these simple trade statistics. Of course, cattle from Alberta help keep U.S. beef processing plants operational, and as well with that they support American jobs. Similarly, U.S. dairy farmers rely on Alberta's canola meal to enhance milk production. A 25 per cent tariff, of course, on Alberta canola meal would directly raise the cost of milk for American consumers.

These are just some examples of the interwoven nature of our industries and the direct impact tariffs would have on both sides of the border and, when it comes to what we're actually doing, which is making sure that we're having these important conversations to illustrate that to our U.S. counterparts, the extent of the integration of our industries and how a tariff on Canadian agriculture and other industries will negatively affect U.S. industries and U.S. agriculture.

Now, let us not forget that agriculture itself is not just about economics. It's also about communities, something that's incredibly important. Alberta's agricultural industry is a backbone for many of our rural communities. It contributes billions to our economy every year, and it helps feed the world. The world is increasingly looking to Canada to help solve global food shortages. Of course, I always say that Alberta's farmers and ranchers are always willing to rise to that occasion. Our government works diligently to maintain and expand international trade relationships, ensuring that Alberta-made agrifood products reach new markets and contribute to global food security and affordability.

With that as well, I do want to point out that some of the conversations I've had in the U.S. are how important it is for us to continue the free flow of trade in the agricultural space. We are stronger together. I even look back in times of hardship such as droughts. Alberta and the U.S. have a long history of supporting one another. During the 2021 drought alone U.S. producers turned to Alberta for hay to feed livestock; in turn, while we've seen droughts up here, we've relied on U.S. feed as well. This mutual support is just another example of the deep ties we share and the importance of preserving access to each other's markets.

4:10

The reality is that any tariff on agricultural products would have wide-reaching consequences. It would raise the cost for U.S. businesses and farmers, and more importantly it'll drive up the cost for citizens in the U.S. to feed their families, something we continue to communicate with our U.S. partners so that we continue to put that pressure on why they shouldn't be implementing these broad-based tariffs.

Now, Madam Speaker, protecting Alberta's agricultural industry is integral to all of our communities here in Alberta and so many hard-working farming and ranching families, and we will continue to engage with our federal and international partners to actively monitor developments and keep an open line of communication with our producers and processors. We'll do everything in our power as a government here in Alberta to ensure that our farmers and ranchers and agrifood businesses can thrive in a competitive and open market. I look forward as the minister of agriculture to more conversations to do that.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

Member Tejada: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm happy to speak to this motion. I know that I've been hearing from hundreds of Albertans, hundreds of constituents who are feeling the weight and the uncertainty of the threat of tariffs from this newly elected President Trump. The overarching message that I'm getting from

my constituents is that they are proud Albertans and Canadians. I think, more than ever, many of us are standing strong as Canadians, and we know that a threat to any one of our industries is a threat to all of us and that harm to any of our industries in Canada impacts us all. So that old saying that there's no "I" in "team": especially relevant right now.

They know that the threats of tariffs present a significant risk to trade, that our economies between nations are interdependent, and that the punitive political whims of President Trump will put that trade relationship, our exports and the jobs that they create, in grave danger. These are the concerns raised by the residents of Calgary-Klein, by families who rely on strong trade relationships for their livelihoods, consumers concerned about the almost impossible cost of living that they're already experiencing, and small-business owners who are already stretched to their limits.

In Calgary-Klein I'm very fortunate to have an enormous industrial area as well as really thriving communities. We have restaurants, cafés, auto shops, welding shops, cabinetmakers, retailers, brewers, bakers, and liquor stores. I think back to a conversation I had just last week with one of my constituents, Gary. He's a local business owner concerned about how he'll plan his purchasing from here on out given the rising costs not only on imports but what tariffs can mean to domestic products as well.

Many of the business owners that I'm speaking to are worried about staying afloat, and let's not forget that these small businesses are often the heart of their community. They create jobs, space for community events, the arts, and make our neighbourhoods vibrant places to live. My own daughter has recently been employed by a local restaurant that we frequented since her babyhood, and they rely on a mix of imported and domestic products to run their business. These businesses are the heart and soul of the community, and their impacts span generations, as we can see just even in my own family's case.

At the end of the day it is in the interest of all Albertans for the government to implement a well-designed plan to protect jobs and livelihoods and to keep our communities thriving. And now here we are, after unsuccessful selfie tours to Mar-a-Lago, camera time with American audiences on Fox. Did we pray for cooler heads to prevail at that prayer breakfast? What were the results of this charm offensive? I'm sad to say that it brings home a line from one of my favourite Johnny Cash songs. "I hear the train a-comin', it's rolling 'round the bend," on March 4, to be exact. We are still getting tariffs.

I remember when Trump won his election that we were the sad witnesses to members from the other side dancing with glee. What we needed was a show of strength, and we needed this government to stand up for Albertans, for Canadians, for our economy, and for our sovereignty. Instead, they cheered on the people who are now threatening us with tariffs. This could cause job losses in the order of 20,000 to 30,000 over the next two years.

While a lower tariff on oil and gas is better than its original 25 per cent, this government needs to do a lot more about the impact of tariffs on our critically important export industries. I'm glad to hear the member opposite talking about agriculture – of course, a pillar of our economy here in Alberta – forestry, and manufacturing. We've offered to work together on a united approach to protect Alberta exporters and jobs, and they gave that a pass. The Premier refused to sign a joint statement with all the other provincial and territorial Premiers on the tariff crisis, in fact, undermining our position, and the arrogance has been astounding.

When Alberta's New Democrats form government, we'll work hard every day for all of us. We'll never let Albertans and Canadians down. What we can do now is implore this government to show up and do the work. We need to have a real plan for

ensuring our economy is best protected from tariffs. We need to strengthen our internal economy, as many have mentioned here, make the case to the U.S. on how important we are to their economy, build our trade relationships across the world, and diversify our markets.

Let's make sure that Alberta can be prosperous for all of us. Let's support our local businesses and entrepreneurs. They need to be top of mind when it comes to procurement plans, not the UCP's friends and insiders. Above all, let's take notes from our recent hockey win and take a Team Canada approach.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Mrs. Petrovic: Thank you, Madam Speaker. We stand at a pivotal moment in our province's history. It's not just important; it's essential that we acknowledge Alberta's undeniable role in driving not only our provincial economy but the prosperity of our entire nation. Let's be clear. Alberta is the energy engine of Canada. Without us the lights go out, the machines stop running, and the economy grinds to a halt. Alberta's oil, gas, and other energy products don't just heat our homes and power our industries; they are the backbone of Canada's international trade relationships. Specifically, Alberta's energy fuels the United States. In 2023 alone, we exported \$127.5 billion in energy to one of our largest trading partners. Without Alberta the U.S. would be forced to rely on less reliable and less responsible nations to meet its energy needs.

The message is simple: Alberta is North America's energy security. Time and time again Alberta has stepped up to meet the needs of our partners, yet we now face unprecedented challenges from our own federal government. Recently we've heard alarming suggestions of policies that would cripple our energy industry, everything from export tariffs to halting energy exports to the United States. These aren't just misguided ideas; they're economic sabotage. Let me be crystal clear. Alberta's government will not stand idly by while Ottawa jeopardizes our energy sector and the livelihoods of Canadians from coast to coast. Any move to impose tariffs or restrict our exports would deal a devastating blow not just to Alberta but to the entire Canadian economy. We are proud of the energy we produce and the good-paying jobs we create, but Alberta cannot continue to shoulder this burden alone. The time has come for the federal government to stop undermining our industry and start standing shoulder to shoulder with us, defending our resources, our jobs, and our way of life.

In 2023 Alberta supplied approximately 56 per cent of the U.S.'s crude oil imports. But let's face it. Relying so heavily on a single customer is a risk we can no longer afford. With a shifting political landscape in the United States, we must diversify our trading partnerships, expand our energy exports, and ensure Alberta's energy is never held hostage by external threats.

To my colleagues in Ottawa, particularly the Liberal Members of Parliament, it's time to do your homework. I recently met with two Liberal MPs who had no idea just how much Alberta contributes to Canada's energy exports. That level of ignorance is not only unacceptable, it's a slap in the face to every Canadian whose livelihood depends on the sector. So here's a lesson: Alberta is not the problem; Alberta is the solution. So, Ottawa, before you propose policies that threaten our industry, take the time to understand the facts. We're not just asking for favours; we're demanding informed leadership.

Looking ahead, we must prioritize infrastructure development, pipelines, export terminals, and transportation networks that will allow us to access global markets and deliver on our energy

responsibilities. It's time to fast-track approvals for projects like Northern Gateway and Energy East, ensuring our resources can reach tidewater and compete on the global stage. Let's stop tying Alberta's hands and start empowering our province to reach its full economic potential. Alberta is committed to being a reliable and responsible energy supplier for Canada and the rest of the world, but we need the federal government to get on board to support policies that protect our resources, our economy, and our future. The era of division must end. Let's work together to build the infrastructure, trade relationships, and policies that will secure prosperity for generations to come.

4:20

The Deputy Speaker: The new hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

Member Miyashiro: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm really pleased to hear that we're actually talking about agriculture and we're talking about something other than just oil and gas all the time in this whole talk about tariffs. The census metropolitan area for Lethbridge, which includes parts of Cardston-Siksika, which also includes parts of Taber-Warner, we have an export value of about \$2.2 billion and about 92 per cent of those exports go to the U.S. That's almost 20 per cent of our GDP in the city of Lethbridge in our area.

