Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, June 12, 2019

Day 12

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 30th Legislature
First Session

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Eggen, David, Edmonton-North West (NDP), Official Opposition Whip
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United Conservative: 63 New Democrat: 24

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m. Wednesday, June 12, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, joining us today from the constituency of Camrose we have the Forestburg school in our gallery, and from the constituency of Strathcona-Sherwood Park is Strathcona Christian academy. I invite you to all please rise and receive the welcome of the Assembly.

Introduction of guests for all of us this afternoon. I'm very pleased to introduce, from the constituency of Peace River, Bob and Dana Blayone. On behalf of the Minister of Municipal Affairs: Dr. Chinyere Nwafor-Okoli, Kene Ilochonwu, and Juliet Boghean-Ogbu.

Members, all of you will be very excited to know that it's Philippine Independence Day today, so we have a number of guests from the Filipino community joining us. Mabuhay to all. From the constituency of Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview: Jeni and Symona Claire Tabile, and Belinda Orte. From Edmonton-McClung: Teresa and Jairus Banganan, Theodora Alingcotan, Charmaine Ria Celis, Joan Sacramento, Mitchelle Santiago, Joan Montemayor, Rossel Sagun, Allenita Dawne Alipio. From the constituency of Edmonton-Glenora – please feel free to rise if you recognize your name – Cynthia Luna-Pasagui, Jerwin Pagdonsolan, Clarizze Truscott, Fely Agader, Lucenia Ortiz, Nimfa Zoleta, Merla Tumacder, Gigi Suelo, Teodora Valles, Fely Della, Alan Sison, Nancy Naval, Marilyn MacDonald, Jeffrey Jose, Marietta Santos, Telesfora Balanag, Ricarta Abenojar, Eladia Garcia, Renz Zoleta, Teresa Uson, Katherine Yason, and Geofrey Cimatu.

Members, mabuhay the Philippines. I, for one, thought I was amazing.

Members' Statements

Philippine Heritage Month and Independence Day

Ms Hoffman: [Remarks in Tagalog] Mr. Speaker, a special mabuhay to all of our Filipino guests in the gallery today. I want to wish all Albertans a happy Philippine Heritage Month, and today I also want to wish everyone a happy Philippine Independence Day as well. Philippine independence has been celebrated since 1898, when the Philippine islands fought for and achieved independence from Spanish colonial rule.

Philippine Heritage Month has been celebrated in this province since 2018, when our NDP government worked with Filipinos across Alberta and declared June as Philippine Heritage Month forevermore in the province of Alberta. Some people asked me: why do that? My answer is that Alberta is home to more than 175,000 Filipinos. The Filipino community in Alberta is diverse in its generations, languages, economic and professional backgrounds, but what is consistent throughout the community are the values of compassion, hard work, hospitality, and fun. Filipino culture enriches our workplaces, our neighbourhoods, our faith, our civic and our cultural communities.

I want to come back to that value of compassion. Compassion is why our party invested in expanding home care to keep families together. Compassion is why we increased the minimum wage. Compassion is why we provided health care to Alberta children, whether their parents were living here permanently or not. We also supported more families in unifying rather than calling lolos and lolas a burden on the Canadian health care system, as members of the former federal Conservative government did.

[Remarks in Tagalog] Mr. Speaker, let us unite. To all Filipino Albertans: we won't stop fighting for you. We won't stop standing up for you and your families.

[Remarks in Tagalog] Thank you. Happy Philippine Heritage Month and happy Philippine Independence Day.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Filipino Heritage Month in Canada

Mr. Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today is Philippine Independence Day. I rise in this House to honour a vibrant and dynamic Filipino Albertan community that is proud of its culture and heritage. We take time today to recognize the richness of their languages, the depth of their culture, and to ensure that future generations never lose sight of just how important it is for us to reflect upon one's roots: the stories, struggles, and successes of previous generations.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta is the proud home to the second-largest Filipino population in the country. The community continues to grow in my own riding of Sherwood Park. I have the privilege of knowing many Filipino families, including Esmeralda Agbulos and the Abad family. One of Alberta's greatest strengths is our diversity, which is why it is so important for us to celebrate our diverse histories and culture. We educate and we learn together hand in hand.

Mr. Speaker, last year the federal government unanimously passed Motion 155. It states that the government should recognize the contribution that Filipino Canadians have made to Canadian society, the richness of the Filipino language, culture, and the importance of reflecting upon Filipino heritage for future generations by declaring June of every year Filipino Heritage Month. So now every June we officially celebrate the contributions of Filipino Canadians to Canada. This is long overdue, a recognition for a community that has given so much to Canada and Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, I hope you will join me in wishing all Filipinos in Alberta and around the world a very happy independence day and for the first time celebrate June as Filipino Heritage Month. [Remarks in Tagalog]

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Incitement to Hate

Mr. Deol: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last month the MP for St. Albert-Edmonton, Michael Cooper, disrespected antiracism advocate and Muslim witness Faisal Khan Suri during a parliamentary committee meeting on online hate. Mr. Suri provided factual testimony on extremists who commit racially driven mass murders and stated that they consumed content from "anti-immigrant, alt-right and conservative commentators." Cooper told Mr. Suri that he "should be ashamed," and then went on to name the perpetrator and quote directly from the manifesto of the man charged with the mass murder in Christchurch, New Zealand. Cooper's actions came the same day that Conservative leader Andrew Scheer gave a speech where he said: bigots are not welcome in the Conservative Party. Of course, despite his promises Scheer has refused to remove Cooper from his Conservative caucus.

We have seen similar behaviour here in Alberta. During the last election the UCP stood by candidates and party faithful who were revealed to support white supremacy and anti-Semitism, and since then they have been absolutely silent and unwilling to denounce their friends like Michael Cooper.

Mr. Speaker, this is inexcusable. As politicians and leaders in this province we must stand up against ethnic division and intolerance. I know first-hand what a difference it makes to have public figures stand up for the rights of the many, not just the few. I stand with my NDP caucus colleagues in ensuring that those who continue to face these threats will always find an advocate in our party.

Thank you.

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

1:40 Unemployment in Calgary

Mr. Singh: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am saddened to discuss the struggles of many of my constituents to find stable employment. During the election the biggest issue that I heard from my constituents was of the high unemployment in Calgary and of the job losses that Calgary has seen over recent years. As of this March unemployment in Calgary is 7.6 per cent. This is with three-quarters of the city participating in the job market, which is 10 percentage points higher than the national average.

This past weekend I've heard from hundreds of my constituents who were angered by the NDP's filibuster last week on Bill 2. My constituents voted for our government because they fiercely rejected the last government's nonstop attacks on job creators. Of course, their record tells all. Under their government Alberta's unemployment was above the national average, and while Canada is enjoying the benefits of record low unemployment, thousands of Albertans are still unemployed following four years of NDP policies.

Further, Calgary's city council is hurting the city's economy even more by raising property taxes on businesses and mismanaging the city's finances, which is only harming Calgary taxpayers and businesses more. Mr. Speaker, I don't know about you, but that sounds like a certain previous government's fiscal record after four years.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to say that this government won't be all doom and gloom. I'm proud of this government for standing up for Albertans. Despite the opposition's best attempts, Bill 2 proceeded past second reading last week, and Bill 3 will move forward soon. But most importantly, the NDP's job-killing carbon tax was repealed, much to the joy of all Albertans. I'm proud of our government for focusing on creating jobs for all Albertans, fixing our finances, and renewing the Alberta advantage.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

Agriculture

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In my unbiased and completely objective opinion Cardston-Siksika is the greatest constituency in the province, the world, and, dare I say, this solar system. It boasts some of the hardest working Albertans I have ever had the pleasure to meet, and I'm willing to debate anyone on that point until I'm Conservative blue in the face. Among those workers are the men and women who toil each day to feed this province. That's right. I'm talking about our agriculture sector.

Mr. Speaker, the farmers and ranchers in Cardston-Siksika have contributed significantly to Alberta. A farmer will tell you that there are never enough hours in a day, and they give up most of their hours to help feed us and help put food on our tables. I am grateful for the work they do. In Cardston-Siksika alone our ag sector is raising over 1 million cattle and calves and nearly half a million pigs. They are out from dusk till dawn working nearly 3.5 million acres of cropland spread across 3,000-plus farms. They are growing barley, canola, wheat, oats, potatoes, corn, sugar beets, and the list goes on and on.

Our Blackfoot members of the Kainai Nation have also established themselves as competitors in the ag market. Speaking with Chief Roy Fox recently, I learned that the Blood Tribe agriculture project is Canada's largest irrigation project. They're striving to become western Canada's premier processor and supplier of quality forage products to international markets and are currently exporting to countries such as Japan, the United Kingdom, and Korea.

These hard-working people are exporting our amazing products across the world, they are driving innovation within the agriculture industry, and I could not be more proud to stand here and advocate for them. But we need to do more than just advocate; we need to make sure that our farmers and ranchers are taken care of. This government is committed to doing just that.

To the farmers and ranchers in Cardston-Siksika and across the province: we have heard you, we hear you now, and we are here for you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-West is rising to make a statement.

Carbon Tax Repeal Act

Mr. Ellis: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to rise today and address this Chamber. It has now been a week since our United Conservative government repealed the carbon tax. This was a proud moment for our government and for me in particular as the Member for Calgary-West: a promise made, and a promise kept. Now, Calgary-West constituents who I have spoken with are appreciative that we have delivered on this key campaign promise, and we will continue to deliver on the rest of our promises.

The carbon tax was a tax on everything, Mr. Speaker. It didn't just affect the prices we paid at the pump. It also increased the cost of heating our homes and hiked up the prices of our groceries. Worse than that is how this tax impacted our most vulnerable. People like our seniors and people receiving AISH were hit the hardest because of this tax. These are precisely the people that we had in mind when we repealed this tax. We want to help instead of hurt those who are struggling to get by. By repealing the carbon tax, our government has introduced the single biggest tax relief measure in our province's history. We believe that Albertans should not be punished for heating their homes or taking their kids to hockey practice, and I am proud to say that under our government they won't be.

Thank you.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader is rising with notices of motions.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to provide oral notice of two bills, actually, for the Order Paper, those being Bill 9, the Public Sector Wage Arbitration Deferral Act, sponsored by my friend the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance; and second, Bill 10, the Alberta Personal Income Tax Amendment Act, 2019, also sponsored by my friend the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods has a tabling or three, I believe.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite five copies pursuant to my speech on Bill Hate last night: first, the LGBTQ2S Youth Housing and Shelter Guidelines, from which I quoted statistics; secondly, I have a document, 1 in 5 Queer Young Adults Attempted Suicide in the Past Year, Study Shows: "mental health issues aren't widespread in the LGBTQ community because of identity or orientation – it's because of discrimination"; finally, five copies of a document titled UCP's Education Bill Plays Games with Students' Lives.

The Speaker: Are there any other members who have a tabling today? The hon. Member for Strathcona, please.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Edmonton-Strathcona, I believe it is.

I rise today to table policies and legislation from Ontario, Nova Scotia, and British Columbia that show higher support for LGBTQ youth in those jurisdictions. If this government passes Bill Hate, they claim their protections will still be the strongest in the country. These documents are on the record to prove that that is not the case.

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

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have copies of the 61 letters that our constituency office received on May 3, some of which I quoted last night, and I will table those.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there any others wishing to table a document?

Seeing none, the Leader of the Official Opposition.

Oral Question Period

Nurses' Contract Negotiations

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, they think they're above the law and that laws that they don't happen to like they just get to ignore: that's the United Nurses of Alberta responding to the Minister of Finance's threats – apparently not threats – to legislate his way out of his legal obligation to bargain in good faith with Alberta's nurses. This letter and any potential move to legislate is a gross abuse of power and is profoundly disrespectful to the tens of thousands of hard-working people who care for our loved ones when they need it the most. To the minister: why do you believe that you're above the law?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, we appreciate the contributions that our public sector makes on behalf of the government and on behalf of all Albertans. We are seeking to delay wage arbitrations. We believe that it's the responsible thing to do at this point in time as it gives us time to consider our path forward: a way forward to deliver high-quality services to Albertans and a path forward to balance for this province.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, the responsible path forward would be to delay a $4.5 billion hole in the budget, not to breach the Constitution, to break the law, to break the contracts and grab money out of the pockets of hard-working nurses. Why are you going after nurses when you couldn't wait two weeks to give a gift to your friends in corporate Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

1:50

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our job-creation tax cut is a very, very important initiative in order to attract investment, create job opportunities for all Albertans, and, in fact, in the long term create additional government revenues so that we can continue to have a world-class health care system and a world-class education system. The previous government put us on a trajectory to $100 billion in accumulated debt. That would mean the next generation would not have a world-class health care system or education system.

Ms Notley: "A common misconception is that governments can only reduce public sector salaries of unionized employees if the unions agree." Those are the words of the chair of the Premier's blue-ribbon panel. I would advise the minister to find more informed legal advice on labour negotiations and the law and what the Supreme Court of Canada says. Why does this minister believe that it is fair and reasonable to give a $4.5 billion tax gift to profitable corporations while at the same time breaching the Canadian Constitution and reaching into the pockets of nurses to grab their money?

Mr. Toews: Again, Mr. Speaker, we are seeking to delay wage arbitration to ensure that we have a responsible path forward to balance in this province. Albertans expect us to be responsible with their hard-earned tax dollars. We're also committed to working together in good faith with the public sector as we work to ensure that we can deliver high-quality services to Albertans.

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, how in heaven's name can the Minister of Finance get up with any sense of integrity and use the words "good faith" when he is about to breach the Constitution of this country to take money out of the pockets of hard-working nurses while at the same time justifying a $4.5 billion tax gift to wealthy, profitable corporations? Does he really believe Albertans are going to agree with this?