What's problematic about that for us is that we don't have a plan, and we haven't seen a plan from this government to deal with that prior to this week, a few days before the tariffs are going to be implemented. We're in a position in southern Alberta where not only are we in a vulnerable position with these tariffs, but if these tariffs go through and our fresh water is contaminated by coal mining in the eastern slopes, our agrifood production in southern Alberta will be decimated.

It's not just about tariffs, and I want to tie this in to the ongoing fight about coal mining in the eastern slopes because it's existential for us in southern Alberta. This affects not just Lethbridge-West or Lethbridge-East. This affects Livingstone-Macleod. This affects Brooks-Medicine Hat. This affects Cypress-Medicine Hat. This affects Taber-Warner. We need to really protect our resources and protect what we have.

Southern Alberta is known as Canada's agrifood corridor, and it stretches all the way from just outside of Lethbridge right to Medicine Hat. We have the highest density of food production in Canada, and we need to protect that at all costs. This government has dragged its feet on talking about tariffs and what we're going to do to protect our jobs in Alberta. We need to do that. We need to have a plan right away to protect Alberta jobs and to protect Alberta's goods. The other thing is to stop coal mining in the eastern slopes now and allow us to flourish as an agrifood processor. This government needs a plan, and we need a plan now. Actually, we needed a plan last month.

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

Mr. Rowsell: Thank you, Madam Speaker. In 1984 the Progressive Conservative party led by Brian Mulroney defeated the Trudeau Liberals, who were skeptical of free trade with the United States. Under Mulroney's leadership, Canada and the U.S. negotiated the Canada-U.S. free trade agreement, which was later expanded to NAFTA with the inclusion of Mexico.

At the time, the Liberals and the NDP strongly opposed the deal. However, it became a cornerstone of both Canada's and the United States' economic growth by removing trade barriers, making life more prosperous for both nations, and setting a global example of the benefits of trade liberalization.

Alberta remains as an economic engine of Canada's prosperity. It contributes significantly to Canada's national GDP with abundant natural resources and industrious, innovative citizens. Our province plays a critical role in our nation's economic growth. The energy sector alone accounts for a substantial portion of Canada's total output, producing about 84 per cent of Canada's oil in 2023. This dominance not only fuels our industries but also supports tens of thousands of jobs, builds communities across Alberta, and supplies 4.3 million barrels of oil daily to the United States, contributing to approximately 52 per cent of the crude imports that the Americans take. Alberta's economy continues to diversify and grow. It has a big impact contributing to prosperity nationally and globally, especially to our neighbours in the south.

However, Madam Speaker, recent actions by the United States administration pose a significant threat to our economic stability. After over 40 years of free trade the U.S. President has demanded that our federal government intensify efforts to stop the flow of fentanyl into their country under the threat of imposing a 25 per cent tariff on Canadian exports. It's concerning that the new U.S. President felt the need to threaten his closest ally. However, his concerns over border security are reasonable. Ensuring the safety of citizens and maintaining the integrity of our border has always been a fundamental responsibility of the federal government.

Alberta, as the nation's economic engine, would be the most directly and negatively impacted province by any tariffs imposed by the U.S. administration or retaliatory tariffs proposed by our own federal government. Industries like energy and agriculture are dependent on free trade and U.S. markets. A 25 per cent tariff on either side would not only disrupt trade but also jeopardize thousands of jobs and livelihoods of Albertans.

I just wanted to interject here that I'm one of the members of the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region, and every January we go down to do capital visits. Myself, personally, this year, I went to the Montana state capital and the Washington state capital. While we were in Montana, we met with the Director of Agriculture and he said, you know, everything is where it is because that's where it should be. Over 150 years we've determined that we should produce calves in Montana, ship them up to Alberta, fatten them up there. We'll buy their fats, bring them down, and slaughter them in our only plant. As a matter of fact, 50 per cent of their volume that goes through their plant comes from Alberta. Well, if tariffs and stuff like that disrupted that trade and they didn't get that 50 per cent, that plant's no longer viable. They're afraid, in their case, that they might lose their slaughtering plant because of tariffs imposed by the United States.

This is why our Premier has advocated for a measured and diplomatic response, emphasizing collaboration over confrontation. As early as November last year, when the then President-elect announced potential tariffs on Canadian imports, our Premier urged the federal government to take immediate action to secure our borders. Recognizing the urgency of the matter, our provincial leadership made clear calls for implementing robust measures to prevent illegal drug trafficking and enhancing border security.

The federal government's response, in contrast, was to propose a reciprocal 25 per cent tariff on American exports. Such a move is not only counterproductive but also detrimental to Canadian consumers and businesses. Many constituents are already struggling with the high cost of living due to the federal government's reckless spending. Imposing additional tariffs would only exacerbate this burden, effectively serving as a tax on our own people.

Recognizing the potential fallout from the retaliatory measures, federal officials continue to publicly and privately float the idea of cutting off energy supplies to the United States and imposing export

tariffs on Alberta's energy and other products. Our Premier sought a different path: directly engaging with the U.S. President and senior American officials to find a mutually beneficial solution.

The Alberta government has always been clear that Alberta wants to be part of Team Canada and always will be. However, as we navigate these discussions with the United States, we also need Team Canada to be Team Alberta. That means scrapping the destructive federal energy production cap as a show of commitment to North America energy security and partnership. Many of my constituents depend on it.

I'm encouraged to see progress, with the federal government finally working towards enhancing border security and addressing loopholes in our immigration system, but for Team Canada to also be Team Alberta, the federal government must repeal the policies that hinder our energy sector's growth. This includes the immediate repeal of Bill C-69 and fast-tracking projects like Northern Gateway and Energy East, essential steps to reaffirming our position as a reliable energy partner and expanding our global trade relationships.

Alberta, and specifically our Premier, has been proactive in addressing the root causes of the U.S. administration's concerns. The province has already implemented measures to combat illegal drug trafficking and has closely collaborated with U.S. agencies to ensure the effectiveness of these initiatives. Our commitment to maintaining the high standards of border security is unwavering, demonstrating to both the federal government and the United States that we are here to work with them, not against them. It is only fair that the federal government considers the unique challenges Alberta faces. Policies should support our province and not hinder the industries that form the backbone of our provincial and national economies.

Madam Speaker, Alberta will remain committed to being Team Canada. We urge the federal government to adopt an approach that prioritizes diplomatic and economic stability and the well-being of all Canadians, just as our Premier has shown, to get us through this unprecedented time.

Thank you.

4:30

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

Mr. Ip: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to the motion under Standing Order 30, and it's my pleasure to offer some of my thoughts. I think there's consensus in this Chamber that we are in a critical moment in this province's history where we're not only under significant tariff threats from an American President with autocratic leanings but our very sovereignty is at stake; in fact, probably the most serious threat to our sovereignty in over a hundred years. And, make no mistake, as we all agree, U.S. tariffs will be devastating to Albertans, all Canadians, and, frankly, the economies on both sides of the border.

In fact, it's already having an impact, sending chills across major industries. According to a recent CBC interview, for example, Greig Mordue, a former auto industry executive and associate professor at McMaster University remarks – and it's a very interesting quote – he says: whether or not they are ever put into place, the damage is done. He continues: Trump's threats have already changed the landscape. Whether he goes ahead with the tariffs or not, or whether he carves out specific exemptions, the threat alone will drive investment out of Canada and into the U.S. End quote.

Madam Speaker, really, for the next four years, according to many industry experts, there will be no serious investment in the

Canadian automotive industry as well as other sectors. We're certainly seeing impacts on the construction industry, the energy sector, agriculture, small businesses, all vital to Alberta's economy.

In this particular moment I want to actually talk about leadership, because instead of strong, decisive leadership from the Premier at a moment where leadership matters, where unity matters, the Premier decides to engage in freelance diplomacy; continues to appeal to her base, who largely support Trump; and naively believed that a brief meeting with President Trump would effectively solve the problem. Well, the truth is – and I think Albertans see through it – that her advocacy hasn't worked.

All the while this UCP government has taken a fragmented approach. At a moment when it is crucial to stand proud as Canadians, defend our sovereignty, and take a Team Canada approach, the Premier and this government have taken a go-it-alone approach. That has not only weakened Canada's position, but it has also weakened Alberta's position. In fact, the Premier refused to sign a joint statement with all other provincial and territorial Premiers on a co-ordinated Team Canada response to the tariff crisis, and according to Canada's former chief negotiator she significantly undermined Canada's bargaining position.

Madam Speaker, the Premier talks about, in some cases – and I find this troubling – acquiescing to President Trump's demands, whether it's on border security or other matters, but what she doesn't talk about is a cohesive strategy that leverages our relationships and friendships with other provinces within the federation in our own country. We only hear about grievances, and that's the difference between members on this side of the House and the UCP government. On this side of the House we are proud Albertans and proud Canadians.

We've heard from government members who say, you know, that they're on Team Canada, but their actions reflect otherwise. The Premier and those close to her seem, at times, to give a nod to separatism. I think we all are aware that her own deputy chief of staff has flirted with separatism in tweets, that he has since deleted. But I should also mention that this government has been largely silent about the impact of tariffs on . . .

Mr. Williams: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader on a point of order.

Point of Order

Allegations against a Member

Mr. Williams: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise only on a point of order on 23(h) concerning allegations made of another member, specifically pointing out the Premier flirting with separation. That is drawing into question her intentions, whether or not she is a proud Canadian, and whether or not she is loyal to the oath she has sworn to His Majesty. These are inappropriate comments to level against another member of this Legislature. The Premier has both publicly, in her recent comments, said that she is a proud Canadian and wants to see a strong, united Canada and also, in her oath that she took when she took office, committed to this country loyally. To question that is questioning the reputation and the commitment of a member of the Legislature in a way that is completely inappropriate.

I appreciate the point the member is making. I ask him to withdraw and please make it in a way that doesn't draw into question the loyalty of any member of this House to our great country of Canada and His Majesty the King.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think what my colleague was saying, if I heard him correctly, was that the Premier's own deputy chief of staff was flirting with separatists, and he referred to a tweet that's now been deleted. But, in any event, it's a matter of debate that somebody has sympathies for separatism as shown through their tweets, their behaviour. It's a matter of debate. It's not a point of order.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, I'll admit that I never heard the member specifically making allegations against the Premier. I also heard the member speak against the deputy chief of staff. I apologize if I misheard. In any event, while we're having a lovely debate here on behalf of our constituents in this House, it's a good time to remind all members to be careful with the words that we say in this House while we're representing our constituents. I know that the hon. member who is speaking certainly knows that. I will not find a point of order at this time, but my caution has been given.

Hon. member, you may proceed.

Debate Continued

Mr. Ip: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just want to continue by mentioning that the government has largely been silent on the impact of tariffs on many critically important export industries, including agriculture, forestry, and manufacturing. And I should add that other than currying favour with Trump, which has not worked, does not work, and actually puts us at further risk, this government doesn't seem to have a cohesive plan.

As my colleagues have already mentioned, on this side of the House we're willing to actually work with the government to collaboratively come up with proactive solutions. So I'd actually like to continue the debate with a series of questions if I may, Madam Speaker, and I want to really ask the government: what have they done, since the tariffs were announced by President Trump, to focus on strengthening our internal economy? What have they done to ensure that we are addressing interprovincial trade barriers, as an example, that we're buying Canadian within Alberta, that we're implementing perhaps buy-Canadian procurement policies within the government of Alberta?

Madam Speaker, it's particularly troubling, as my colleagues have previously mentioned, that the Premier has effectively taken off the table our largest and biggest bargaining chip, which is energy. She has effectively said on more than one occasion that we will not use energy as a bargaining chip, and that not only reveals our negotiation hand, but it effectively undermines any sort of leverage we might have as a province and as a country, and that's troubling.

I think, you know, perhaps the government should take a page out of our book on this side of the House and try to actually get a pipeline built in the same way that previous Premier Notley and Naheed Nenshi have done. I want to know what they've done since the tariffs have been announced to engage with the private sector. What have they done to help and continue to diversify our economy, and what's the plan to protect small businesses if and when the tariffs actually are implemented?

4:40

This is a moment where we need actual, tangible results from this government, not just rhetoric, and all we have heard are, in fact, mixed signals and confusing rhetoric from the Premier. It clearly shows that there is no plan. Madam Speaker, Albertans are watching. We expect more from Alberta's government.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Wright: Thank you, Madam Speaker. This is an unprecedented issue, and I appreciate that we're having this conversation, though I find it incredibly frustrating that this Assembly is rising to speak to this matter before our prorogued federal government does.

We've had, you know, quite the interesting ride here these last few months in Ottawa and Washington, so I thought I'd use a bit of a whimsical approach and sum up this whole situation with a story. Now, I know Christmas is over, but our story is going to sound a little bit like a Christmas classic although it derails rather quickly.

It's the week before tariffs and all through the country the federal government isn't stirring, not even the Prime Minister remotely. With the border concerns hung by the fireplace with care, the Prime Minister throws his hands up in the air. "I don't care if I gave my word to meet the border concerns or meet the minimum military spendings. I'm a postnational leader; these things are below me," cries Trudeau. "I know what we'll do," schemed the Prime Minister. "If I don't get my way, I'll impose tariffs, too." With all the Premiers gathered, Trudeau, the great creator of this nation's failings, begins to sell the idea that nothing is wrong with his plan and his failings. Diplomacy won't be used. We'll use counter tariffs. That'll work. "I have a plan," confidently states the Prime Minister. "We'll fire back with tariffs of our own to protect our dairy cabal and maple syrup mafia in Ontario and Quebec. Alberta, your oil will foot the bill. To ensure Canadians go along with this plan, I'm proposing pandemic-level, inflation-creating spending to continue to destroy – I mean grow and protect – our economy. We'll also spend \$5 billion to send to Ukraine, and I'll consider sending underequipped Canadian troops there, too."

Unfortunately, a number of the Premiers nod along in blind bad faith to Trudeau's plan, but one recognizes the scheme for what it is: a blatant attempt to break Canada's commitment and prove that our national word means nothing. "Diplomacy, not retaliation, is the best way for a country to stifle the risks of punishing new trade sanctions," states Alberta's Premier. Trudeau scoffs at Alberta's Premier, but to Trudeau's dismay more and more Premiers recognized that she knew the way. Canada's commitment is what is needed, and that's why a full-court press of Premiers were down in Washington. Manitoba's Premier Wab Kinew acknowledged that the NATO commitment concern was valid and that Canada has failed to meet its requirements. He's even quoted: I want Canadians to see this as a national security issue; it's an investment in the Canadian Armed Forces, but I encourage Canadians to also think of it as an investment in trade.

All satire aside, Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister's approach of threats and reckless spending is going to leave Canada more doomed than his political career. His announcement of pandemic-level spending will destroy what's left of our economy. I know people's memories can be short, but we're still feeling the inflation-driven price hikes at grocery stores and gas stations and on our utility bills.

While Canadians are rightly concerned by the threat of a 25 per cent tariff from the U.S., they seem to be overlooking an equally damaging 20 per cent Canadian tariff coming from Ottawa on April 1 that will affect every single Canadian. And by Canadian tariff I mean carbon tax increase.

Let's look at the inflationary pressures of Trudeau's proposal. Pandemic-level spendings. Well, during the pandemic inflation soared to an astronomical 6.5 per cent, 7.7 per cent, and a terrifying 8.1 per cent month over month. If we look at the span of 2020 to 2022, there was a nearly 34 per cent increase in inflation over this

time period, leading to the economic mess that we as a nation are still struggling to clean up. Now, all of this just to support a frail ego of a failing Prime Minister. Inflation spending will not stave off tariff effects. It will just make things worse.

Let's change gears a bit and talk about drugs and organized crime. This is another issue raised by the U.S. President as well as state representatives and Senators, yet many Canadians seem to overlook or question whether it's even a problem. Well, the answer is yes. Drugs and organized crime are a problem in Canada.

The term "super lab" has been surfacing frequently and even most recently by the Deputy Premier. What exactly are they, and do they exist in Canada? Well, the Deputy Premier mentioned one right here in Alberta, but there's another one. See, these super labs manufacture fentanyl on an industrial scale, and the RCMP just dismantled one in Falkland, B.C., in October, a \$485 million criminal organization containing 54 kilograms of fentanyl, 390 kilograms of meth, 35 kilograms of cocaine, 15 kilograms of MDMA, six kilograms of cannabis, precursor chemicals or the ingredients to make these drugs, submachine guns, explosive devices, and half a million dollars in cash.

Assistant Commissioner David Teboul, head of the RCMP in B.C., states that "the precursor chemicals, in combination with the finished fentanyl products seized at this location, could have amounted to 95,500,000 million potentially lethal doses of Fentanyl" entering communities and markets abroad, and by "markets abroad" we should really say the U.S. He continued that the 95 million potential lethal doses of fentanyl that were seized could have taken the lives of every single Canadian twice over. So these super labs are a big deal. They highlight the risks these cartels and triads pose to North American communities. They underscore the need to enforce our laws, scrap the broken catch-and-release bail system, deport noncitizens who break our laws, and reclaim our country from criminal elites and their federal enablers.

Canada's federal government has been fostering an environment where organized crime thrives. This extends well beyond the drug production and actually even into logistical international transport. In California the FBI arrested a Canadian long-haul truck driver carrying 990 pounds of meth, 734 pounds of cocaine originating from Ontario. In June '23 U.S. law enforcement arrested another Canadian truck driver carrying 211 pounds of drugs. September 2024: 274 pounds of illicit substances. But the most glaring came in December of 2024, when two Canadian truck drivers were arrested in Illinois with 1,146 pounds of cocaine worth \$40 million. Had that shipment been caught at the border, it would have accounted for 25 per cent of the annual known drug busts entering the U.S., which is why our sheriffs stationed two kilometres from the border are so vital, that these types of things can get caught.

They highlight how organized crime is exploiting Canada's failing infrastructure and border security systems. However, this is not an indictment of Canadian trucking. Canadian truck drivers have played a crucial role in keeping the economy afloat during the pandemic and its subsequent recovery. Rather, it's a call to recognize how criminals are taking advantage of weak federal enforcement by our federal government.

I recently had an opportunity to attend several intergovernmental meetings since the fall session. Many of the President's statements have been echoed at a state level by Senators and representatives at the Council of State Governments – West as well as the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region's capital visits. Discussions covered drugs, organized crime, NATO commitment, and the potential of Canada's federal government being influenced by China.