The Speaker: The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll tell you what Albertans will agree with. They're going to agree with a government that puts Albertans first. They're going to agree with a government that creates a business environment that attracts investment and jobs for all of Albertans. That's what Albertans are going to agree with.

Ms Notley: Apparently the members opposite don't believe that nurses are Albertans because clearly they're not coming first; they're coming last. Foreign corporations and their shareholders: that's who's coming first under this government. This government didn't say a word about breaching the Constitution to break the law in order to steal money from nurses in the last election. Why didn't they come clean about that plan in the campaign?

Mr. Toews: Mr. Speaker, again, we absolutely appreciate the contribution the public sector makes to this government and certainly to Albertans in general. We, again, are simply seeking to delay arbitration until we have enough time to adequately build a path forward that will both be responsible economically and also ensure that we can deliver high-quality services to Albertans. It's seeking simply a delay in the arbitration time.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's not a simple delay in arbitration. It is the breach of a legal contract with the nurses and other public-

sector workers. It is a breach of a contract that the Supreme Court of Canada has said must be protected and is protected by the Constitution of this country, and the only way you can do it is by bringing in the notwithstanding clause. Why did you not tell Albertans that you were going to break the law to steal money from nurses?

Mr. Toews: Again, Albertans expect this government to be fiscally responsible with their hard-earned tax dollars. We are seeking this delay to ensure that we have a path forward that includes both returning to balance in this province and delivering high-quality services to Albertans. Mr. Speaker, we know that this delay is the responsible path forward, and we believe Albertans will support it.

The Speaker: The hon. Member . . .

Ms Notley: I've got one more. This is my third one?

The Speaker: Yeah. It's up to you guys. That's not what I have, but I'm happy to call you. The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Ms Notley: Well, to be clear, the responsible way forward, Mr. Speaker, is not to break the law.

Gay-straight Alliances in Schools

Ms Notley: But let's move on to a new topic. Yesterday the Government House Leader repeatedly made claims in this House that were not true. I am a stickler for people telling the truth, so I just can't let this go, Mr. Speaker. Bill Hate removes guarantees that students can use the word "gay" in describing gay-straight alliances. Ontario's legislation says that neither the board nor the principal shall refuse to allow a pupil to use the name "gay-straight alliance." Black and white. This is stronger. Will the House leader acknowledge it, or have we officially entered the posttruth era in this Legislative Assembly?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, let's be very clear. Our government will have the most comprehensive statutory protection for LGBTQ students in the country. That's important to us. It's a priority of this government. It's something we campaigned on. It was a priority of our parties when they were in opposition as well. It's disappointing to see the Leader of the Official Opposition still misrepresenting facts inside this place. To be clear, students will continue to be protected. Section 35.1 of the Education Act specifically guarantees students' entitlements to create inclusion groups, including GSAs and QSAs. Those are the facts.

Ms Notley: The House leader just can't stop saying things that are untrue. He just can't help himself.

On June 3 the Premier told this House . . .

Mr. Ellis: Point of order.

Ms Notley: . . . "Our government will maintain the strongest legal protections for gay-straight alliances of any province in Canada." Now, Nova Scotia's policy, which I just tabled, requires all schools to provide GSAs, including private schools, clearly stronger protection than Bill Hate's private school loophole.

An Hon. Member: Point of order.

Ms Notley: Will the House leader apologize on behalf of the Premier for providing members of this Assembly with information that is not true, or has the Premier also embraced the posttruth era in this Legislature?

The Speaker: Hon. members, I would just like to note both points of order at 1:57 and 1:58.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, we won't be lectured on not telling Albertans about things from that member, who lied about the biggest tax increase in the history of this province. Again, let's be very clear.

Mr. Bilous: Point of order.

Mr. Jason Nixon: We will continue to have the strongest statutory requirements when it comes to GSAs. That's a priority of our government. The Official Opposition should stop misrepresenting the facts. We want LGBTQ students to know that we stand with them. This is an important issue to this government. It's an important issue to the Education minister. It certainly is an important issue to the Premier, and we will continue to make sure that we have the strongest statutory requirements in the country. Those are the facts. That's how it will be.

Ms Notley: Well, let's try again. On June 10 the Minister of Justice said that the UCP will make sure "that Alberta has the strongest gay-straight alliance provisions in all of Canada." In British Columbia ministerial orders compel private schools to have a policy that protects kids from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. I've tabled it. Bill Hate removes . . .

Mr. McIver: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Ms Notley: . . . those requirements from private schools. Will the Solicitor General be allowed to rise and apologize for providing this House with incorrect statements and, in so doing, attempt to salvage his legal reputation?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, the only person who should rise in this House and apologize is the Leader of the Official Opposition for continuing to misrepresent facts and act the way that she and her party have inside this place. It is disappointing. LGBTQ students are important to us. GSAs must be protected and maintained. It's important to the Justice minister, as it is to every member of this cabinet and every member of this government caucus, to make sure that we follow through on our campaign commitments, make sure that we have the strongest statutory protections for GSAs. We stand with LGBTQ students inside our school system. We trust teachers; they don't. That's really what this comes down to.

The Speaker: The point of order at 2 o'clock is also noted.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Member Irwin: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, two-spirit, intersex, pansexual, asexual, nonbinary. Words matter. Yesterday our leader asked the Education minister to correct her horrendous comments in which she identified LGBTQ youth as "whatever." Our leader asked her to simply say the word "gay." She couldn't do it, and she won't answer media questions today. I'm going to give her another chance right now. To the minister: again, will you state that you unequivocally support the use of the words "gay" and "queer" in your government's GSA policies?

2:00

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education is rising.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Again, I find it very disappointing. I find it personally hurtful to our government and to myself that the opposition continues to imply that we do not support our LGBTQ students. [interjections] Our

government will have the most comprehensive statutory protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, two-spirited students, period.

The Speaker: I was happy to hear the question. I'm also happy to hear the answer. If we could keep the volume level similar, that would be helpful.

The hon. member.

Member Irwin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Quite frankly, respectfully, it's not about your feelings. It's about the feelings of LGBTQ youth.

When our leader asked the question yesterday, it was the Government House Leader who rose and accused our side of the House of bullying the minister. Let's talk about bullying. We're talking about kids who experience the worst forms of bullying because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. We're talking about these kids' lives. Outing kids is dangerous, destroying GSAs is dangerous, Bill Hate is dangerous. To the House leader: can you seriously stand in this House and play the victim while you put these students in harm's way?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, I was not referring to myself or the Education minister. What I was referring to in those comments was the outrageous behaviour by the MLA for Edmonton-Glenora over the weekend when she went out of her way to bully a musician playing at a flag-raising event here at the Legislature and, in fact, on Twitter called for more people to join in that behaviour. These are the tactics that continue to come from the opposition. I reject those tactics. I think it's ridiculous that they continue down this path. What's interesting enough is that Albertans have rejected them in record numbers. The fear and the hate from this side of the House won't be accepted by Alberta anymore.

Member Irwin: This government is rolling back the rights of LGBTQ youth, and their minister stays silent. I'm curious if this is an issue for her alone or if it's rampant throughout this government cabinet. We know the minister of culture raised the pride flag last week and ignored protestors who were behind her. That minister and the Justice minister claim to be allies, so will they commit in this House that they will advocate in cabinet so that students won't be prevented from using the words "gay" and "queer" when they establish a GSA or QSA?

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader is rising.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Again, Mr. Speaker, the Education minister and the Justice minister, the Premier, and others have been clear on this issue. We continue to have support for the best statutory requirements in all of the country on GSAs. We will stand beside LGBTQ kids to make sure that GSAs will be called GSAs and that kids can participate in GSAs. That's an important issue to our government. It was an important issue to us when we were in opposition. We made it clear in our platform. We've made it clear over and over in this Assembly. We will continue to have the best statutory requirements when it comes to GSAs in the entire country. That's a fact.

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

Wildlife-human Coexistence

Ms Rosin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Rocky Mountains are beautiful, and tourists come from all over to witness them themselves, but there are more than just mountains to see out there in the wilderness. A number of areas in Banff-Kananaskis have seen bear warnings and area closures due to bear activity over the last month. In fact, just two weeks ago a poor black bear was put down by RCMP after he innocently wandered into Canmore one too many times. My constituents love the wildlife. The animals are integral to the beauty of the Rockies, and we don't want to see them in harm's way. To the Minister of Environment and Parks: what steps are our government taking to minimize the occurrence of bear-human interactions in the area?

The Speaker: The Minister of Environment and Parks.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Wildlife rehabilitation is a key component of our long-term strategy to minimize negative interactions between humans and bears. Bears that spend less time in rehabilitation facilities are less likely to engage in behaviours that put them in conflicts with humans, thus increasing their chances to survive and thrive in the long term. The Department of Environment and Parks is currently planning to launch a new community practice form for wildlife rehabilitation so that experts are able to share information and best practices. We are also continuing to partner with a number of experts on population and DNA studies to keep tabs on the real-time locations of our province's bears.

The Speaker: The Member for Banff-Kananaskis.

Ms Rosin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that proper education is critical when it comes to keeping our wild animals wild and minimizing dangerous interactions with people and given that over recent years we've seen tourists get a little too comfortable with the wildlife, some even approaching them for selfies, it is only a matter of time before one person gets too close and the animal gets spooked, causing injury or death to an unsuspecting tourist. What is the ministry doing to ensure that visitors are properly educated on the dangers and best practices of wildlife encounters?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, as part of our BearSmart campaign we're working to reduce human and wildlife conflicts. Albertans can do their part to avoid human and bear conflicts by carrying bear spray and air horns, keeping dogs on a leash, and travelling in groups. People are asked to adhere to the warnings and closures due to bear activity. Campers are also encouraged to keep food, beverages, scented material, and garbage in airtight, bearproof containers or inside a vehicle and store anything that may have a smell of food or garbage away from humans and out of the reach of bears. Campers are encouraged to pack up their garbage when they leave their campsites.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Ms Rosin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Well, given that human-wildlife interactions aren't the only dangerous interactions as vehicle-wildlife instances are increasing as well and given that, in early May, 15 elk were killed on the Trans-Canada highway during one single snowstorm, luckily with no human fatalities this time, and given that just last week a black bear was struck and killed on that same highway, one proposed solution is to install simple wildlife fencing from the gates of Banff national park out to Dead Man's Flats, guiding the animals to cross in the underpass. Is this a priority for our government, and if not, what is our government going to do to ensure the continued safety of both humans and wildlife?

The Speaker: The Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The government of Alberta has allocated $25 million over five years in the budget to identify animal-vehicle collision-prone areas to assess the best ways to redirect wildlife and to design and install mitigation measures such as fencing and underpasses or overpasses. The commitment will be reviewed as we develop the 2019 capital plan along with all the other important projects. The department has already retained an engineering consultant to determine the best location of a wildlife crossing and to design a wildlife overpass and fencing on the Trans-Canada between Lac des Arcs . . .

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

Gay-straight Alliances in Schools
(continued)

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituents and I are appalled that this UCP government is laser-focused on denying GSAs and destroying GSAs. Even before Bill Hate was introduced, my constituency office received . . .

Mr. McIver: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Ms Renaud: . . . 60 letters from students addressed to the Premier. Here's one. I quote: "I am a member of the LGBTQ+ community. I have one question for you. Do you think that it is okay for us to take 20 steps backwards? . . . GSA's are a safe space and it is where we are heard and welcomed with open arms." To the Minister of Education: will you acknowledge and answer this concerned student? Answering "whatever" won't cut it.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Again, I reiterate that we will have GSAs available to students. Under 35.1:

> If one or more students attending a school operated by a board request a staff member employed by the board for support to establish a voluntary student organization, or to lead an activity intended to promote a welcoming, caring, respectful and safe learning environment that respects diversity and fosters a sense of belonging, the principal of the school shall
>
> (a) permit the establishment of the student organization or the holding of the activity at a school, and
>
> (b) designate a staff member to serve . . .

And it goes on and on.

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

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the fact that the students I'm hearing from don't believe that Bill Hate is balanced . . .

Mr. McIver: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Ms Renaud: . . . and given the fact that 60 students wrote to the Premier, I'd like to read another one.

> I feel the need to tell you that it is hard to come out. I should know. You're sending a message to the people around you that they can't be themselves without you exposing them. You're telling kids that they don't have a choice, that they can't be heard. Everyone knows this is wrong [and] you should . . . too.

To the minister: do you know that this is wrong, to out kids without their consent?

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Schools cannot disclose a student's membership in any inclusion group as there are student privacy considerations that trump all other legislation. We trust professional educators to navigate these difficult situations and do what is in the best interests of kids. FOIP and PIPA are the law.

Thank you.

Ms Renaud: Given the fact that I, like the students who wrote to me, don't believe what this government is saying – and you can use all kinds of words – I have one more question to the Premier. I quote: taking away the ability to reach out and tell someone in your school or join a club to feel safe is, quite honestly, disgusting. There is absolutely no reason for which a student's right should be taken away. What if the only reason a child hasn't come out to their parents is because it isn't a safe environment? You are putting members of our community in danger. They could be kicked out, beaten, or sent to be turned straight.

2:10

The Speaker: The Government House Leader is rising.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, to the hon. member's students and constituents, I want to assure them that, again, under this, students will continue to be protected under section 35.1 of the Education Act, which specifically guarantees students entitlement to GSAs and QSAs. In addition to that, schools cannot disclose a student's membership in any group, as there are student privacy considerations that trump all other legislation. We trust our professional educators to navigate these difficult situations and to do what is best for the kids. Those are the facts. Despite the opposition continuing to want to misrepresent them, those are the facts.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Glenora is rising.