It was a Colorado state rep who encouraged me to go watch the testimony of a former CSIS intelligence officer who stated that every government from Mr. Mulroney to Mr. Trudeau has been

compromised by Communist China. A Democrat Californian state representative brought to my attention all of the examples of the previously mentioned concerns with long-haul drivers. Many state elected officials have also brought up concerns about the Vancouver model of money laundering. That's where organized crime uses the casinos in British Columbia to launder their money.

Madam Speaker, it goes much further, and honestly, when we move past President Trump's bravado and troll approach, the core issue remains: he demands that Canada take action and responsibility for what is happening in its own backyard. Diplomacy and a hardline stance on drugs and organized crime are the only way out of this tariff situation we find ourselves in. It's time for Canada to accept the reality instead of pointing everywhere else and saying "they're the problem" or "they're worse."

4:50

If Trudeau, the great creator of Canadian destruction, truly wanted to help Canadians, he would use diplomacy, take responsibility for the border drug and crime issue he created, and he'd abandon his thick-witted, postnational mentality. Trudeau needs to listen to his own Bank of Canada, which warns that a tariff war with Trump would obliterate what remains of the Canadian economy.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Mr. Kasawski: Thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, this debate: I'm glad it's been brought up. It begs the question that we need to ask the government: do you get the assignment?

Albertans get the assignment, Madam Speaker. President Trump has been speaking of annexing Canada. He's been speaking about it since he was elected. When he took office, it became clear that he was not just talking whimsically about this, that this manifest destiny of building a larger America that would take in Canada is what his goal is. Albertans got the assignment, and we saw that immediately in the stores. We saw that immediately with the efforts to buy locally, and it wasn't something that had to be said. Albertans got the assignment.

This government does not get the assignment. The U.S. President started talking about annexing Canada, and they thought: what a great opportunity to take more vacations to the United States. And while they're there, they're trying their best to get the attention of people down in the U.S. that are not concerned with Canadians. They do not get the assignment.

Team Canada last Thursday got the assignment. When they were getting ready for the game, they knew what was on the line. They knew the rhetoric that was going on in the political world, and they had a hockey game they needed to play. It was a magnificent hockey game, Madam Speaker, so indulge me for a little while while I just show how important it is to get the assignment.

We had a team captain from Coal Harbour, Nova Scotia, backed by an outstanding goaltender from Ontario, from the same place as the outstanding Connor McDavid, Richmond Hill. The game started out with an amazing shot from Nathan MacKinnon from Halifax, Nova Scotia, to get us the lead, and then two inconsequential American hockey players scored some goals. But then, with an amazing effort from a former Calgary Flame, Sam Bennett from Holland Landing, Ontario, tied the game, which took us into overtime. Our goaltender from Ontario did an amazing job, and he kept us in the game, and then Cale Makar from Calgary caught the puck at the point. He passed it along the boards to Mitch Marner from Richmond Hill, Ontario, who immediately passed it to Connor McDavid and put it in the back of the net. Everyone in

Canada felt the great joy because together as a united nation we felt immense pride in our team that was playing for our nation. Team Canada's hockey team got the assignment.

It's so important to bring this up, Madam Speaker, even though it's a wonderful story, because what Albertans want right now is a well-designed plan to protect the jobs and livelihoods of workers, of every single Albertan, and Albertans want us to emerge from this threat better than ever. You want to get rich? Do you want to build wealth and prosperity here in Alberta? Let's produce things. Let's create things. Let's grow things. Let's develop things made locally in Alberta, and let's develop a plan that knows the government has the assignment and they get the assignment.

Right now this government thinks that this existential threat of tariffs is an opportunity to rag against the federal government. There is no Canadian government that has done anything that has led to the situation we're in. If the people across the way are going to try to imagine that Erin O'Toole or Andrew Scheer would have put us in a better position than we're in right now, that is a foolish idea.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Canada must stand together as a nation and be united, and we need to work. So when I hear the Premier and the House leader talking about allies, I want you to think about our allies that are inside Canada. I am so happy when the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat talked about the best Premier in Canada, Wab Kinew, and his statements because he is doing an amazing job representing his province. He gets the assignment. So many times I think in this Legislature the members across the way have a failure to understand what is our job as a province and what is the role of the government of Canada.

We find ourselves at this critical crossroads, Mr. Speaker, in a place where decisions made in the halls of power in the U.S. are going to impact the economy and our daily lives. We have the uncertainty of the tariffs, which we've all talked about. We know of contractors that aren't getting work because people aren't sure they should go ahead. They're not sure how the economy is going to fare this year.

Let's be clear. Donald Trump has started an economic war with Canada. So let's turn to our allies, and those allies are Canadians. Like the players on our hockey team, they're from across Canada. Let's stay focused here to make sure that we have the opportunity to build our markets inside our country. We need to lead this country in interprovincial trade. We need to lead this country in breaking down the barriers. We need to build critical infrastructure so that this is a place and an economy that can thrive with or without the trust of our largest trading partner. We need to focus on productivity, and we know that's been talked about up until this time, but now is the time for the government to focus on it. We expect to see a budget that has put a thoughtful plan in place so that Albertans know that the provincial government of Alberta is considering the years ahead that we have to have under a Trump presidency and they know that our government has their back.

Get the assignment.

Mr. Williams: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to make my point in response to the member who just rose. The dripping condescension that somehow we don't get the assignment on this side because we care about the economic future of our province and of not only our largest trading partner but the world's largest economy is dumbfoundingly off the mark but, more importantly, somehow the idea that the current Liberal government in Ottawa has no part to play in this mess and that Liberal politics and progressive ideas that members opposite espouse have done nothing to lead us here.

Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, we are proud Canadians on this side of the bench, very proud Canadians, proud to be a part of one of the world's greatest countries ever to have existed. But do members opposite understand that a country is not an economy? It needs an economy; it is not exclusively an economy. When you lower flags for six months at a time and remove portraits of the Queen from government buildings, when you put John A. Macdonald underneath a box in front of Queen's Park, when you continue to claim that Canada is a postnational state, it collapses this idea of national identity that is so important, that has thrust us into economic prosperity and one of the greatest countries that the world has ever seen because we knew who we are as Canadians.

Members opposite did not stand at any point and oppose any of this happening. In fact, they cheered it along, Mr. Speaker, and the collapse of the idea of Canada as a nation starts in the progressive policies. Any time you've seen nation-building in this country, you've seen it under Conservatives from coast to coast, not progressive failed Liberal governments or NDP sidekicks that can never make it into government on purpose because Canadians know they're not a serious bunch with what they propose.

These trite condescensions that somehow federal politics don't at all matter around crafting an identity: before we address the question of what we are as an economic union, ask who we are as a people. What was handed down to us by our parents and grandparents who came before us? Are we proud of who we are, or should we self-flagellate for decades ad infinitum? We're imperfect as a country but still the greatest country this world has ever seen. Members opposite will have a short moment of wrapping themselves in the Canadian flag. Soon after, Mr. Speaker, they will turn to their attack on who we are, our inheritance, and what we received as Canadians and Albertans.

5:00

I ask the members of the public, the Albertans who get it, as the members opposite, to remember this moment and this conversation we had because it will not be short order before we see members opposite again condescendingly telling us that we are horrible Albertans, that we have this heritage that we ought to be ashamed of, that we ourselves should not stand because we are somehow not worthy because of the sins of forefathers.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the dripping condescension of that speech is exactly what articulates the lack of trust that Canadians have in progressive politics today, why we'll see Pierre Poilievre, truly a nation builder, get elected federally and why we will see continually Premier Danielle Smith – I withdraw; pardon me – the Premier of this province continue to not only succeed in her work of trying to create interprovincial relationships but international relationships, where we see nothing but attacks of our own country coming out of the Prime Minister's office currently.

If members opposite want to care about our economy, they should care about the national identity first. A country is more than its economy, and members opposite need to appreciate that if you attack every aspect of who we are for decades on end, at some point your voters and wider Canadians might take you seriously. And that, Mr. Speaker, is why we're here today.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. the Minister of Municipal Affairs, followed by Banff-Kananaskis.

Mr. McIver: Okay. Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. I heard some of the comments from across the way, and my colleague just did a great job of dispelling some of what was said. The folks over there talked about missing the assignment. I would say: what assignment did we miss? I can tell you that the folks that are not in tune with Canadians, not in

tune with Albertans in particular, not in tune with making this province better and successful within Canada are the folks across the aisle.

I heard folks say: well, you went down there and took a vacation; nothing happened. I don't know. For the folks across there that like to throw stones but don't pay attention to the details, I would say that the leadership in the U.S. a week ago was saying, "We don't need anything from Canada," and they may say that again, because they're not completely consistent. However, as a sign that our message is getting through, yesterday the President said: we need Keystone XL. Well, who do you think brought that up? That wouldn't be our Premier? Yes, it probably was. I'm sure it was. Listen, the fact is that our message is getting through. There's no guarantee we're going to win, but the folks over there won't even fight. They'll just take it. They're just not interested in even making an effort.

Right from the beginning, when the Premier went down there and spent time with the President and other influencers in the U.S., all of a sudden there was a 25 per cent tariff for Canada and 10 per cent on energy. It wasn't everything we wanted, but that wasn't the end of the fight. That was the start of the fight. So we've gone from that, from not needing anything from Canada, to acknowledging, the President himself saying: "You know what we need? Keystone XL." Well, that's pretty far from saying we don't need anything from Canada. That's billions of dollars apart.

Let me remind the NDP that that's hundreds of thousands of jobs apart. How do I know it's hundreds of thousands of jobs apart? Because the NDP drove 200,000 jobs out of this province in the energy industry in a short period of time when they had the only chance that they had in government and, while we're on that topic, the only government in the long history of Alberta to be fired after one term. The only one-and-done government in the history of Alberta is represented with what's left on the other side of the aisle, Mr. Speaker. So they shouldn't try to lecture anybody on getting the assignment.

When they had an assignment, they messed it up so bad that they didn't get a second chance. The only time in our history that Albertans didn't give their government a second chance was when the folks over there were in charge. Whatever they think the previous government did over 40 years to get fired, they did it in four years. They're overachievers that way. In terms of making Albertans happy, it took the previous government 44 years to make Albertans that mad; it took the folks over there less than four. The folks over there don't get it.

In fact, when you've got our federal government that put us in this position, they would have been gone by now except for the folks over there's boss has kept Trudeau in government for two years or three years longer than he should've been, under the heel, essentially, of a federal government that not only doesn't care about Alberta but doesn't like us. Mr. Speaker, the folks over there are the problem. They don't just represent the problem; they are the problem. They're the ones that have kept Trudeau in power for this long. Them and their boss in Ottawa are the ones that have actually caused the problem. They should be a little bit careful about complaining about who gets the assignment and who does not get the assignment.

Mr. Speaker, as we look forward, I hope that our Premier and other ministers keep going to the United States. I hope they keep talking to them. And you know what? We want all of Canada to benefit. I think the fact that they had the President talking about moving out all of the automobile industry from Ontario is not a good thing, and we need to fight against that, too, because we need all of Canada to succeed.

But Alberta under Conservative governments has actually led the way in terms of promoting internal Canada trade. I mean, let's face it: if you're talking about the GDP of Canada going down by a number of per cent if tariffs come into place, the fact is that if we did what Conservative governments have advocated for for decades, they hold – not just Albertans, Mr. Speaker. They like to wrap themselves in the flag and talk about Team Canada. But on this Conservative side actually it promoted that we beat Team Canada and we take down the provincial trade barriers, and the whole country's GDP would go up by 4 per cent.

Now, for the folks over there – I'm not going to say that. It would be too easy, but it would be cruel.

Mr. Speaker, 4 per cent is a lot of jobs. It's a lot of jobs in Alberta, it's a lot of jobs in all the other provinces and territories in Canada, and it would make a difference between being able to balance a budget, build schools, build hospitals, all the things that governments need to do. The folks over there just don't get it because they think money grows on trees. In fact, what else needs to be protected is our culture. If we don't talk to our folks to the south, then we won't be able to protect that either.

Fortunately, Mr. Speaker, other provinces are starting to get the message, and we're grateful for that. Quebec is even talking about – they haven't quite agreed to it yet, but they're talking about the possibility of pipelines. We get other Premiers and other people talking about border protection. The folks across the way made fun when our Premier and our minister of public safety and others made efforts to assist the federal government in protecting the border. Well, Mr. Speaker, we are Team Canada. Let's face it.

Our Prime Minister promised to try to give us a chance to be able to negotiate with our folks south of the border. He promised 10,000 people to put on the border, but, Mr. Speaker, he doesn't have them. When it's important, did we throw stones? We said, "No. Let's roll up our sleeves. Let's work with them. Let's work with municipalities and see what they've got for manpower and personpower to help out on the border, too." Our minister of public safety and our Premier took the initiative to be Team Canada as did other Premiers and other provinces to bolster border security in their provinces and to help, actually, our current federal government, despite the fact that they've been largely hostile to us.

This is a Team Canada moment, and our government is rising to the challenge. Our ministers are rising to the challenge. Our Premier is rising to the challenge. The folks on the other side have demonstrated here and almost every other day that they don't have a clue.

Mr. Speaker, we actually need to work together. Fortunately for the rest of the country, Alberta's government, the government controlled on this side of the House, will be part of Team Canada. We'll be part of the solution. Otherwise, the folks over there would just be watching TV and saying, "What's happening to us now?" because they don't have a clue and can't even get behind the efforts we're making, not even at this point. We're getting behind the federal government's efforts during this tough time, but the folks there can't even get behind our efforts to protect Canada because all they can think about is their own selfish interests.

Mr. Speaker, for shame.

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

Dr. Elmeligi: Wow. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to get back on task and to get the assignment and to talk about tariffs. I thought that's what we were talking about this afternoon. I'd like to go back to talking about that instead of just throwing insults across the aisle.

I stand here as a proud Albertan and a proud Canadian. Tariffs will hurt everyone. I think we all know that. We all recognize that every Albertan will feel the pinch of increasing costs with exports and imports increasing in cost. This is coming at a time of an affordability crisis where we're already feeling that pinch. So of course we should advocate for Alberta's industries and impacts to Albertans in the face of these tariffs, and we need to work together collaboratively to find solutions that will benefit Albertans and their businesses. Trade is critical to our economy.

5:10

In thinking about what I wanted to say today, I really reflected on the great riding of Banff-Kananaskis because our riding economy is very diverse. From cattle ranching and farming to tourism and small entrepreneurial efforts, each of those businesses will be impacted by the increased costs of exports.

Albertans want us to have a well-designed plan that protects jobs, lifestyles, and livelihoods. They want us to be a government that leads by example and that demonstrates solutions. Regardless of what Trump is doing on the other side of the border, we need a government that is focused on the success of Albertans and the Alberta economy. I mean, I feel like there are some perceptions of what success looks like. I'm talking about all Albertans, not just my friends in high places.

Instead of creating a strong plan that will support all Albertans, our Premier is wasting energy, time, and money trying to charm Trump into changing his mind. I'm not sure that anybody can change this man's mind. Like, he is a very spectacular human. He does and says a lot of things. Nobody really knows who his influencers are, but it's for sure not the Premier of Alberta. So – surprise, surprise – her efforts haven't really worked. The tariffs are still coming.

My constituents are asking us to have a co-ordinated, united approach with other provinces and Canada. They want us to stand together. It's not something that we are perceived as doing. What am I hearing from my constituents, more specifically? Well, from small businesses and tourism-related businesses I'm hearing a lot of fear and concern about what their cost to do business will look like with tariffs and retaliatory tariffs. We know that anything that's exported or imported is going to cost more money. Those increased costs will be passed on to the consumer. We've talked about the devaluation of the Canadian dollar and some pretty big implications.

This is why I think we need to be thinking ahead as a provincial government and putting measures in place that will support local businesses and entrepreneurs, and those systems should be at the forefront of government procurement plans and of any planning. We need to look beyond what happens when the tariffs come into place. How will we make sure that all Albertans have an opportunity to prosper and thrive regardless of what is happening on the other side of the border? What I'm hearing from my constituents is that they're not seeing that kind of response from this provincial government right now.

People always think Banff-Kananaskis is about tourism and mountain biking, and there's certainly a lot of that happening, but we do have three large industry players in the Bow Valley: Lafarge, Baymag, and Graymont. You might not know this, but Lafarge is the largest cement producer in Canada, and 80 per cent of the buildings in western Canada are built with Lafarge cement. They're kind of a big deal. But 80 per cent of the buildings in Canada: they've already got great interprovincial trade relationships.

Graymont and Baymag are smaller facilities. Graymont produces lime and limestone. These calcium-based solutions are important for operational infrastructure, support vital industrial construction,

agricultural processes and requirements. Their applications include air and water purification, extraction and processing of critical minerals, and they have locations across North America. If the tariffs come into place and it becomes cheaper for them to do business at those other locations, I'm worried about what that will mean for the Graymont plant in Exshaw, where hundreds of people currently work. Those jobs are at risk in my riding with these tariffs.

I've also had pretty significant conversations with Baymag, who supplies magnesium oxide, essential to industries that feed and power and ensure clean water across Canada and the U.S. Basically, Baymag mines magnesium carbonate in B.C. and then refines that in Exshaw to become magnesium oxide. It is the only operation of its kind in Canada, and the magnesium oxide that it produces is of such high quality that it is renowned across North America. It is a critical component for industries treating water in oil and gas productions, nutrient supplement in animal feed for beef and dairy, and it's cleaning water in key municipalities' waste-water treatments across North America.

Their ability to meet growing demand and investment will be impacted by these tariffs, so Baymag is asking for magnesium oxide to be considered as being included in the list of critical minerals in this trade discussion. I really hope that the members opposite can consider that when they're having all of these wonderful conversations with people in the States, who are clearly just waiting for direction from Alberta before proceeding with their plans. My riding is dependent on the jobs created and maintained by these industrial partners. They're a big part of who we are in Banff-Kananaskis, and we need to make sure that they are protected as well.

I also have ranchers and agriculturalists in the riding. We know that agriculture and ranching is very exposed in this international trade war. Exports to the U.S. typically increase year over year, and beef is our biggest export, and a lot of that beef comes from Banff-Kananaskis. The live cattle and beef supply chain between Canada and the U.S. makes up the largest two-way trade in live cattle and beef in the world, and I'm definitely grateful for every single steak and ground beef and roast that currently sits inside my freezer that I get from an Alberta rancher every year.

What do we need here? We need solutions instead of rhetoric. We need solutions that will strengthen our internal economy. Buy local. Buy Albertan. Buy Canadian. Across Banff-Kananaskis I feel so blessed that literally I can buy everything in my riding made by people who live in or very close to my riding. We need government of Alberta procurement. I know that this is a very controversial topic right now because there are some questions around procurement, but maybe we could be working with Canadian companies and have a government that leads by example, buying Canadian at the government level. We need to diversify our markets and celebrate new trade relationships, getting our energy products to markets other than the U.S.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland.