Education Funding

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On Monday this government caved to pressure from this opposition and parents and confirmed that it would fund enrolment. Good on the Finance minister, but Calgary public and Catholic school boards wrote a letter to the Education minister on Tuesday stating that they have no clue about this government's plan, and they warn that they've already started cutting in anticipation of a terrible provincial budget. To the Minister of Education: why leave school boards in the dark? Is your announcement to fund enrolment just a smokescreen to find other places to cut?

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the questions. Albertans can be very confident that our government is making thoughtful, prudent decisions to ensure that there is funding for the high-quality education they expect for their children. The NDP need to stop with their scare tactics. They have to stop playing politics with our children, and we will give the information to the school boards as soon as we can.

Ms Hoffman: Given that the chaos in our schools has been created by this government and given that it's harming student learning and given that the chaos has already resulted in job losses and that I've learned specifically from a family counsellor who was laid off in the Palliser school district on Monday, the same day this

government claimed to be funding enrolment, that he lost his job, will the minister guarantee that any of the staff that lost their jobs as the mismanagement, as the bungling, as the waiting until due course will be rehired? Yes or no?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. We have continuously been here in the Legislature stating that we are funding education. We are maintaining funding. The boards have to make the decisions that they feel they need to make, but we have continuously said that we are funding education. It's a priority, and we will continue to build schools. Thank you.

Ms Hoffman: Given that words don't cash cheques and given that there are more challenges confronting our schools and the government looks to rush through a decade-old piece of legislation, the Education Act, or Bill Hate – cue point of order – and given that the province's second-largest school board, Edmonton public, held an emergency debate on the Education Act yesterday and given that the trustees in the meeting said that they can't see any reason to rush implementation of the act, as did the members of ASBA, will the minister agree to delay the act?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. I feel that the opposition has been the one to delay the act. It should have been passed. It was passed in 2012, amended in 2015, and we've been waiting for it to come forward, so we're quite ready for it. I have quotes from Lorrie Jess, president of the Alberta School Boards Association.

> We are pleased with the amendments to ensure that residency and age of access are remaining the same as in the School Act. We look forward to working on successful implementation of the amended Education Act in support of public, separate and francophone school boards.

I have similar . . .

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville has a question.

Highway 15 Twinning Projects

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since 2009 the traffic on highway 15 and the adjoining bridge into Fort Saskatchewan has increased by 50 per cent. Daily more than 23,000 vehicles travel across the bridge. The bridge is narrow and single-lane each way. Collisions on the bridge are all too common, and when they occur, the bridge is often shut down for hours at a time. Starting the twinning of the highway and the bridge construction have been repeatedly promised. Can the Minister of Transportation explain to the House why this project has not been started, and when it will start?

The Speaker: The Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The project described by the hon. member is in two parts. Part A is east of highway 28 to highway 37. It started on May 15 and will be completed by October 15 of this year. Part B is east of highway 37 and west of highway 21 within the city of Fort Saskatchewan. The twinning project also includes construction of a new bridge over the North Saskatchewan River, and construction is expected to begin in August of this year.

The Speaker: The Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that the previous government constantly promised money for the project and announced that it was going ahead multiple times, dating back to March 23, 2017, and given that construction has not started more than two years after that and given that this is a key project to help commerce flow back and forth, particularly from the Industrial Heartland, can the minister please tell the House when the project, in actuality, will have money allocated?

The Speaker: The Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for the enthusiasm in listening to her constituents. The funding has been allocated for the twinning of highway 15, which includes the construction of the new bridge over the North Saskatchewan River. While the first part of the project has begun, the plan is to begin the second part, which includes the bridge, in August of this year. That's the schedule, and we intend to keep it.

The Speaker: The Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Minister. Given that the Minister of Transportation has been talking about the twinning of the highway and of the bridge and promising such since 2017 – and it hasn't started – and given that the capital region is growing and showing little sign of slowing down, to make the problem worse, and given that highway 15 is a major corridor into the Industrial Heartland that is required for economic growth, can the Minister of Transportation please tell the House again when the bridge construction and twinning will start?

The Speaker: The Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's persistence on this matter is impressive. I will remind the hon. member again that it's a major corridor. We understand that it's vital to the economic growth of the Industrial Heartland, which matters to all of Alberta. Again, construction between highway 28A and 37 is under way. It has been for about a month now. Again, the bridge and the other piece of the infrastructure, including the bridge in Fort Saskatchewan: it's budgeted. It's intended to start in August of this year. We plan to keep that schedule.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-McCall is rising to ask a question.

Oil Transportation by Rail

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question is not about Bill Hate. Our government did what was necessary to move our product while waiting for pipelines to be built. We signed oil-by-rail contracts that would have generated $2 billion in revenues for Alberta's economy. Oil was due to begin moving by rail as a result of these contracts in three weeks' time. The Premier is now saying that he wants to move these contracts to the private sector. To the Minister of Energy. A simple question: will these private companies be able to move our products in three weeks, or will we be waiting for another year or so?

The Speaker: The Government House Leader is rising.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, our government is working on every avenue to be able to get our products to market. It's one of the most important issues facing our province and something, quite frankly, that the former government completely failed on. When it

comes to crude by rail and the conversation about that, I think it's important that we, actually, quickly talk about the boondoggle that the NDP brought in in the dying days of their administration, bringing in one of the largest expenditures in the history of the province, maybe even the largest expenditure in the history of the province, at a time when they knew that they were going to lose the election, in an election period, in a last-ditch, desperate attempt to be able to maintain government. It was ridiculous.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-McCall.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that there are further delays coming for the line 3 pipeline expansion and given that the Premier is now saying that he will have to extend curtailment into next year and given that moving oil by rail would help to ease the impact of curtailment, to the minister: will you commit to continuing on with the contracts we signed if you cannot find all the takeaway capacity we secured in the private sector?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, what I will commit to is that we will continue to work to find every avenue that we can to be able to get our product to market. What I can also commit to is what the Premier promised back in February, before the last election, that we will examine every contract that was made by the NDP government in the dying days of their administration, during that election period, to make sure that it is appropriate for taxpayers. Our job is to protect taxpayers' interests. We will look at all of these contracts with that lens. That's the lens that we will use. Now, the problem, again, is that the opposition does not want to talk about their boondoggle that they put in at the last minute to try to save their government.

2:20

Mr. Sabir: Given that now the Premier has spoken out against the oil-by-rail contract without knowing any of the details and given that he jumped to conclusions that the private sector could actually handle the needed takeaway capacity despite not having any evidence to suggest that and given that the Premier and the minister have now been briefed on the contracts we signed, to the minister: will you admit that you are putting ideology and campaign rhetoric over protecting people's jobs and our industry?

The Speaker: The Government House Leader is rising.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Speaker, this government will not be lectured by the NDP opposition when it comes to jobs. When they were in power just a short while ago, they oversaw the largest job loss in the history of this province and then brought in a tax increase that devastated families across Alberta even more.

When it comes to the oil-by-rail contract, that they brought in during an election period in a desperate attempt to be able to hang onto government . . .

Mr. Bilous: It wasn't during the election.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Yes, it was during the election period, Mr. Speaker.

Again, from day one the Premier was very, very clear that there were concerns with this. Nothing that we have seen since then has changed that. We will continue to look at it in the best interests of taxpayers.

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

Corporate Taxation, Tax Credits, and Job Creation

Mr. Bilous: Mr. Speaker, corporate tax reductions are risky and unlikely to create jobs or ensure companies are supporting economic growth. Several economists are skeptical at best that this UCP government's risky 4 and a half billion dollar giveaway will do little other than boost the bottom line. Will this minister admit that there is no single silver bullet and that to promote job creation, he must listen to the chambers of commerce and other business groups, who know best?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta is in a difficult way today in terms of job availability and job opportunity for all Albertans. We've witnessed – in fact, the members opposite presided over a government that witnessed – the largest flight of capital out of this province in recent history. Bill 3 is one measure of many that will again create a very competitive business environment, attract investment to this province, and create jobs and opportunities for all Albertans.

Mr. Bilous: Mr. Speaker, given that chambers of commerce have been asking successive governments to level the playing field with other jurisdictions and introduce an investor tax credit and given that every $30 million in tax credits generates a hundred million dollars' worth of investment in Alberta companies through our program, the Alberta investor tax credit, is the minister refusing to commit funding to this job-creating program because he knows better than the job creators in chambers of commerce, or will he commit to funding the Alberta investor tax credit?

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

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have heard from many chambers of commerce. We've heard from countless business-people in Alberta. We've heard from many, many investors. What we've heard is that we need to make a 180-degree turn from what the previous government did during their time in office. We have a comprehensive plan, including a large corporate tax cut that will attract investment, jobs, and opportunities into Alberta.

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the minister for his non answer.

Given that this government doesn't want to give Albertans the opportunity to invest in companies in their own backyard and given that the capital investment tax credit has been incredibly successful, where $200 million in conditional tax credits has leveraged $2.2 billion worth of investment – that's an ROI of more than 10 times, Minister – if the minister will not commit to this program, will he apologize to Albertans for driving away investment and jobs and admit that he believes he knows better than the business community?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, this government is committed to a comprehensive plan to create a very competitive business environment. That includes reducing our corporate tax rate from 12 to 8 per cent. That includes a full-on commitment to modernize our regulatory environment to ensure that Alberta businesses have the most competitive regulatory environment to compete not only nationally but globally. That includes repealing

the carbon tax, which was the largest tax repeal in the history of this province. I'm confident our measures will create jobs and opportunities for Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Apprenticeship Training and Skilled Tradespeople

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There are more than 50,000 registered apprentices in Alberta, training in over 50 designated trades and occupations, with over 800 high school students enrolled in the registered apprenticeship program. Many of these students attend Lethbridge College, utilizing their new trades building for their education. These apprentices are part of the backbone and future of our province. Will the hon. Minister of Advanced Education ensure that trades and apprenticeship training in this province continues to thrive?

The Speaker: The Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Nicolaides: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, encouraging more people to enter the trades and pursue vocational training opportunities is a top priority for me and for the government. We will be spearheading a number of initiatives that will encourage more people to pursue skilled trades, including expanding the registered apprenticeship training program and providing more scholarships for high school students who show promise in the skilled trades. Let me just say unequivocally that our government believes that apprenticeship education and skilled trades have every bit as much value, weight, merit, and worth as a university.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Mr. Neudorf: To the same minister: given that apprentices who complete an apprenticeship program have seen increasing starting wages since 2005 and that these graduates of apprenticeship programs bolster the provincial economy and strengthen our middle class here in Alberta, what will the minister do to ensure that new graduates of trades and apprenticeship programs have access to the kinds of jobs they have spent years training for?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Nicolaides: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. It is imperative that young Albertans have access to good jobs after graduation. We're working to strengthen the ability of our postsecondary institutions to fill labour market needs in a proactive manner. We recognize that from now until 2025, 3,000 skilled tradespeople will retire each and every year. This so-called grey wave will create opportunities for Albertans, and by supporting the skilled trades, we will ensure more Albertans have access to good jobs.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Mr. Neudorf: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for his answer. Given how critical tradespeople are to our province's success and how tradespeople sacrifice time away from their families to work across our province while enduring long and demanding work hours on projects where they may not receive a thank you for their efforts, what is this government doing to recognize and celebrate the contributions of Alberta's tradespeople, like myself?

The Speaker: The Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Nicolaides: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government completely respects and honours the tradespeople who quite literally helped build this province and who will be on the front lines of our economic recovery. These highly skilled men and women power our economy and have created a lasting legacy for all Albertans. That's why we are committed to honouring these tradespeople, who have left their mark, in a manner worthy of their contributions to our province. In fact, tomorrow I'll also be having a meeting with several private members to continue to explore opportunities to recognize the great work being done.

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

Child Intervention Panel Recommendations

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government established an all-party panel to review the child intervention system in 2017. For over a year members from both sides of the House engaged with indigenous leaders, academics, front-line workers, nonprofit organizations, and families and youth receiving services. The panel delivered 26 consensus-based recommendations. The UCP then played politics and voted against legislation to put an action plan in place to implement those recommendations. To the Minister of Children's Services: will you tell me where you stand on the recommendations your colleagues endorsed and then abandoned?

The Speaker: The Minister of Children's Services is rising.

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The all-party panel undertook consultations for more than a year, speaking with people across the province, including indigenous leaders, people with lived experience as well as members on both sides of the House, so that we could learn and make improvements to the child intervention system. I've spoken with my colleagues who participated in that important work as well as with other panel members to better understand the feedback that went into that report, and we will continue to consult with our stakeholders as we move forward on the longer term plans.

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

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that some of the panel members that were on this side of the House would also be interested in engaging with the minister on that.

Given that in the most recent Child and Youth Advocate report he notes that our action plan works to improve services for young people and, more specifically, to improve disability services and support for permanency services and given that leading experts in the field see the value of the full implementation of the action plan, will the Minister of Children's Services confirm her commitment to full implementation of the action plan by 2022, as our government committed to, or will we get another non answer?

2:30

The Speaker: The Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Just so that the member opposite is aware, one of the people that I did reach out to was the former Minister of Children's Services to get her thoughts and feedback on how the panel worked, what some of the background was on what went into that work. I haven't yet received confirmation as to whether or not she would be willing to meet, but I would more than welcome a meeting with anybody on the opposite side of the House who wants to discuss that further. We do

need to make sure that we have the best interests of these vulnerable children top of mind when making decisions.

Ms Pancholi: Well, unfortunately, I didn't hear from the minister any comment about full implementation of the action plan.

Given that the minister's answers are lacking the clarity that Albertans deserve, I will try something more straightforward. Can the minister at the very least confirm that indigenous children and families in Alberta will receive the same level of services and funding regardless of where they live and that she will not cut that funding to pay for a tax giveaway for wealthy corporations?

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

Ms Schulz: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the members of this House may be aware, there were short-, medium-, and long-term recommendations within the work that the panel undertook. A lot of the short-term recommendations have already been put in place or work has begun or they've been completed. A number of the recommendations are to take place within this year, and then a number are longer term. Many of those do require ongoing discussions – and that's very clear in the report – with our stakeholders, including indigenous communities, and I'm happy to say that we had a number of those discussions this week.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods is rising to ask a question.

Public Service Contract Negotiations

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The right to collectively bargain is recognized through international human rights conventions and has been protected by our Supreme Court of Canada in very clear decisions. To the minister of labour: could you please explain to this House the importance of good faith bargaining and its relationship with the government legislating contractually obligated negotiations to stop?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, this government is just seeking to delay arbitration, and we believe it's in the best interests of Albertans. We're seeking to delay arbitration to build a path forward that will ensure that we can deliver high-quality services to Albertans and will ensure that we can get on a path to balance. We're waiting for the MacKinnon panel to deliver their report. That's our simple request, just a delay in arbitration.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Minister of Finance used the term "bargaining in good faith" yesterday when he was speaking to the collective bargaining process with public-sector unions and given that we're now learning that he's going to break the law and delay contractually mandated talks on wage reopeners, to the minister: can you please clarify for the House what you mean when you say "good faith bargaining"?

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

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We appreciate the public sector and all that they provide to both this government and to Albertans as they deliver high-quality services. Again, we are just seeking to delay arbitration. We're working in good faith with all stakeholders, quite frankly, to ensure that we can have a responsible plan going forward in the best interests of all Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Woods.

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister does not appear to understand bargaining in good faith and given that the minister invited unions to a consultation on wage reopeners and given that he attempted to brush off questions yesterday about why he would legislate himself out of these contracts, to the minister: will you admit that you had no plan to bargain legally and that you are going to use your majority in this House to break the law?

The Speaker: The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, Albertans expect this government to make thoughtful, prudent decisions and not be rushed into hasty decisions that will not be in the best interests of Albertans. Therefore, we are simply seeking a delay in the wage arbitration so that we can build a responsible plan going forward, a plan that ensures that the best interests of Albertans are top of mind.

Highway 63 Maintenance

Mr. Yao: One issue that I hear about is highway maintenance, Mr. Speaker. What my constituents in Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo are concerned about is the current contract because the maintenance of highway 63 is abysmal. It is poorly maintained. In the winter the plowing and clearing happen infrequently. People rely on the buses and larger trucks to literally carve through the snow that has piled alongside the lanes on the bridge. What assurances does this government have that Albertans are getting the services that they are paying for? Have standards been lowered over the years in regard to these highway maintenance contracts?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Snow clearing standards, to my knowledge, haven't been lowered, and I assure the member that highway 63 remains a priority. Our maintenance contractors are required to respond to winter conditions in a timely manner and to monitor highways three times a day. Department staff are able to monitor the contractors' performance through both visual inspections and by GPS monitoring, which is required on the service vehicles.

Mr. Yao: Given, Mr. Speaker, that the highway still has not been swept, leaving our busiest road uncleaned – the sheer amount of gravel and sand on the provincial road can cause motorcycles to slip, injuring riders; rocks get spit up by vehicles into the windshields; it's dangerous, inconvenient, and expensive – and given that the contractor's reply was that the delay is due to equipment breakdown, my constituents wonder: why wasn't this company ready as they had all winter to prepare? Do they have more than one sweeper? To the Minister of Transportation: what contractual mechanisms are in place to ensure that Albertans receive the services that they are paying for?

Mr. McIver: Well, I thank the hon. member. As a motorcycle rider myself who rode up this week, this is a matter that I'm familiar with. The contractor did indeed bring in a subcontractor to begin sweeping operations following some equipment difficulties that that contractor was facing. I can tell the member that the sweeping operations are under way, probably as we speak but certainly this week, and will be completed as soon as possible. I will follow up based on the hon. member's comments.

Mr. Yao: Given, Mr. Speaker, that all winter my constituents noted the abundance of highway street lamps that were burned out and now they question whether they will be repaired in time for next winter and given that the delivery on this contract is a reflection of what Albertans think about all government contracts, what assurances do Albertans have that the highest standards and measures are in place, and will this contractor be held accountable to repair these lights, clean this highway, repair the highway, and clear the snow?

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the litany of complaints and drawing them to my attention. We review the performance of our contractors on a regular basis. If deficiencies are identified, they are addressed directly with the contractor. Contracts contain specific standards and obligations, and there are financial penalties for not meeting those obligations.

In the case of the lighting the majority of the lights have now been replaced or repaired, I understand.

I thank the hon. member for bringing this important situation to my attention, and we will follow up.

The Speaker: Hon. members, in approximately 30 seconds or less we will move to points of order. I'd ask all members who are leaving the Chamber for other commitments to do so in an expeditious manner.

The hon. Government House Leader is rising.

Point of Order
Imputing Motives

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you for the opportunity to rise. I believe we have a few points of order. I could probably speed it up, if the Opposition House Leader and the Speaker are so inclined, to three points of order: one at 1:55; then one at about 1:57, roughly, would be the time; and then the remainder of the points of order called by the Member for Calgary-Hays could probably be looped into one point of order. If that's okay with you, Mr. Speaker, I would start with the one at 1:55. I assume we're on the same page?

2:40

The Speaker: Agreed.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on that particular point under 23(h), (i), and (j). The Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition at the time made comments a few times that I thought were bordering on imputing false motives on members of the House as well as language that could create disorder, particularly around – and I will quote what we heard; you have the Blues, so you have a bit of an advantage over me at the moment – what basically was: steal money from Albertans. You know, there is no intention by any member of this House to steal from anybody. I would not say that about the opposition nor about the government. I think there are lots of rulings in the past that make that clear. I won't spend too much time on it because I'm more interested in discussing the other points of order, but I think it would be appropriate for the opposition to withdraw and apologize for that remark.

The Speaker: The Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What we have here are two sets of facts. Quite frankly, we have the fact that the government seems to think they're above the law while we believe that violating the constitutional rights of Albertans is profoundly inappropriate and abusive of their office. So the reference the hon. member was making was in regard to taking money from nurses. That's what would be the case if they do in fact legislate versus negotiating. These are two different sets of facts.

I would argue, Mr. Speaker, you know, under *Beauchesne's* section 75 that what the members are trying to do is curtail our ability and freedom of speech in this Assembly. According to *Beauchesne's*:

> The privilege of freedom of speech is both the least questioned and the most fundamental right of the Member of Parliament on the floor of the House and in committee. It is primarily guaranteed in the British Bill of Rights which declared "that the freedom of speech and debates or proceedings in Parliament ought not to be impeached or questioned in any court or place outside of Parliament."

Mr. Speaker, this is a difference in sets of facts, as you yourself even on Monday, May 27, had said when dealing with a different point of order. You said, "What we can agree on is that it's quite possible that there will be times in this Chamber when there are two sets of facts around the same issue." I would argue that this is one of them.

The Speaker: I would say, with respect to the point of order around the Official Opposition making accusations about what the government may or may not have done, that this, in fact, is a disagreement on the facts. As such, this point of order is not well taken. We can proceed with the fact that this was merely amongst debate.

The House leader, please.

Point of Order
Parliamentary Language

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you. I'm rising on what would be the second point of order, at 1:57-ish, I believe. Just making sure that we're on the same page. Am I roughly there with you, Mr. Speaker?

I again rise under 23(h), (i), and (j) in regard to parliamentary language. I will refer you, Mr. Speaker, to a Speaker's ruling on November 28, 2012. Interestingly enough, it involved the hon. Opposition House Leader back when he was in opposition the first time. He got himself into a little bit of hot water using words like "intentionally misled" to describe the government projection on a budget. Not only was it unparliamentary, but it was directed at an individual member, and those words did cause disorder. It was ruled on at the time by the then Speaker, who cautioned the hon. member at that time on that. I just think that's important to point out because, again, it was back in 2012, so clearly the Opposition House Leader is aware of these circumstances.

At the time, Mr. Speaker, what the hon. member said was:

> Mr. Speaker, given that this Conservative government intentionally misled Albertans by using a budget based on overly optimistically projections – in other words, rainbows and unicorns – and given that the price of oil is still lower than this government's projected price, to the President of the Treasury Board: will he admit that the way to rectify this situation and ensure that Albertans get the public services they need is to increase royalties to an amount competitive with every other jurisdiction in the world?

I don't think that question includes the "misled" quote, so that's where I'm confused, Mr. Speaker. I do apologize to the House. I'm on the wrong one.

Where I'll go with this is this: the member on that day, November 28, 2012, intentionally misled the House. The Government House Leader at the time said, "I will leave aside all the other points of order but one, and that is when the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview rose to ask a question" and went on to talk about

misleading the House. I'm not going to read all of it, Mr. Speaker, because it's longer than I thought. The point is that the opposition over the last few days has continued to skirt around the issue of our parliamentary rules on calling people liars, saying that they've misled. Context matters – I agree with that – but it's pretty clear, if you read the Blues, that the opposition continues to imply that members of the government are lying or telling mistruths to this Assembly. In fact, that is, one, not true, but, second, it is certainly unparliamentary, and I think that you should caution the members not to do that anymore in the future.

The Speaker: The Opposition House Leader is rising.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, I'm confused because I don't know if the Government House Leader actually identified what was said. Again, I think it's very important that specific words are dealt with. That's why there are words that are listed in the unparliamentary language and others that are not.

Now, to my knowledge – and you have the Blues, Mr. Speaker – there was nothing in today's QP, from this side of the House, that either said "lied" or "misled." On my point of order, that I will be arguing shortly, it was the Government House Leader that actually said "that member, who lied about" the carbon tax. He used the word "lied" in his own point of order, so it's a little bit contradictory to be arguing now that it's a point of order if we use language like that.

I am very careful and try to encourage this side of the House to be careful in the language that they use so as not to cause disorder with words. We do have a list, all members of the House, as far as words that are ruled unparliamentary. This point of order is no point of order. At no point did – I don't know if that was against our leader – the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona use a word to incite disorder in this House. In fact, as you ruled just yesterday, Mr. Speaker, on two different sets of facts, two different sets of opinions, we believe that our facts, as the leader tabled today, are in black and white and are the truth. The government believes there is a second variation on that truth, but you did rule that each of us may have our own version. Therefore, this is not a point of order.

The Speaker: I thank you for your interjections. Based upon my ruling, maybe we will be able to deal with your point of order in our discussion at present.

Here is what I would say. I do happen to have the benefit of the Blues. At approximately 1:56 the Leader of the Official Opposition and the hon. Government House Leader were engaged in excitable debate when the Leader of the Official Opposition said the words "The House leader just can't stop saying things that are untrue. He just can't help himself," at which point a point of order was called. The Leader of the Official Opposition also went on to say, "Will the House leader apologize on behalf of the Premier for providing members of this Assembly with information that is not true, or has the Premier also embraced the posttruth era." I think we were all there for that.

What I would say with respect to this half of the point of order – over the past two days both sides of the House have been doing their very best to get as close to doing things which you are unable to do intentionally and doing them through other means – is that many rulings have taken place in the House in the past and that when members might be trying to do this, they would be speaking to "all members" or "the government," making broad strokes. What we saw today was the Leader of the Official Opposition very clearly imply that the Government House Leader was saying untrue things, which, in fact, is unparliamentary. In the second half of my ruling I will give the Leader of the Official Opposition, or the Opposition House Leader on her behalf, the opportunity to apologize and withdraw.

2:50

Having said that, the Government House Leader also behaved in a manner that is not becoming of a member when he very specifically used the word that we all know is unparliamentary and wasn't just skirting the rules but, in fact, broke the rules when he said, "That member, who lied about the biggest tax increase" in Alberta's history.

What I might say is that in a few moments I will give the Government House Leader the opportunity to withdraw and apologize. The challenge that is before the House is that both sides of the Assembly are trying to do, through whatever means possible, what we are not allowed to do, and that is to imply that a member of the House has lied. In this case, the Leader of the Official Opposition or the Opposition House Leader will apologize and withdraw because she implied that, specifically, the Government House Leader said something that was untrue, and the Government House Leader will also apologize for using the unparliamentary language saying that the opposition lied.

The hon. Government House Leader is rising.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Do I get my opportunity to apologize and withdraw now, or would you like me to do it later?

The Speaker: Oh. Right this second, and then you can sit down.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I did use the word "lied" today, and I do apologize for it and withdraw my remarks.

The Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona I apologize and withdraw that comment.

The Speaker: Excellent. Thank you. Good work.

The Government House Leader is rising on the point of order. At your pleasure.

Point of Order
Epithets

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll rise again under Standing Order 23(j), "uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder." I'd also refer you to a citation in *Beauchesne's* which refers to the concept that one should not provoke debate. I raise it in the same manner that I raised it on previous occasions on this issue. I'm going to just refer you to a Speaker's ruling on March 22, 2000, on the issue. What I'm referring to is the opposition continuing to rename Bill 8, which is the Education Amendment Act, and at the time this issue was raised before in the House, the Speaker ruled this way. He said:

> Thank you both . . . hon. gentlemen.