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to everybody who has offered comments today on this very important file when it comes down to our number one trading partner, longest standing ally, border friends, neighbours, family members across the border on either side. There have been some comments from across the aisle talking about sojourns and these trips, that we're taking vacations down to the States to talk to our U.S. colleagues.

There's a really weird concept, and I know the members opposite may struggle a little bit with it. It's simply that if you have an issue, you talk to somebody about it. This is nothing simpler than good,

old-fashioned kitchen table diplomacy. We're fortunate enough to have the number one trading partner right across our border. We share a border with Montana, obviously. We're also very fortunate, a number of us as MLAs, to be part of the transboundary groups, the national council of state legislators, the Council of State Governments, the Pacific NorthWest Economic Region, The Energy Council, just to name a few.

It's not just because of the trade issues or the intonations currently of the new administration. We've been talking to these folks for years. Heck, MLAs out in my area, former ministers, were also part of The Energy Council. This is nothing new. These are the relationships we've built up over the years, and we have to continue to build these relationships up.

You know, there's an old saying that when the elephants dance, get off the floor. Part of that is to make sure that you know your place and when you can talk to folks and do that, so when you've got a new administration coming in from the States, as an example with President Trump, and you have an outgoing lame-duck Prime Minister, as in Prime Minister Thank-Goodness-He's-Done Trudeau, this is nothing new with that relationship. We've seen this conversation high dive for a long time.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I know full well that there were only a number of folks that were fortunate enough to make it down to the inauguration in the States, and I was one of them. The reason why I was there was at the behest of a Michigan state Senator who came up and visited Alberta last year. Part of this Council of State Governments, why we can have these conversations and why we can continue to have these . . .

5:20

Mr. Schmidt: Who paid for your flight? Who paid for your hotel? Who bought your dinner?

Mr. Getson: To the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, if he wants to listen rather than talking because that way his ears will work a bit better and hear, the other person that he invited was a Member of the Legislative Assembly for Ontario.

The reason why he invited two of us there was to make sure that we could continue this collaboration, to make sure that we could talk out the issues, and to his point, to have that conversation at the least political venue as possible. Because those inroads were made, he counted on both of us to have the conversation about what was happening in our respective provinces. They wanted a line of sight through the incoming administration as to what was really going on, not what was out in the media, not what was being hijacked. They wanted to be able to talk to us. I can tell you full well that the Congressmen and the Senators and the representatives we met down there wanted to talk directly to us. It was a personal item, and because of those conversations, because they could look us in the eyes, because we could have a cup of coffee and talk about those things, it was reciprocated on both sides.

The week prior to that I was down in Montana. When I drove down there, Mr. Speaker, the trucks ahead of me crossing the border . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order. Let me remind members that if they would like to join in the debate, they're welcome to do so, but debate should be through the chair, not across the aisle.

The hon. Member for Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland has the call.

Mr. Getson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The week prior to that, as I was saying, I was down in Montana. Now, the trucks that were ahead of me were our forest fire guys heading down there to help out in California. I took a couple of pictures, safely, obviously, pulled over on the side of the road and parked. Also, when I was

driving down there, it's the first special forces highway. The Devil's Brigade was put together of Canada and U.S. troops. Look it up. This is the granddaddy of all special forces. They trained in Helena, Montana.

When we arrived there, Mr. Speaker – there were a few of us that were there – I had a CTV reporter that wanted to talk to me and find out what the perception was. I spent half an hour on the phone with this lady. None of this made the news, by the way, because – I don't know; speculation – it didn't fit the narrative. She asked how I knew we were being received well. Well, I told her you could look at the Montana state Legislature because they record it the same as we do here. When they mentioned that Alberta was in the room, they stood up and gave us a standing ovation. Further to that, I was invited to speak at four Senate committees to talk about our relationships. It was afforded to us through their energy, technology, and intergovernmental relations committee to put forward a resolution at the state level. They will take this on our behalf.

The week after the inauguration down in Oregon, again through Canmore, meeting at their state capital with members from both sides of the aisle, they were telling us emphatically that their drug program they put in place was killing kids. They had to do a one-eighty on their drug program. They also talked about being, essentially, a refugee state for any of the illegal immigrants that are coming in. They told us emphatically the things that were happening in their communities, where you had crime being set up and you had kids – a 13-year-old kid, literally the neighbour of one of the representatives, was found dead in a fentanyl overdose. This is personal to them.

So when you have these conversations, Mr. Speaker, you realize that it's more than about the rhetoric and the politics. It's more than looking at your vote count going up. It's talking about the issues, and these issues are not new. They want us to deal with the border issues. They want us to deal with human trafficking. They want to make sure that we're dealing with the fentanyl crisis and we stop pouring it across. I heard members from the other party talking: it was only a 20-kilogram bust of fentanyl. That's enough to overdose 2 million people, like, the potency of this.

I also had members from the NDP out in British Columbia with us. Now, here was something pretty wild, and I heard some of this here today. The member over there, as did the Member for Sherwood Park, started intoning about building infrastructure, started talking about building all this stuff and making things here. Well, welcome to 2009. It's like déjà vu all over again. We had to explain to our own Team Canada members that are sitting down in Ontario and Quebec that they actually get their oil from Alberta through the U.S. because they cancelled the Energy East pipeline. So thanks for catching us up, folks.

Right now our largest trading partner is to the south of the border, and because of our lacklustre-at-best Prime Minister and his wackadoo, woke ideas, he's put our entire country in a compromised position, and the Team Canada approach they're spouting here so much is to take and sacrifice Albertans one more time for the cause of Canada.

The fact that we take our message on the road, that we talk to these people across the aisle on both sides of the parties and tell our story and, moreover, because of that leadership, we saw the first batch of these tariffs get delayed so we could demonstrate and prove that we're actually doing something. Our national defence program, our 2 per cent commitments in NATO: we're about 1.39 right now. I think it was about \$28 billion. Hey, that's just a hair shy of what we spend as the province on our health care. It's a country this big.

We've got Russia and China doing coast guard operations off of the coast of Siberia, running nonstop, the first time that we've had bombers and fighters off the coast of Alaska. We literally have the

Arctic. It's ours, and it's under dispute. Maybe – just maybe – let's take them at face value. They want us to deal with the issue. They want us to stop the labs. They want us to take this seriously.

When I was down in Washington at the time, even some of our own team members are going: is this border thing really an issue? Well, in Vermont the crossing there is up 600 per cent. That day a U.S. borders and customs agent was shot at a roadside checkpoint from Canadian citizens coming across. Six hundred per cent.

We've got about 2.1 million passports that are tied to the outgoing administration, and we had full confidence that people that used to work in CSIS, that just happened to be out in B.C. right now on this trip, were disclosing a number of these things and validating it. Heck, even the person I sat next to in the airplane that's from Prince Edward Island, a young guy working up in Grande Prairie, said that they all know about this. It's all over the country, and for some reason we're burying our heads in the sand.

Yes, Team Canada. So what we're going to have to do: suck it up, buttercup. You're going to have to let us build pipelines. You're going to have to fast-track Fortress North America. You're actually going to have to get onside with the economic corridors I've been talking about for the last four years. We're going to have to literally build out capacity and get our bootstraps up, and until then: yes, sir; no, sir; three bags full, sir. I'm not bankrupting my constituents because you all want to start a fight that you can't finish.

It comes back to basics, Mr. Speaker. Talk to people about the problem, deal with the issues that are arising, and then you go to the next stage. If you've got to drop the gloves, drop the gloves, but don't do it because you're wanting popularity points, and that's all I can see. All I can see is the easy one to pick on right now is to talk back. Every time they do, it is against the U.S. administration. Well, that is one of the silliest things you ever want to do. Let's talk about doing the right thing for Albertans and for our country. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Ellingson: Well, yes, I think we all agree, Mr. Speaker, that this is indeed an important matter to debate. The potential fallout from tariffs is considerable. Albertans expect us to both understand the issue and to propose tangible solutions. Albertans expect their elected representatives to work together across this country to provide them with some sense of security that we are taking actions to support them when faced with uncertainty like we haven't seen for quite some time.

There is considerable information about how these tariffs might affect our economy. The governor of the Bank of Canada, if we're to believe a federal source, estimates that tariffs could knock off three percentage points from economic growth in the next two years. Given that Canadian growth is expected to be 1.8 per cent in '25 and '26, tariffs could result in Canada experiencing no economic growth in the next two years. Worse, the governor suggests that if tariffs are in place for a longer period of time, we risk a structural change to our economy that we cannot recover from, a future where economic growth is permanently stalled.

Taking the long-term view increases the gravity of the situation. Businesses may permanently shutter or relocate and not return or open operations and generate employment for our citizens. Alberta is at considerable risk. We have an economy that is heavily dependent on exports. Exports comprise almost 40 per cent of our provincial GDP, and to be clear, people are behind those exports. People will feel the harm and the fallout and the blow to our economy.

5:30

While the Premier has spent all of her time working to defend our largest industry, which she should, against potential tariffs, the energy industry is not the only industry to be impacted. Our agricultural sector exports almost \$18 billion worth of products each year, and half of those exports go to the United States. Those products include beef, wheat, and canola seed. Those three products alone account for \$8.3 billion worth of goods.