To the Opposition House Leader and the Government House Leader he says:

> The reality is that a bill does have a name. A bill does have a title. One can use . . . an adjective to describe it, and all that ever does is lead to provocations and a whole series of other things. In other words, it leads to a debate in the question period. Of course, the purpose of question period is not to have a debate. The purpose of question period is to raise a question.
>
> I do believe there is some merit to the point [of order] raised by the hon. Government House Leader with respect to this and

> would like to advise all members of the House that I really wonder what this question period is going to be like as of April 4, when second reading is given to Bill 11. If one looks at the traditions in anticipation of what's on the Order Paper for that particular day, perhaps the environment here will be quite different. So we can think about that and how we're going to deal with all that and read the rules.

He goes on to say:

> This is not a lecture. This is . . . a suggestion or advice. Bill 11 does have a name, as all hon. members have names, and all hon. members are referred to [in] that way. We do not denigrate the names of their constituencies or other individuals or anybody else. It's kind of an honourable thing.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I would submit to you the same thing as the Government House Leader did on that day. Like they did on Bill 11, we have Bill 8, which does have a name. Question period is not a time for debate. Question period is a time for asking questions. I ask that you caution the hon. members to stop using the term "Bill Hate," particularly in question period.

The Speaker: The Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm about to cite a number of examples where the now government, when in opposition, misnamed or intentionally renamed my own Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, a number of our bills. In fact, the Government House Leader on December 12, 2016, referred to our bill that was being debated at the time, the fair trade act – I will get the name in a second. The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre had said in *Hansard*:

> It should be probably named the unfair elections act, or how about the kneecapping the opposition act, or the incumbent election act, or the NDP election act, or the act to stack the deck? But I would not want to do the same as the NDP and use political purposes in names.

That's rich, considering that the previous six examples were just that.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to draw attention to the fact that the opposition continually refers to our carbon tax as the job-killing carbon tax. I want to also draw your attention to the fact that the opposition, or the government when in opposition and even today, actually used the adjective "kill" in many different examples, which, in my opinion, is a much more aggressive term: killing coal communities, killing the economy, killing jobs, job-killing carbon tax, which, Mr. Speaker, neither you nor the previous Speaker have ruled as out of order.

I will go back to *Beauchesne's* section 75, which is all about the freedom of speech for members. What the Government House Leader is trying to do is stifle members' ability to be able to speak freely. Nowhere in today's question period was any particular bill named, Mr. Speaker. What members were referring to is Bill Hate, as what some Albertans have referred to in communications with us.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a point of order. I feel that we should not apologize, considering that the shoe now is on the other foot for the government, who used this over and over again in this House for the past few years, and it has never been ruled out of order.

The Speaker: Thank you.

I was just about to recognize the Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, I'm always grateful when you are kind enough to recognize me in this House.

The Speaker: For clarity's sake, you are providing new information, not rehashing debate, correct?

Mr. McIver: I am. My hon. colleague did make some good arguments, but what he did not do and the reason why this is new information is that under 23(h), (i), and (j) the phrase "Bill Hate" is really, truly abusive. Mr. Speaker, it's your ruling, but I'm not sure how anyone could think it's not abusive and insulting language. It imputes false and unavowed motives to another member simply because it suggests that someone in this House hates Albertans or a subset of Albertans, and I can't think of anything more abusive or insulting than that. By so doing, also under 23(h), "makes allegations against another Member," it's abusive and insulting language that could create disorder in the House. The fact that we're on our feet right now I think is proof enough that that's the case.

The Speaker: Are there any other members wishing to provide new or relevant content who have not yet spoken? The Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Member Irwin: Yeah. Respectfully, I would argue again, as the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview said, that using inflammatory rhetoric like "job-killing carbon tax" to refer to other bills, legislation would be just as inflammatory. I would point out *Beauchesne's* 69.

> The Speaker has reminded the House, "It is very important . . . to indicate that something can be inflammatory, can be disagreeable, can even be offensive, but it may not be a question of privilege unless the comment actually impinges upon the ability of Members of Parliament to do their job properly.

And I would argue that this does not.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. members. I appreciate the additional interjections. I think part of the question will be not on whether it infringes on someone's privilege but on: is the comment likely to create disorder? The question that is before us, though, I don't believe is clear cut, be it a point of order or not. I think that all of the members have taken reasonable positions with respect to the importance of free speech, with respect to times in which the name that you're using for the bill, Bill Hate, may or may not be used.

I think that it is prudent in this case, as I spent some time this morning thinking about whether or not this particular issue would arise in question period today, and given the new information that's been provided, I will report back to the House, likely tomorrow, with respect to my decision on the ongoing use of Bill Hate. I would provide some context.

With respect to phrases that have been considered parliamentary one day, they may in fact be unparliamentary on other occasions. I think Speaker Zwozdesky spoke to this on a number of occasions when a statement that was not initially deemed to be unparliamentary certainly became unparliamentary because it continued to create disorder in the House.

3:00

My reservation is that I believe that is the path that we're currently heading down, but I will reserve my right to rule until tomorrow.

Are there other points of order that I have missed?

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, I have four or five other ones on the same matter, about the same words. I think it would be appropriate to let you rule on what we just talked about, not relive the last 10 minutes, and wait for your ruling tomorrow. As such, I would withdraw them because we've had that discussion just now.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders
Third Reading

Bill 3
Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act

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

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move third reading of Bill 3, the Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act.

I would like to thank all members of this Assembly for their input and debate with regard to this bill. This is a subject where our viewpoints differ, but I know that fundamentally we all share a desire to get Albertans back to work, and our government is confident that this bill will assist us in accomplishing that.

To recap, this common-sense legislation proposes to cut the corporate tax rate by a third within the next three years while maintaining the small-business tax rate at 2 per cent. This bill will also make minor technical amendments to ensure that the rate cuts are implemented properly.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Over the past few years we've seen investment and capital leave our province as a result of poor economic policy. We need bold action to renew the Alberta advantage, create jobs, and get Alberta working again. The previous government increased corporate tax rates, and revenues fell as the province became a less desirable place to do business. Our plan will help attract the investment needed to stimulate the economy, which will grow the overall size of the tax base and eventually lead to additional revenue.

Leading economists such as Dr. Jack Mintz and Dr. Bev Dahlby have estimated that this tax reduction will create more than 55,000 new jobs over the next four years and generate nearly $13 billion in economic activity. Dr. Mintz and Dr. Dahlby are both highly respected economic experts across the nation, and both are based here in Alberta at the University of Calgary. They have a keen understanding of Alberta's unique economy, and I value their opinions.

I also value the opinions of the chambers of commerce across this province who stood with me after I tabled this bill to show their support. I was also graciously joined by members of the Alberta Enterprise Group and the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. Their support for this action was clear.

Franco Terrazzano, the Alberta director of the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, said that "by lowering business taxes, this government is giving Albertans a chance to get back on their feet and get ahead." I agree with him. Businesses are the backbone or our communities, and by supporting businesses, we're supporting all Albertans. Without successful businesses there are very few jobs and there is far less government revenue. Businesses invest significant amounts in our communities and provide Albertans with the opportunities they need to feed their children and house their families. Overall, more workers and a healthy business community mean that we can better meet our commitment to protect government's vital programs and services.

Madam Speaker, I would like to remind the opposition that when they were in government, they told the Legislature on more than one occasion that their industry-specific corporate tax breaks would stimulate thousands of jobs and millions in investment. I find it very interesting that they are now saying that these broad tax reductions, that will benefit all sectors, will not create jobs or stimulate new investment.

We are working to correct the course of our province, and we are confident that these tax reductions will help create jobs and reignite our economy. This is what we were elected to do. Alberta's businesses have been punished for far too long with carbon taxes, red tape, and increased corporate taxes. Business efforts to expand and support our communities have been hampered, and I'm proud to be part of correcting this situation.

When the Premier and I spoke about this bill at Lafarge Canada's Edmonton infrastructure building, many workers and management were happy to stand with us in support of this action. Their western Canadian CEO, Brad Kohl, spoke of Lafarge's large investment plans and how they are looking forward to quick returns on those investments. He spoke of their desire to work in a province that is open for business and their intent to hire more people, which is welcome news.

Beyond supporting local businesses, these tax reductions will attract new companies to Alberta and encourage the development of new businesses by creating an enticing tax regime for expansion and job creation. Madam Speaker, by July 2 of this year Alberta will have the lowest corporate tax rate in Canada, and within a few years our province will once again be one of the most attractive business destinations in North America. We are proud to support job creators and help regain investor confidence. By laying out the dates of each rate reduction now, we are giving investors the certainty they need to rely on to make sound business decisions with confidence.

Madam Speaker, I know that Alberta's businesses want to grow and that they want to grow here in our province. Easing the tax burden on job creators was a core promise we made, and I'm proud that our government is keeping that promise. I would again like to thank the members of the House who are supporting this bill as well as those who offered considerate debate.

With that, Madam Speaker, I am pleased to move third reading of Bill 3, the Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is not available.

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

Member Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'll just start by saying that of course our viewpoints differ on this matter. We are not confident on this side that the bill will generate the investment that the hon. Finance minister talked about. He talked about his economists, the economists on his side, those expert economists who know Alberta well, saying that this will generate investment, that this will generate jobs, et cetera, et cetera. He did not say that there are other economists who don't agree with his economists, and there are. We have quoted those people, those reports, extensively in our earlier debates on this topic. I don't need to quote them right now, but I'm sure my colleagues here will do the same thing.

The fact is that the province struggled mightily after the crash in the world oil prices in late 2014. It caused our economy, because of its overreliance on revenues coming from the energy streams in this province, to struggle mightily and go into recession over a couple of quarters and longer than that. We soon got news that it would go into recession in early 2015.

We chose to work to mitigate that, Madam Speaker, and we did that in a far different way than this government is taking to mitigate the difficulty in our economy. We brought in former Bank of Canada governor David Dodge, who said: to mitigate the steep

decline in your economy and the loss of jobs, the retrenchment of investment and capital, you should look at investing in your province to keep people working, to keep businesses afloat.

We did that through our capital plan, as everyone remembers, by targeting a 15 per cent increase on top of the approximately $5 billion to 5 and a half billion dollars that was in the capital plan at that point, when we took over government in May 2015. We contributed more than that $5 billion to 5 and a half billion dollars, and we got that capital plan up over $7 billion, Madam Speaker. That, as I said, was a way to stop the economy from nosediving and kind of smooth it out somewhat.

3:10

That helped people all over the province who were involved in construction of all kinds to stay on the job. As you know, Madam Speaker, the track record of this side, when we were government, was pretty remarkable in the area of school modernization and construction, something the previous PC government was unable to really deliver on. We chose to invest. And, yes, there was a cost to that investment. That cost was to run deficits while the economy was in free fall, and that had the support of economists. When I would meet with those economists in my role as Finance minister, they would come here and say: look, your government is doing the best it can with the hand that it's been dealt.

Madam Speaker, I was pleased to be able to stand up in this House and talk about how we were keeping Albertans employed, how we were mitigating the steep decline in the GDP in this province. For that reason, I don't understand why the government believes that we're on the best track to reduce the corporate tax by $4.5 billion over four years, not to see a gain in corporate taxes as a result of that for two years.

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Finance minister mentioned that – you know, that side seems to be against something that we did in a very targeted and selected way, and that is, Mr. Speaker, that we worked and we put royalty credits out there for companies in the world, really, who wanted to use our really affordable gas stream products and value-add to those. Inter Pipeline and another company took advantage of those royalty credits in a very targeted, specific way, and it paid off big time in terms of investment to this province.

We didn't do a scattergun approach, as this Finance minister and government is doing. We did a targeted approach, where we knew that there was cheap feedstock for the kinds of things like polypropylene or plastics that could be manufactured easily in this province, but companies weren't doing it. They weren't doing it because there were some particular challenges around the financial environment for those kinds of companies in this province. So we made it specific to those kinds of industries. They took it up, going great guns, Mr. Speaker, and we're seeing a return not only on the construction side but on the long-term use of cheap feedstock in this province that will create an industry that wasn't here.

Now, I don't know what industries the Finance minister is talking about that are magically going to happen as a result of a reduction in corporate taxes. What we've heard from many people on this side, Mr. Speaker, is that that reduction, as former Bank of Canada governor Mark Carney has said, will create dead money, meaning that the $4.5 billion reduction over four years that this government is giving away to corporations will sit on their balance sheet, or it will sit in their shareholders' pockets. It won't get reinvested because of the uncertainty of so many things, including the tariff environment that's being upset all over the place as a result of the United States going to war, not literally, on regulations and trade regulations with other countries in the world.

The upshot is that the kind of activity that this government is taking is really a Hail Mary. They're hoping, hoping against hope, that it's going to return more in the long run than their investment up front will cost. Mr. Speaker, that's a bit of a wish, and for that wish, for that opportunity, for corporations to put the monies in their pockets and potentially give it back by way of investment and jobs, as being indicated from the other side, we all get to have a lot less revenue in this province to address the needs of Albertans today, tomorrow, next year, and the year after that and after that and after that.

What that means, Mr. Speaker, what that likely means, almost one hundred per cent means, is that the government is going to be finding efficiencies across all of the programs and services that get delivered to Albertans, and those efficiencies is a kind way of saying that they're going to start cutting back on the quality and quantity of services for Albertans. If the wish of investment does not realize itself, as I doubt it will, then they're going to be saying: well, we've got to find a way to cut back because we don't have the revenues.

Well, Mr. Speaker, we know now that Alberta is growing in terms of population. We know that our population is getting older as we speak and that the needs of an older population are more expensive than a younger population. Relative to the rest of Canada we're younger, of course, but that won't stay forever. The needs of our older citizens are going to be increasing as we go forward in terms of the cost. So it's not a responsible thing to do, to look at the reductions to the extent that the Minister of Finance is talking about.