It goes without saying that the brunt of these impacts will be felt on rural communities, communities that are already facing inflationary challenges, cost-of-living challenges, higher rates of unemployment. We think of steel and aluminum exports facing 25 per cent tariffs and many of us think about how this will affect Ontario and Quebec, but there's \$1 billion worth of exports from Alberta of steel and aluminum into the United States. A 25 per cent tariff on this industry would be devastating. The last time tariffs were imposed by President Trump on these industries, their output fell by half with a subsequent fall in employment.

And it isn't just about what is directly made and exported from Alberta. Alberta is an integral part of this country; 3 per cent of our workforce is employed by companies that make products for companies based in other provinces that in turn export to the United States. So, yes, we need to think about Ontario's exports and Quebec's exports because Albertans work for those companies right here in Alberta.

But this government has been caught flat-footed with this threat. I was in this House when members from the side opposite did a victory dance when Trump won the election. We've all seen the photos of members opposite wearing their MAGA hats. The opposite side of the House cheered Trump's victory, a President that daily tells us we should be the 51st state. They didn't see this coming, and since the Premier and this government are taking the wrong approach to this challenge, they still believe that it is about the border.

Should we be working to reduce crime and the production and trafficking of drugs? Absolutely, yes. But this will not prevent the President from imposing tariffs. We know that because we have seen both Canada and the provinces announce and begin to initiate actions to protect the border and stop the flow of drugs. And what was the result? Trump has reinforced his message that tariffs will be imposed. The President imposed tariffs the last time he was President, and today he has said time and time again that he loves the word "tariff." He believes that it is a way for others to pay for the prosperity of Americans. It's not about drugs. It's not about the border. It's about his belief that he can get other people in the world to pay for the prosperity of Americans.

If only we had a Premier and a government that cared about Albertans and Canadians. We've heard from the Premier about her successful diplomacy tours to the United States. We've seen the photos with her and Kevin O'Leary and President Trump. But Albertans aren't fooled by social media. They know that a 30-second introduction at a party isn't a meeting. They know that meeting dozens of lawmakers at more social gatherings also are not meetings. We know that after all the Premier's bluster about her success there were no meetings with senior members of the President's administration when the Premier was in Washington and with their counterparts.

While there is a rise in Canadian nationalism, this government continues to go back to their old playbook: don't look to address the challenge; just blame the feds. What we need is a government that is serious about this issue, a government that is looking for solutions.

When we talk about being in the United States – I'm just going to throw this out there – I was very thankful to be invited to Kentucky this past summer. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really enjoyed the conversations that we had there, nonpartisan conversations. I will say that I was glad to be there to give a fulsome picture of Alberta's story, having heard the conversations presented from the other side, having heard how the other side introduced me to their guests in Montana.

But we need to look for solutions. A 2020 study conducted by Statistics Canada estimated the cost of internal provincial trade barriers was the equivalent of 6.9 per cent, not 4. An RBC report suggests there are three areas of low-hanging fruit to improve interprovincial trade: standardizing trucking requirements, mutually recognizing professional skilled trade credentials, and removing the restrictions on sales of goods and services between provinces.

A study by the Bank of Canada conducted in 2017 suggests that a 10 per cent reduction of internal trade barriers could boost GDP by 2 per cent annually. Yes, I want to acknowledge the fact that Alberta, from a previous Premier, did remove most of the barriers for trade with Alberta, and we can continue working with other provinces to also reduce their barriers to trade to help Alberta businesses. Internal trade alone, though, however, cannot off-set the negative impact of tariffs. Internal trade between the provinces and territories, at \$532 billion, is only half of the \$1 trillion we trade with the United States each year.

We can also look to diversify our export markets. Agriculture is exported to China, Japan, Indonesia, Vietnam, and the Philippines. Canada's membership in the CPTPP partnership creates opportunities for additional exports to these markets. We can be working with ground staff that we have in Singapore to build these export trade opportunities, and while the government of Alberta has export development programs, now is the time to double down on supporting Alberta businesses to export. This could mean additional funding for programs to provide companies with information and strategic financing to support export development. These are real actions we could be taking rather than wasting our time in this House not addressing the real challenges that we face from these tariffs.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie.

Mr. Dyck: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'm rising just to speak on tariffs. This is a very important conversation, but as I do this, I would also like to just take us down what the impact of our culture is here in Alberta as well. There's something I believe, really, at the core of who I am. I believe that Albertans are a strong-willed people and that at the heart of Albertans there's a very strong, historic drive to create, a historic drive to do and to get things done. This is a spirit that's been crafted in the cold north. We have something here that makes people have to be able to go and do, have a spirit of can-do attitude, have a spirit of work ethic, hard work, and entrepreneurial spirit. This is part of what makes us Albertans.

When our forefathers came to Alberta and they saw the opportunities and as Alberta was being crafted as a province, they took the opportunities. For those that homesteaded, it was hard work. The work was hard. It was relentless. It was hard. Cattle ranching was difficult, but it created people of grit and determination. Tilling the ground, planting crops, concerns over weather, the challenging north: these are all things that people had to overcome. But in this place they continued to come because they saw opportunities. They saw the richness of the land to plant. They

saw the richness of agriculture. They created a life for themselves and for their families. They believed in something. One of the core beliefs was that they saw they could do it and they saw that there were significant opportunities for them here. They didn't just sit down and quit, but they got up again and again and they kept trying and they kept going, Mr. Speaker, and that's what we're going to do as a government.

They drove innovation, Mr. Speaker, in energy, in forestry, in agriculture. They did it because they wanted to do it and they wanted to be the best at it. Albertans have continued in this attitude in pushing the forefront of ideas, the forefront of innovation because we believe in what we can do and that we can do it better. This belief in their abilities, their belief in God, and the hope of a bright future is what continues to drive Albertans even today to create the Alberta we know and love and continue to move forward.

Today we as Albertans and Canadians face a significant challenge, but we are going to rise to it. While the challenge is different, it is no less challenging than what Alberta's forefathers faced. The challenge of tariffs is very large, is significant, but, Mr. Speaker, we have a lot of value as well to offer to the United States, our largest trading partner. Sharing the longest undefended border in the world is a significant feat in itself. Shipping and exporting our high-quality agricultural products, our energy, our forestry across borders that are unprotected is a significant milestone for Albertans and for Canadians, and it has incredibly high value for both countries. We have a long history of trade and friendship that has shaped our two nations, and this is one of the reasons why it's so critical for us to continue and to strengthen our partnerships rather than jeopardize them with these tariffs.

5:40

Now, Mr. Speaker, over the last few weeks I've had opportunities to speak with a few members of Congress and other key decision-makers, and our discussion really did focus upon energy, agriculture, forestry, and the impact of tariffs. Building relationships is critical to this conversation, as prior was mentioned in this Chamber. Those relationships: they want to understand the context of what we're hearing, understand the context of Alberta and how we can continue, and hear the accuracy of what we're actually doing. The amazing thing is, Mr. Speaker, that they all recognize something. They all recognize the important role that Alberta in Canada and Canada play in our shared prosperity through trade.

One of the main messages that continues to hit home in our conversations is that Alberta is the answer to North America's energy security concerns as well, and we have the resources to make a difference in the world. We have the fourth-largest energy reserves on Earth. We have significant natural gas reserves, I believe the third largest in the world. We have the opportunity and energy in order to provide.

What is fascinating, Mr. Speaker, is that when people were asked in the United States where their energy was coming from, the majority of people referenced other oil-producing nations across the world. They referenced the Middle East, and Canada was referenced, but it was significantly lower, around 17 per cent. But what is little known is that Alberta produces 56 per cent of all oil imports to the United States. This is twice as much as Saudi Arabia and Iraq combined, and this helps drive growth. It helps drive jobs and prosperity in Alberta as well as significant jobs in the United States.

Alberta sends approximately \$100 billion USD in energy exports to the United States, and as the United States of America they turn this into roughly \$300 billion in value-added products. We have significant opportunity. We have a significant role in their

economy, and when they started understanding that this was such a big part of it and that this was significant jobs for Ohio, Indiana, Michigan, and several other states, this is an incredible number and one that both countries should be proud of. It is significant.

Not only this, but cross-sector our industries produce just over 900,000 American jobs. Energy is part of that. That is significant for them, too, to recognize that Canada is helping the Americans with their job market. We have a place, Mr. Speaker, in this conversation, and we've done it well.

Now, not only that; Alberta has been a key economic player for many states, and we have strong relationship with all 50 states as well. Now, currently Alberta is a top 10 trading partner for 17 different states and the largest trading partner of six states. Significant. And we have strong ties with these states. They understand the significance of Alberta. They understand the significance of Canada, and we need to continue to build those relationships for stronger ties and to continue to face the challenges ahead.

Mr. Speaker, if we simply sit here in Alberta and hope that President Trump just changes his mind, we have no hope that the tariffs will be postponed or reconsidered. We need to take a proactive approach and show Americans the importance of partnering with Canada by sharing Alberta's story and Canada's story. That is what we are doing. That is what Alberta is doing by sharing the entire story, the impact that we have but also the trade that they also export to us. This is why we must continue our advocacy for fair and open trade. We must ensure that Alberta's voice is heard and that our industries are protected from these unjust policies that threaten our livelihoods here.