You know, I want to point out that we're at the low end of the scale already in terms of taxes in this country if you're looking at corporate taxes. We know we're the least taxed jurisdiction when you add up the fact that we don't have a PST, we don't have a health care premium, we don't have a payroll tax. Those things are present in many other provinces, and an apples-to-apples comparison of this province to other provinces would show that we're doing well already. So I don't understand why the Minister of Finance believes he can operate with even less money going forward on the hope that, I guess, lots of investment will occur with the scattershot approach that he's taking and that his government is taking to address the needs of corporations and forgetting about the needs of citizens in this province.

Mr. Speaker, the targeted approach we took with the investments on what is the sweet spot in Alberta, you know, the energy stream that we are blessed with having in this province: we targeted investments there, and it paid off big time. Now, I'm not sure where – there is no target for what the Finance minister and the government is proposing. They're just saying: you'll all pay less. The message I want to continue to deliver is: if you're not a corporation, everyone else is going to pay more, essentially.

I think the best interest of Albertans is to stay with the current tax regime we have, to stay with the targeted investments that have paid off mightily that we have, and to continue to follow the route of pushing for pipelines, pushing for a medium-term solution to get crude by rail happening so that we can get better value for every barrel of oil, Mr. Speaker. That would have been the bill that should have come forward as the continue-to-work-on-pipelines bill, the continue-to-get-value-added-from-energy-products-in-this-province bill, instead of the Hail Mary that is here before us.

I just want to assure people that there are speakers on the other side, leading economists, this one economist who talks about a 2012 study survey conducted at the University of Chicago, that trickle-down economics, the kinds of things that are being talked about here, don't work. A person no less in stature than Warren Buffett talked about how trickle-down economics really just surges upwards towards the shareholders and corporations.

Mr. Speaker, I, for one, won't be supporting this bill, and neither will folks on this side. Thank you.

3:20

The Speaker: Hon. members, is there anyone else wishing to speak to third reading? The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to third reading of this bill, that would bring a huge tax break, which nobody is asking for and nobody has explained how it will help create jobs, bring investments. I think it's a very famous definition put forward by Albert Einstein, that insanity is to keep doing the same thing over and over and over and expecting different results. What we see with this bill is exactly that. As the Member for Calgary-Buffalo mentioned, Alberta has a tax advantage of $11.5 billion to the next jurisdiction. We are already competitive, and we have an advantage when it comes to taxation because we don't have health premiums, we don't have a payroll tax, and that gives us an edge of $11.5 billion.

What we know, if we look at the history of tax breaks, is that these experiments, the tax break experiments, have been tried in the developed world many times. Under President Reagan, under Prime Minister Thatcher there were massive, massive tax cuts. There was a tax on trade unions; there was deregulation; there was privatization; there was outsourcing: all in the name of competition. But what we saw was that growth was low, and because of these policies, inequality rules, we created a society of have and have-nots, and assets of the state were put in a fire sale. And every time those policies were put forward to respond to a crisis. In other words, crises were used as an opportunity to impose these policies, these failed policies, these trickle-down economic policies.

Exactly what we are seeing here is that this government is fixated on their rhetoric and ideological agenda, and they're bringing in the policies that have failed across the globe. They failed in the U.K., they failed in the States, and they even failed in Canada as well. If tax cuts were to create jobs – I think the U.S. saw the biggest tax cut just a year ago, a couple of years ago from 35 per cent to 21 per cent, almost a 14 per cent break, and the analysis of that is that 84 per cent of the businesses who are benefiting from that break haven't changed their investment plans. That's 84 per cent of the businesses. And as is common with these policies, like supply-side economics or trickle-down economics, they always create deficits. The U.S., clearly, has seen the deficit go up 17 per cent, to $779 billion.

In fact, the evidence is that it didn't create jobs. AT&T promised somewhere around 7,000 jobs under this tax cut, but they actually reduced their job numbers by 23,000 people. That's exactly what we are seeing here in Alberta, too. Just on June 6 the China National Offshore Oil Corporation, CNOOC, announced that they will be laying off a hundred staff from their operations. I think if a tax cut was to work, if the carbon tax was an issue, they have clear indication of both, that this government is willing to cut tax and that this government has gotten rid of the carbon tax. But that didn't stop them from laying off workers. That's a clear example. That's clear evidence that the path you're heading on is not working. It has not worked in the past, and it will not work this time around.

In recent federal tax breaks that were awarded by Prime Minister Stephen Harper – I think when you look at those breaks, those breaks also didn't have any significant impact on investment. That break, yes, gave some flexibility and more money to businesses, but that money was accumulated in accounts and didn't create jobs, didn't go to investing in new businesses. I think it was called dead money by Mark Carney, former governor, Bank of Canada. I think the evidence is there, even from our own Conservative experience. The evidence is there that when the federal Conservative government cut it from 22 per cent to 15 per cent over four years, that didn't create jobs, and that left the federal government with revenue shortfalls and in fact deficit. What we are seeing in Alberta is that we have a tax advantage of $11.5 billion, and we are seeing deficits. How can we improve that? I don't think that's the recipe for that. This has failed everywhere, and there's still time for the government to reconsider this experiment.

Look at evidence from other jurisdictions. Like, look at evidence from Conservative governments across the world. Look at evidence from the Thatcher cuts in the '80s. Look at evidence from Ronald Reagan's cuts in the '80s, Prime Minister Brian Mulroney's cuts in the '80s. Like, all those cuts have not created the results that people were made to believe, that somehow they will create jobs and create investments. It just takes revenue away from that, and those revenue shortages then, I guess, result in cuts to education, cuts to services, cuts to health care. And here we are, I guess, heading down that path already with massive cuts.

We are seeing legislation coming in to attack workers' constitutionally protected rights under the contracts to negotiate and to have a pay raise after three years or so. Those were frozen. We are seeing the same pattern, that attacks are coming on trade unions. We are seeing deregulation. I think there was some news out there on driver examinations, that after a report was taken in-house, government is looking into deregulating that again, outsourcing those things.

3:30

I think what we need at this point is policy that is more common-sense and that is more tailored to Alberta's economy and what the Alberta economy is facing today. We are facing many issues. If I talk about just the energy sector, we have enough production. We have investment in oil sands, and we can produce. The issue we have is that we don't have takeaway capacity. When it comes to that, instead of helping industry with the steps we were taking, they are insisting that they will reverse those things, for instance oil by rail. That contract alone would have provided 125,000-barrel-a-day takeaway capacity for our energy sector, and 125,000 barrels a day means new jobs, new investment, and new revenues for the government. What we are seeing here is this four-plus billion dollar tax break. At the same time, what the economy really needs, that takeaway capacity, we are turning a blind eye to. I don't think that's what Alberta's economy needs.

I think every time we have heard from Albertans, we have heard from different political parties that we are aligned on one industry and one customer in terms of our energy industry. What we need here is investment and diversification of the economy. When we were facing these crises, we responded differently. We responded differently. We didn't make the situation worse, which this corporate tax break and the policies that government is pursuing will. We responded by helping the energy industry to create that takeaway capacity. We invested in schools. We invested in child care. We invested in green infrastructure. We invested in the green line in Calgary. The result was that in 2017 Alberta was leading the growth across Canada by 4.9 per cent.

Here, I think, in second reading the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board commented on it, that this cut will see job creation by '22-23 of 50,000 and some billions made up – I don't know, $12 or 13 billion – in investment in '23. But Albertans are hurting now. They are looking for jobs now. That was the platform: jobs, the economy, and pipelines. This government needs to focus on the things that matter to Albertans. They need to pursue policies that create jobs. There is no evidence that tax breaks automatically create some kind of jobs. What we are seeing in our

industry is that investment is not coming in because we don't have takeaway capacity. Government policies, government efforts need to be focused on creating that capacity so that we can get our economy going, we can attract investment, and we can create new jobs. This bill, coupled with their other policies like the Municipal Government Act, will also somehow attract investment, although there is nothing in that piece of legislation, and then there is red tape reduction that will create investment: all those things may be good photo opportunities, but they are not the policies, economic policies, the kinds of initiatives that Albertans elected this government to pursue. They will not create jobs.

Instead, this cut will create a revenue hole in our budget, and Albertans: those in school will suffer; those who require health care will suffer; those Albertans who rely on critical government supports like income support, AISH, PDD will suffer. That's an irresponsible thing. I think government should not pursue this giveaway, so I will urge all colleagues in this House to reject this policy and to reject this break for the benefit of all Albertans.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. I see the hon. Member for Taber-Warner rising.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, I rise just to address some of the things that we've heard on a regular basis from the members opposite, stating that there is no evidence that this can create jobs. The absolute truth to this issue is that a majority of the members opposite are the evidence. The members opposite, a majority of them, have moved to this province because we did something different here than they did in other jurisdictions. We made sure that we had some of the lowest marginal tax rates in Canada and sometimes in North America. We made sure that we had a sustainable government. We made sure that we had a lower regulatory burden.

During that time, Mr. Speaker, what we saw was over a hundred thousand people move into this province each month. In fact, many of the people on that side moved here for that very reason. They moved here because we had this thing called the Alberta advantage. That was the winning formula that allowed us to be able to get to some of the best jobs in North America, some of the highest paying jobs in North America. Yet the members opposite continue to say that there is no evidence. They are living evidence that it worked because they moved from other parts of the country or other parts of the world. People from all over the world moved to this province because we did something different here, because we had the – now, the interesting thing about the members opposite is that they can continue to say how bad it was over the last 44 years, yet they continue to quote Ralph Klein. The hypocrisy of this. They will argue out of one side of their mouth that . . . [interjections] We had a great opportunity to be able to listen to them. It'd be fantastic if they could listen now as well.

The arguments that they are making . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Hunter: . . . about there being no evidence: the truth is that we had 100,000 people move to this province during a 10-year period. We had over 150 corporate head offices move to this province because of this concept of having a lower marginal tax rate. We had some of the best growth in terms of GDP growth. We competed against juggernaut states like Texas in terms of GDP growth. Now, they could say that it's all about the oil, the price of oil, but we did that when the price of oil was $20 a barrel.

There's a very good book Mark Milke wrote, and I think that it would be great if the members would read that because their revisionist history lessons that they try to say don't fly with Albertans. In fact, it's interesting. I had an interesting conversation with one of their colleagues, that actually didn't get elected again in Calgary because he followed the NDP strategy to the T. I was asking him: where have your socialist strategies worked? I kid you not, Mr. Speaker. He quoted *Star Trek*, Gene Roddenberry's *Star Trek*. Now, what's interesting about this is that I think, as I listen to the arguments of these members, that they are still living in this fantasy world. There are economic principles that work and that have worked in the past, and we're getting back to that formula that has worked. It's important for the members opposite to be able to leave that fantasy realm and come back down to Earth and realize that there are economic principles that have worked in the past, and they'll work again if we implement them properly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-McCall, if you'd like to respond.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think the comments that the member made were somewhat confusing, offensive as well. If you are not indigenous, you moved from somewhere, from some part of the world. The only difference is when you got here, whether by boat, whether by ship, all those things.

The evidence I was suggesting there was academic evidence based on economics, based on experiences in the States, in the United Kingdom, in Canada. The right-wing governments that followed the supply-side, trickle-down economics that this government is now following – that policy has failed across the globe. That policy is rejected by all economists across the globe.

Thank you.

3:40

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

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to the third reading of Bill 3, which drastically reduces Alberta's corporate tax revenues from large and already wealthy corporations. The reasons why I am pleased to rise and provide my comments at third reading are, well, a couple of different things.

I think the first thing I want to talk about is what this bill says about the priorities of this government and what it sets up for the future framing of how this government is going to interact with Albertans, particularly either Albertans with whom they disagree, Albertans who are of lower income, Albertans who potentially work in the public sector, and Albertans who are working on an hourly basis just to get by. Let's talk about the priorities that this bill revealed and the values that are so different from Conservatives and the folks on this side, who were elected to bring a certain perspective to this House.

We elect governments in a parliamentary democracy, not dictatorships, so while, yes, in a two-party system one party wins more votes – that is how elections work – the fact of the matter is that the opposition has a duty to speak to why their constituents sent them there and what kinds of values sent us here. Mr. Speaker, I will be pleased to do so because they are starkly contrasted within the contents of this bill and what it says about a government that has started its record of governing this province with essentially three themes.

That is, they tend to make decisions with horse blinders on with respect to evidence. We see this in climate change. We see it with respect to the international evidence around large tax giveaways to the already wealthy. This is not about small business, Mr. Speaker. We see that it is a government that makes promises based on political games. It is a government that, when they do that, is then

left with the consequences. When you blow a very large, multibillion-dollar hole in the budget, one cannot then meet the needs of health care, education, roads, hospitals, bridges, child intervention, child protection, seniors' care, child care, and the like. It then reveals this priority of giving away four and a half billion dollars to the already wealthiest among us. It shows that that is the priority, that that wealthy class of shareholders is the priority over working-class people.

Furthermore, it shows that they are willing, Mr. Speaker, to give away that security of health care, education, other services, and other supports to the least privileged among us because there is a streak of uncaring, lack of empathy that runs through certainly the record of . . .

Mr. McIver: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: A point of order has been called. The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Point of Order
Imputing Motives

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, under 23(h), (i), and (j) it talks about attributing motives to other members of the House. The hon. member just said that other members of the House were uncaring and lacked empathy. The only thing missing in 23(h), (i), and (j) is an example like accusing other people of being uncaring and having a lack of empathy. I would be happy to listen to the hon. member's debate on policy. She ought to stick within the rules that we actually as a Legislature have all put in place for ourselves through the standing orders.