Obviously, tariffs don't just impact and harm Albertans but also have far-reaching consequences right across Canada as well as the United States. Americans do rely upon significant Canadian raw materials, so there's lots of trade back and forth, and a trade war benefits no one. It only creates economic uncertainty and job losses. This is why we must continue to take action. This is why Alberta should continue to take action. We must continue to work with our leaders. We are leaders here on this side of the aisle. We have a vision for the future. We are going to work with our trade representatives and industry experts to develop strategies to mitigate some of these tariffs as well.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to emphasize once again that we have a long history of being able to be creative, a long history of the can-do attitude, of rolling up our sleeves and doing the hard work, of putting in the creative ideas in order to actually come up with creative solutions. This is the Alberta attitude. This is the Alberta advantage that we have here in this great province as well. We're not going to be playing political games. We're not going to be deterred by economic threats. We will rise to the challenge. We will stand up for our industries and fight for the future of our province.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there others? The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West has the call.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be brief, just so that we can get the last few speakers in, but now is the time for us to look for practical solutions for a major problem that's coming in the next couple of weeks. I mean, it's not like we can talk about it in hypotheticals, about the importance of oil and gas and agriculture. Of course, we know all of those things are true. They're all under threat with these tariffs, and you can't talk your way out of it.

I mean, certainly, I have a list of things that we can do, but let's call it for what it is, Mr. Speaker, which is economic warfare against

the country of Canada, of which we are a part. There's no negotiating going on here, right? It is Donald Trump and his administration using a form of extortion not just on Canada but on many other parts of the world as well. Take a look at the news. It's happening in Europe, threats in Panama, in the Middle East, in Greenland, you name it; a very similar pattern is emerging. So we need to protect Albertans from this. We need to have a concrete plan, and I believe there are some things that we can do now. Here we are with a budget coming up. That budget can help to protect Albertans from some of the worst effects of this tariff war, that the Americans are imposing on our country and our province as well.

Some solutions. Take a look at what's happening in the last few weeks, the last week or so or two weeks, around consumer boycotts of American products. Now, we're not going to bring the United States of America down if we read the Superstore label and find things that are made in Canada or in the United States, but it helps to send a message to the United States that we're serious about this. And we know that lots of people say that they've been travelling down on diplomatic missions into the United States, and that's important, too, but they have to know that the message is clear that we're not taking this lying down, that we're going to fight for our country, that we're going to fight for our province, and we're not going to sell out our province or our country to the United States.

Anything less than that and Donald Trump and some of his administration will simply ignore it. In fact, they are probing for weak spots, Mr. Speaker. We don't want to be a part of that. We don't want people to say: "Hey. Look, Alberta, they're going on their own. They're, you know, not following the rest of this unified approach against tariffs." That is a weak spot, and we must never play into it because that's what Donald Trump is doing. If you think it's diplomacy and negotiation, it's not. It's economic warfare and its extortion; using the economic power of the United States to extract economic benefits for themselves from the province of Alberta.

So buying Canadian, it sends a message. Kitchen table diplomacy, I heard somebody over there say it, absolutely. We can talk to our border states, and they can know the relationship that we have is in jeopardy if they continue down this road of tariffs. It's not like we're going to cut a side deal or say: "Hey. Well, some kind of Alberta exceptionalism." No. If they're going to do those things, there will be consequences and they can send through their channels the message back to Washington that this isn't working, it's unacceptable, and we need to back away. That is a way to do it.

Very quickly, I think that it's very important at this juncture to dial back this whole idea that Canada is broken. I've heard it from these members opposite for years now. They continually are attacking Canadian institutions, going after the Canada pension plan, the RCMP – right? – advocating for private health care, attacks on our universities and scientific research, attacks on immigrants as well. These are all things that, number one, undermine the strength of our country, and, number two, an awful lot of them come directly from the Trump playbook. So for the sake of our country, for the sake of unity, for the sake of fighting tariffs and helping to protect Albertans, dial back the pro-Trump rhetoric that comes through all of these policies, and we will go a long way to mitigating the circumstances.

5:50

It will be painful, whatever comes this way. Tariffs will be painful. Some of those numbers of 3 per cent of our GDP going down; I mean, that is significant. But standing together, protecting our core industries, our energy industry, for sure, our agriculture industry, absolutely, and all of the tech benefits and gains that we've made over the years. We have to have that market in the

States, but we also have to protect ourselves for the sake of the future of this province and our country, Canada, of which I'm very proud.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there are others?

Seeing none, I am – oh, the hon. Member for Calgary-Bhullar-McCall.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thought it was an important enough topic to set aside the daily business to talk about the tariffs and threats that we are facing to our economy, to our sovereignty.

While we are going through one of the most challenging times in the history of our province, in the history of our country, we have a government in a complete tailspin over corrupt care, allegations of corruption in health care, allegations of inflated contracts to its friends and insiders. They're completely consumed by that internal drama. Earlier we saw one minister resign over those allegations. That's why we are not seeing, quite frankly, any strong proposals, any strong ideas on how we will stand against these threats.

Earlier in the debate I saw a lot of the same old rhetoric, that Ottawa is to blame for everything. Even the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat mentioned how Ottawa is failing Ukraine. I think they forgot to mention, I believe, that Trump is also asking Ukraine to surrender to Russia, wherever they are. That's the kind of administration we are dealing with on that side of the border.

These executive orders are issued pursuant to his federal powers that also include the national Emergencies Act. So in issuing these executive orders, Trump has invoked the national Emergencies Act, among other pieces of legislation, citing the safety and security of Americans on its borders. Two reasons are being cited. One is fentanyl and the illicit drug crisis . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Sabir: . . . and the other one is the shortcoming in combatting human trafficking and immigration issues.

A couple of things on these fronts. I do not understand how putting tariffs on Canada and Mexico in equal measure helps address this issue. There were federal stats about fentanyl and drugs; 21,889 pounds of fentanyl was seized in 2024. Out of that, 96.6 per cent was seized at their southern border, Mexico border. Canada's share was .2 per cent, which is still 19 kilograms; a huge amount, enough to poison thousands of people. But when you look at the context, like, we are not the main problem here in terms of supplying or sending drugs to the U.S.

And it's never about the drugs, because tariffs were a central part of Trump's economic plan, and many conservatives who were supporting, cheering for Trump knew that that was the plan. Back in the day the minister of economic corridors was campaigning for Trump last time around when he got us with tariffs, 25 per cent on steel, 15 per cent on aluminum. So that was the policy of Trump in the first administration as well. These tariffs come as no surprise; he's continuing with his economic plan.

What have we seen so far from this government? We have seen them touting about a visit to Mar-a-Lago beach. There were a couple of selfies as well, and then there were cocktail parties; some galas as well. Then there were some prayer breakfasts. But none of those things were able to help us with these steps because that's Trump's economic policy, and he's following through on his economic policy.

What we need from this government is some concrete plan for how we can work with other provinces, how we can work with the federal government to strengthen our own economy by, for instance, reducing trade barriers, by making things easier to flow through provincial

borders. We can also, instead of agreeing to everything that President Trump is saying about drugs, about immigration, stand up against them, lobby around him, use our relationships, and state our case on whether we are the problem in drug trafficking or not, whether human trafficking is something that's, I guess, caused by Canada.

Those are the kinds of things that do concern many people, many people in immigrant communities, because these words "illegal immigration" and "illegal human trafficking," at the end of the day, we have seen policies from conservative governments here like the barbaric cultural practices hotline, like a niqab ban to target immigrant communities, to divide our communities between old stock and new Canadians. We have seen those practices. We should not be giving in to all that rhetoric that what Trump is saying is right and that we don't need to push back; that we don't need to stand up.

We have not seen anything from this government that can assure Albertans that in the event tariffs are imposed, their jobs will be fine, that there will be something the government will be doing to protect their economy, that there will be someone standing up against the lies coming from that side of the border and some plan

to build trade relationships with countries other than the United States, diversifying our economic market so that we are not one hundred per cent reliant on just one partner.

In the grand scheme of things I think the United States is a big economy. It's an important trading partner, but instead of putting all our eggs in one basket, we should also be looking at diversifying our markets, diversifying our access to different markets so that we can withstand those kinds of threats, so that we can withstand some uncertainty that often comes with unpredictable leadership, just like President Trump.

In short, I think that it was good that we set aside the business of the Legislature to talk about this important issue, but it's so unfortunate that we didn't hear any . . .

The Speaker: Hon. members, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(2) the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

Table of Contents

Prayers.....	2391
In Memoriam.....	2391
Indigenous Land Acknowledgement	2391
Presentation to the Assembly of Member Rob Miyashiro for Lethbridge-West.....	2391
Introduction of Guests	2391
Members' Statements	
Health Services Procurement Process.....	2392
Addiction Treatment and Recovery.....	2393
Health Services Procurement Process.....	2393
Rowan House Emergency Shelter 25th Anniversary.....	2401
Health Services Procurement Process.....	2401
Provincial Music Commissioner Proposal.....	2402
Oral Question Period	
Health Services Procurement Process.....	2393, 2397, 2398, 2399, 2400
Addiction Treatment and Recovery.....	2396
Members' Acceptance of Gifts and Benefits	2398
Community Grant Programs.....	2398
Agricultural Trade	2399
Reproductive Health Care Access	2400
Notices of Motions	2402
Introduction of Bills	
Bill 37 Mental Health Services Protection Amendment Act, 2025	2402
Tabling Returns and Reports	2402
Tablings to the Clerk	2403
Emergency Debate	
Proposed U.S. Tariffs	2405

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