The Speaker: The hon. Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. First of all, this is not a point of order. Second of all, I appreciate the fact that the Member for Lethbridge-West gets under the skin of the Member for Calgary-Hays. Saying that some members may be uncaring about certain issues is not unparliamentary. Quite frankly, I mean, my Lord, had we when we were in government jumped up on points of order every time the opposition talked about – again, as we talked about earlier today, using the word "killing": killing communities, killing this, killing that.

You know, referencing that, in her opinion, this move or decision by the government to reduce the corporate tax rate is a decision in their priorities, meaning that other things, then, will be either not funded or adjusted, is a difference of opinion that the Member for Lethbridge-West feels demonstrates that that, then, is an action that shows the government doesn't care about X or Y, Mr. Speaker. This is not a point of order.

However, while I am standing talking to this point of order, I should have jumped up on a point of order to an earlier comment that was made.

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker . . .

The Speaker: Thank you to the hon. Minister of Transportation. However, I am the one that determines how points of order work around here.

Mr. Bilous: As I was saying, Mr. Speaker, the fact that there were comments questioning members about how Albertan they are, depending on how long they are in this province . . .

The Speaker: Thank you to the hon. member. As you'll know, a point of order needs to be called at the time of the challenge.

Having said that, the question before us is on whether or not the Member for Lethbridge-West used unparliamentary language when referring to hon. members. I think that the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview will recall that there's a significant difference between saying that the government is doing something and that there are members that are something. Unfortunately, I don't have the benefit of the Blues, but to my recollection the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West said that the members are uncaring. It does present a challenge when you attribute, although you didn't say, "The Member for Camrose," a motive to members. Feel free to imply or state your strongly held opinion – and I encourage you to do so – that the government may or may not be responsible for something, but I would encourage some significant caution with respect to attributing it to members as being one thing or another.

Without the benefit of the Blues, I would consider this not to be a point of order because I'm not a hundred per cent sure of what was said, but if you feel it appropriate to apologize and withdraw and attribute those strongly felt opinions to the government, I would encourage you to do so.

Debate Continued

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. To my recollection, I indeed did say: the members of the government. However, I can appreciate that my third point, which is about the priorities of this government – given that what is going to happen here is a massive giveaway to the already wealthy, to folks who least need help after we are pulling ourselves out of a recession caused by the drop in the price of oil, we demonstrate that when we give away billions of dollars with pretty scant evidence that it will lead to policies that will demonstrate the priority of this government, it is my values that when you put the already wealthy before those that need a little bit more in society, that is, in fact, a fairly disconnected, entitled, and uncaring approach to public policy that this government has taken.

3:50

Now, I can appreciate that there are some members opposite who do not like being called out on entitlement or being out of touch or not understanding the priorities of Albertans given that some of those members, in fact, have a great deal of experience with policies that led to those kinds of conclusions being drawn by Albertans. It's very important that Alberta politicians keep ordinary people first and foremost in their minds so that when they're making public policy decisions like when we saw them, for example, signing off on the sky palace, those kinds of decisions, Albertans will conclude that the government does not have its priorities straight.

What we have here is a massive giveaway that has been sold as a job-creating initiative. We have demonstrated on this side of the House, using evidence from a former governor of the Bank of Canada, from other economists, and from others and certainly evidence from south of the border – I can appreciate that the members opposite don't like hearing about that given that the record in terms of the highest level of public policy initiatives hasn't exactly emanated from the White House, south of the border. But, certainly, members opposite have a high tolerance for those kinds of shenanigans, as I understand it.

Certainly, what we see here is that we have priorities, which are that the already wealthy get billions, that nurses will get a pay cut, that toonies will be taken from teenagers, that thousands of dollars will be taken out of the pockets of, in particular, oil and gas workers – private-sector, non-union oil and gas workers who are working overtime – and that LGBT kids will not enjoy the same human rights as they did under a previous piece of legislation. Otherwise,

there wouldn't be the changes made. Those are the priorities that we are revealing with the government's first moves.

Bill 3 sets up the fiscal framework for those themes of this government, which are that they make decisions based on politics, based on putting things in the window, based on making unsubstantiated claims, based on a fact-free analysis, based on a lack of information and evidence. They make policies that lead to a society that is more unequal, a society where we care less about what happens to our neighbours, where we are less able to meet the needs of an increasingly unequal society. They make decisions, Mr. Speaker, that reveal that they are out of touch with ordinary Albertans, ordinary working people, because they put wealthy people first, and the working class among us get their toonies taken away and their overtime scooped. That is what we see coming out of Bill 3.

I can appreciate that some members don't want to hear that and that some members in this House want to go back to the one-party state. I can appreciate that some of these comments fall on ears that are used to those 44 years where nobody ever stood up and the opposition was significantly weaker. You know what, Mr. Speaker? I'm here to tell those hon. members who don't want to hear those kinds of comments about a massive giveaway to the already wealthy at the expense of ordinary working class folks that, you know, those days of the one-party state are over. I hope folks enjoyed it while it lasted. I hope the sky palace was fun and the airplane rides and all the rest of it. I hope everyone had a good time because this opposition will speak out.

We will not be silenced. I won't be silenced. Nobody sent me here to sit on my hands or to not say what I mean. Nobody sent me here to not come to work or to whine about doing my job. I've heard all of those things from the folks across the way because they just can't understand that their role here is actually part of a vigorous democracy and a vigorous legislative process, which means that sometimes you've got to go to work and sometimes you've got to work overtime, Mr. Speaker. There's no crying in this business and no whining and complaining either. Take your snivelling elsewhere.

Now, going back to some of the issues around Bill 3, what we've seen around budget projections is that, of course, budget projections have softened for this year, and that is obvious when one takes a good, solid run at one's revenue. If you quit your job, you're going to have less money coming in. Certainly, what's happened here is that a number of economic indicators have, in fact, softened, both the economic performance forecasts coming out of private-sector forecasters and, it is no surprise to anyone, the revenue forecast. This isn't anything that is any different from the situation that we faced, Mr. Speaker, in 2015 or indeed the Prentice government, prior to us. They saw increasingly worsening economic conditions brought on by the global collapse in the price of oil – that's why the election came early – but it's also why they brought in a budget early, because they knew the forecasts were just going to get worse.

Of course, your budget projections are going to be worse, one, because the global price of WTI has softened over the last three, four months and, two, because the differential remains, outside of the curtailment policies, a significant risk to Alberta's balance sheet, and the price of WCS right now is dependent on those curtailment policies. The whole idea was to phase out curtailment and phase in some crude by rail as a bridging mechanism before TMX and line 3, Mr. Speaker, but folks across the way are choosing not to go with that particular piece of evidence-based decision-making either.

But the biggest thing is that projections do change, Mr. Speaker, over time. That's because the private-sector forecasters and the professional civil service provide different advice to government over time, particularly in such a volatile budget situation as we find ourselves in here in Alberta. Much of that is structural right now, and we understand that. But to blame that, the fact that forecasts change, on the professional civil service when it's very obvious that we've got both global economic conditions and the fact that a massive hole has been blown in the budget: that is really beyond the pale. A lot of the rationale for Bill 3 is around getting Alberta's economy back on track. In that respect I couldn't agree more with the hon. Minister of Finance, and I suspect that over a beer we would probably have more agreements than disagreements although I don't share his views on magic.

The fact remains that this is one way to allege to stimulate an economy. We have made the case on this side, using facts and evidence, that it is very unlikely to actually work. In fact, what it will do is concentrate wealth in fewer and fewer hands and make Alberta an even more unequal society. Now, over the last four years we took great pains to reduce that inequality, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, after 44 years of governing with the wealthy in mind, with folks just focusing on their own entitlement, building sky palaces and various other monuments to their own greatness or of the PC Party dynasty, we saw lots of that. Some folks certainly paid an electoral price for that; some didn't. Over the course of those 44 years Alberta became one of the most unequal provinces in Canada.

Through that balance of ensuring that we had appropriate revenues coming in from the small-business tax, which we, I believe, appropriately cut by a third; through various other tax incentives that the hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview introduced, targeted tax incentive programs; through the petroleum diversification program, which, we know, has created thousands of jobs and ushered in $13 billion worth of private-sector investment, in particular into the Fort Saskatchewan Industrial Heartland area; through diversifying the economy and ushering in, at a minimum, $2 billion in new renewables investments, much of which is into rural ridings that surround Lethbridge and Medicine Hat: Mr. Speaker, all of that is new investment.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Through those policies that targeted the private sector and through a variety of public-sector, again, targeted investments – I'm speaking here of the child benefit and associated child care policies, which lifted hundreds of thousands of children out of poverty and, in fact, reduced Alberta's child poverty rate.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments or questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Minister of Transportation.

4:00

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm grateful for this opportunity to respond to the fact-free information that I think we just listened to.

An Hon. Member: Careful.

Mr. McIver: A word to live by for all of us, sir: careful.

Madam Speaker, I'm actually amazed at what passes for thoughtful discourse here. What we need to do when we think about these things is try to connect the dots on cause and effect, I think. The hon. opposition party loves to talk about the wealthy corporations. To be clear, some corporations are wealthy, and some are not. That's a fact, but the dots that they fail to connect is that their disdain for corporate Alberta, their disdain for corporations that support charities and arts and so many other things that make Alberta great, was partially responsible for 80 billion plus dollars' worth of those corporations leaving Alberta in the last four years.

Now, I suppose the opposition probably doesn't care about that. I don't know. But the place where I'd prefer they connected the dots is that when they left, a lot of jobs, tens of thousands of jobs, left with them, leading to the abysmal track record that the government that the previous speaker was close to the centre of left Albertans with, the highest unemployment rate in decades, for sure, perhaps forever. It has left us with the highest unemployment rate of young people forever.

That's why their disdain for corporate Alberta – one thing that is consistent, I suppose, is why they wouldn't like the job-creation tax cut, because that is actually designed to undo some of the very, exact damage that the opposition did when they were in government, the very, exact damage that had Albertans saying: "We just want them gone. Make them stop. Make it go away. We'll vote for you if you'll win because we have to stop the damage that this NDP government is doing." That's what we heard consistently from Albertans. It's so bad that, you know, family members, friends are losing their jobs, and that's where it actually affects working people, Madam Speaker.

On this side we certainly appreciate that. I myself worked as a meat cutter, a butcher, if you will, for a number of years. We have a police officer on this side, I think a number of farmers, an EMS person, lots of people that have done lots of work, and lots of people that have family members, friends, and other people that we love and care about who are working people. You know what? Those working people that I met when I was door-knocking and still when I walk around today: they say, "Thank goodness you're here, and thank goodness the NDP are gone because they were making it impossible to make a living so that I could look after myself and my family and pay my taxes and be as productive a citizen as I want to be."

Those are the dots that the opposition fails to connect, Madam Speaker. They talk about taking toonies from teenagers, which is a wonderful catchphrase. They're actually good at catchphrases. I'm going to give them credit for that. They're good at catchphrases. But what they fail to again connect the dots on is that while everyone in this room and probably everyone in Alberta would rather make $15 than $13, the dot that they fail to connect is that everybody would also rather make $13 than zero dollars. There are thousands and thousands and thousands of Albertans making zero dollars instead of $13 an hour, and that's what our party, our government is trying to correct, not so that people can live on $13 but, rather, so they can have a job so that they can get on the first rung of the economic ladder so that they can then move to the second rung and the third and the fourth and work their way up to a good, mortgage-paying job to support themselves and their families and increase their quality of life if that's what they choose to do.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

Mr. Stephan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my privilege yet again to stand and speak in favour of Bill 3, the Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act, to restore Alberta's place as the most attractive place to start and grow a business in Canada. As indicated, I am a tax lawyer and a chartered professional accountant, and I work with private businesses, their owners, and professional advisers. These job creators know how to compete and succeed in the real world much better than government. I admire and respect these individuals, and I care deeply about their ability to create and support other Albertans to succeed, to be self-reliant and provide for their families without government intrusion into freedom. For many years it has been an honour and a privilege to speak on taxation matters to various professional groups and promote Alberta as the most competitive place to start and grow a business. Alberta was the land of opportunity.

Let's consider the facts. The former government increased corporate tax rates by 20 per cent and brought in other additional uncompetitive changes to hamstring Alberta businesses. The result was that corporate revenue actually fell, and their multibillion-dollar deficits resulted. This is the truth. It would be a mistake to perpetuate the failure of the prior government. That would not be in the public interest. Our government is making a course correction to do the opposite of the NDP.

What has served Alberta very well in the past? Madam Speaker, Alberta is a meritocracy. That is how Alberta has competed and excelled in the real world. A socialist mindset is content with mediocrity. Most Albertans do not share their world view. Alberta does not have the lowest general corporate income tax rate in Canada. Ontario and Quebec, the largest provinces, have a lower general corporate income tax rate than Alberta. That was not the case prior to the NDP. Bill 3, the job-creation tax cut, is focused on the general corporate tax rate.

Madam Speaker, I do not understand why the NDP is against having the most competitive tax jurisdiction in Canada. Why is this embarrassing? Why are they against us being the very best that we can be? Why are they content with mediocrity? This corporate tax cut is all the more expedient given that we are not only competing in Canada, but especially in Alberta's circumstances, we compete for capital from a global perspective.

What we are doing, Madam Speaker, is not new. Having the lowest corporate tax rate has served Alberta very well historically. We have actually had billion-dollar surpluses with the lowest corporate tax rates, so we have evidence based on historical fact.

Madam Speaker, my impression of the former NDP government, with a constitution that states as its purpose to establish and maintain a democratic socialist government, is that it does not understand the private sector or how to compete in the real world. The NDP increased corporate tax rates by 20 per cent and shrank Alberta's private-sector workforce by tens of thousands during the four years they were in power. That is failure and an embarrassment.

4:10

This NDP government likes to think they are the champion of government services. The truth is that they are not. While the NDP wishes it wasn't true, government services only exist if there are taxes from private-sector businesses and those who work in them to pay for them. The NDP shrank the economy and, by so doing, crippled the sustainability of government services, necessitating billions upon billions of increased government deficits and debt. That is their record. How can a government be a champion of anything they have no idea how to pay for? Irresponsible, undisciplined, uncompetitive: NDP governments would by and by lead to the collapse of unsustainable government services. Doing it their way failed miserably.

I have sat and listened to the NDP criticize the job-creation tax cut as an attack on workers. We have reputable economists that have said the following. According to Jack Mintz the job-creation tax cut will lead to the creation of at least 55,000 full-time, private-sector jobs. Contrast that with the historical fact of failure by the NDP, losing tens of thousands of private-sector jobs, a very uncomfortable truth, Madam Speaker. Furthermore, University of Calgary political scientist Dr. Bev Dahlby estimates that this tax cut will generate a $12.7 billion increase in nominal GDP, a 6.5 per cent increase in per capita real GDP, and $1.2 billion in additional government revenues by 2023-24. Again, contrast that with the

NDP record that when they actually increased corporate tax rates, corporate tax revenue dropped.

Madam Speaker, the NDP views business success as a zero-sum game. In their heart they view that if businesses do well, then workers do not. That is a fundamental flaw in thinking. They are not win-win in their thinking. The old NDP government had a philosophy that is in direct opposition to what is required for economic prosperity from a government that does not understand how to compete and excel in the real world, and the results speak for themselves.

It's time to renew and restore Alberta as the most competitive and attractive jurisdiction in Canada to start and grow a business. Enacting Bill 3, the job-creation tax cut, is an important step on that path. Again, here is the litmus test. In four years let's compare the NDP record of losing tens of thousands of private-sector jobs with the job-creation tax cut and the other important measures we are taking to support Alberta businesses, to support the important government services that all of us in this House value and rely on. I know what the answer to this question will be. My prediction is that the members opposite will be uncomfortable when they are confronted with our factual success and confronted with their factual failure.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments or questions under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member that just spoke for bringing some reality and sense to this debate and for bringing his genuine expertise in what he does for a living. I'd like the hon. member, if he wants, to comment on what we heard as the disdain that the NDP has for what they call wealthy corporations and the politics of jealousy that actually holds people that are in corporations that are successful in disdain, how that affects the livelihoods and the quality of life for Albertans in the future and what the policy decisions are and how that affects the future. I think he'll have some wise words to say about that if he chooses to do so.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

Mr. Stephan: Well, Madam Speaker, I've had the opportunity to work with private businesses and their advisers. These individuals care deeply about the success of and ability to provide for their employees. Successful businesses actually work as a team. Valued employees: they strive to treat them as best and as generously as possible. The members opposite seem to have the perspective that business owners are actually in opposition to their workers when the fact is that successful businesses actually value and appreciate their employees.

The socialist ideals that kind of underpin the NDP, as per their very constitution, which they cannot escape, are in opposition to the economic prosperity that has served Alberta very well in the past. Their socialist mindset informs their world view that business owners are somehow inherently evil, and by so doing, trying to legislate and box them in has basically sent the message that Alberta is not welcoming of innovation and business growth. You know, unfortunately, because of that, a lot of businesses have either left – and I've certainly witnessed that in my own personal practice, seen businesses see that Alberta has become less competitive and, unfortunately, make decisions to invest elsewhere. It's unfortunate that the NDP doesn't appreciate the important intrinsic connection between the ability to pay for sustainable government services with a strong economy.

You know, Alberta has done very well in the past as we've supported businesses and helped them succeed. Those businesses return the favour in kind by paying a lot of taxes, by employing those individuals and families in Alberta to work in their businesses. It's also very interesting that when you are the most competitive jurisdiction, businesses will actually seek to centralize and move their income into the most attractive jurisdiction. That has served, again, Alberta in the past very well. The NDP seems to miss that connection with being competitive and with the normal, rational behaviour in the real world of seeking to have your business carried on and grown where it makes the most economic sense to do so, Madam Speaker. Throughout many of the policies that the NDP have brought forth, they seem to miss the connection that Alberta businesses and the workers who work in those businesses are friends, that they want to work together, that they want to succeed together.

The Alberta corporate tax cut does not benefit the wealthy. As corporations may distribute those profits out to individuals, those individuals will pay the personal tax rates on those distributions.

4:20

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate you recognizing me and allowing me to stand up here in the third reading of Bill 3, the Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act, which kind of sounds more like a giant gift card to billionaires act. As you can imagine, I was absolutely riveted by some of the speakers in the last few minutes talking about working people. I seem to, you know, remember some of the members from the last Legislature in this House right now belittling some of the different working people that were within our caucus at the time. So it's interesting that all of a sudden that's a really great thing. But I am glad to see some diversity there.

I want to get back to one of the comments, though, around the Member for Red Deer-South, talking about the real world. Let's talk about the real world for a second, Madam Speaker. I'd like to quote something: this huge tax cut will be rocket fuel for our economy; the biggest winners from this transformation will be everyday families from all backgrounds, from all walks of life, and our great companies, which will produce jobs; they are going to produce jobs like you have never seen before. That kind of sounds a little bit like what I've been hearing over the last little while around this job-creation tax cut. That was said on October 11, 2017, so it's pretty close to real world, I guess, depending on how you like to work your calendar there, and that was said by President Donald Trump.

Now, the problem we have here is when they reduce their corporate tax rate, Madam Speaker, from 35 to 21 per cent, all promising more jobs, and so far 84 per cent of businesses have not changed their investment plans. That was "not," by the way. They did not change their plans, and the deficit is up 17 per cent to $779 billion. As a matter of fact, a big company – you know, there might be only one or two people in this House that recognize the name – AT&T, promised to create 7,000 jobs. That sounds fantastic because we got a tax break, right up until they cut 23,000 jobs. That, sir, is real world.

Let's talk about some other real world. I'd hate to get some headlines like this: The Great Kansas Tax Cut Experiment Crashes and Burns. For five years Kansas's Republican Governor Sam Brownback conducted the nation's most radical exercise in trickle-down economics. Those measures were supposed to deliver a shot of adrenaline into the heart of the Kansas economy and ended up being a shot of poison.

So when we talk about the real world, I always say, you know, that when somebody says, "Look, if we just do this, there's the light at the end of the tunnel," sometimes I have to tell them that it's actually a train coming.

When we talk about factual success, it sounds like you're pretty confident in your position. So I'm kind of curious, Madam Speaker. A while back, when we had a chance to prove your factual success of a two-year review, you should have just jumped on that because that would have been the time to shut me up and make me eat humble pie.

More facts. You know that great Kansas experiment? Oh, my goodness. What they got was slower growth, a revenue drop that forced officials to shorten school calendars. Wow. That kind of makes me a little nervous, Madam Speaker.

I also noticed that you had touched a little bit on the deficit that was left. I'm interested, Madam Speaker, because I never seem to hear anybody talk about their leader's debt when he was in Ottawa. It's funny how that kind of gets left out of the sentence. So we had the chance to potentially course correct, like I said. You could have proven your factual success. You voted it down. I kind of wonder if you really are that confident in your position.

I do know that there are others that would like to speak on this bill. As you can imagine, I'm not very overly excited about giving companies like the Walton family a great, big corporate gift card all in the name of creating jobs, because when I've spoken with students – I have 26 schools in my riding, Madam Speaker; great to talk to students there – even they were able to figure out that if my boss only needs five people on shift, just because you pay me $13 an hour isn't going to mean that he's going to need six to do the job.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Any comments or questions?

Seeing none, any other speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, it's not a surprise, actually, that I will not be supporting Bill 3 for a number of reasons, but, you know, the members opposite wanted to tell us some hard truths, so let me fire some back at them a little bit.

Every single oil-reliant province lost jobs when the price of oil fell: fact, right? We know this. Prices were falling before 2015, and they continued to fall, and then we entered into a recession, the worst in a generation: fact. The government would like us to believe that it's all because the NDP formed government, but that was not the case, and we know that.

Let's talk about the previous Conservative government. When oil was $100 a barrel, there were failures on all kinds of levels. One of the things that particularly bothers me quite a bit when these guys talk about paving roads and building schools and hospitals is that when oil was $100 a barrel, they continued to allow the infrastructure deficit to grow and to grow and to grow . . .

An Hon. Member: And didn't balance the budget.

Ms Renaud: . . . and could not balance a budget.

You know, I think it sums it up. One of the Premier's sock accounts on Twitter – I'm sure he's got an army of them now with his war room – mentioned something about how there could not be compassion in Alberta without prosperity. I guess that kind of sums it up – doesn't it? – what their world view is.

You want to talk about world view? Let's talk about some world view. The government of today would like us to believe that there's really only one way out of this. There's really one way, as they see it, and that is to continue to do things that we know don't work. We've seen them not work in other jurisdictions, and we have certainly seen them not work here. But there actually is another way, and we were on track with that other way.

I'm going to focus a little bit on that. Of course, the Premier, before he swooped in here, would like us to believe that he is the saviour. Only through him will we get to a prosperous place, and then when we get there, we can be compassionate. But, you know, like he says when we ask questions, Madam Speaker, I reject that completely. We were focusing on some other things. We were focusing on things that had been neglected for years, like infrastructure, like focusing on our assets and strengths in our communities, focusing on local ownership, and then focusing on something that this government fails to focus on but will be the one thing that will derail their plans, and that is climate change and the climate change crisis.

One of the things that we expended a lot of resources and energy on and, honestly, political capital was creating a plan that would get us to a place where we could continue to be a leader to address climate change, because it will impact our revenues. It will impact our jobs. We were creating a plan that was a well-thought-out energy transition, recognizing that we needed to continue to work to get the best price for our resource while we needed it. We can't stop using fossil fuels. That is our resource, and we owe it to Albertans to get the best price for it. We were working on that, but we were doing it at the same time as addressing some other things because we can walk and chew gum at the same time. [interjection] I'm glad the members find that funny. It's a bit of an old saying, but okay.

An Hon. Member: It's super old.

Ms Renaud: Yeah, super old.

We continued to address infrastructure deficits. Let me give you an example of what that means. In my community of St. Albert, the community that I represent, we had a lot of infrastructure deficits. We had a lot of fields with signs on them and no schools. We also had a hospital that had a boiler that was 25 years old that needed to be replaced and, of course, had been deferred, deferred: "No, we can't afford it," "The price of oil," yada, yada, the same stories. Finally, when we got to a place where we could make those decisions, we addressed that and we replaced that boiler, but we took it a step further because we were investing in people. We added an operating room. We added a NICU. We added capacity at that hospital that is not only serving the city of St. Albert but is serving that area, so that includes Morinville, Redwater, Legal, Gibbons. We were looking at the people that lived there that needed health care and access to health care in their community. We also invested in some other things because we realized that investment, diversifying your investment and investing in people, pays off.

4:30

It's odd to me that the members opposite are willing to take a risk, a massive $4.5 billion risk, to give wealth to already very profitable corporations and then hope that it trickles down when, in fact, they have seen it again and again fail in other jurisdictions. What we did was invest in people. We invested in people, in minimum wage. That is an investment in people because we know that – I don't know how many of you have had to work minimum wage while perhaps carrying a child, caring for a child, raising a child, going to school – when you have additional funds, when you're earning a little bit more, you are investing it right back into your community, whether that's child care, whether that's the local grocery store, or buying clothing. Whatever it is, it goes back into your community. That's not wishful thinking or wishful trickle-down; that's actually fact.

We also invested in indexing AISH. We did that in a time where we were slowly recovering from the worst recession in a generation. We invested in indexing AISH, and what that meant for people with disabilities – I don't speak for them, but what I've heard is that it removed the need for them to continuously have to lobby government to say: "Hey, over here. We're living in grinding abject poverty. Not only do we face an astounding unemployment rate, but we can't possibly live on what we're earning." So we invested in tying it to inflation. We gave them a small bump. I wish we could have done more, Madam Speaker, but the reality was that things were tough. But we indexed it. That took courage. That took political courage, and that's an investment that will pay off.

We invested in diversification, not just using the word and the phrase, but we invested in a plan. It's an energy transition recognizing that the world is indeed changing. You can laugh. You can ignore it all you like.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, I suspect you're going to tie this back to the bill, right?

Ms Renaud: I will absolutely tie it back.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Ms Renaud: What I'm saying is that this is the other way. The government would like us to feel like this is the only way; they have the only answer. The only answer is to do something that has been done again and again and again and failed – and failed. But they want us to believe that this is the only way. We were on another path because we believed that there is another way. We had four years. After four decades of one government, it was a little tough to do everything in four years.

Madam Speaker, with that, I am going to end my comments, and I'm going to sit down and allow my colleague to say a few words. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Any comments or questions?

Seeing none, any more speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'll make my comments fairly brief. I appreciate that we're in third reading. I just want to address a number of things. The issue that I have with this bill is that there is no guarantee that reducing the corporate tax rate will result in massive job creation. There isn't. Will there be some jobs created? I'm sure of it. I'm not about to stand up and say that not a single job will be created.

Ms Phillips: One job.

Mr. Bilous: No, I created one job. More than that, actually.

The truth, Madam Speaker, is that there isn't a guarantee. What I had talked about I think in second reading was what I would have liked and what we would have liked to have seen. If you're going to introduce a corporate tax reduction, tie it to or ensure that companies are using that to reinvest in their company, invest in machinery and equipment and job growth. The number of companies that will take that tax savings and pocket it and say, "Thank you very much. We need to make up for the recession and the tough years that we just lived through," I think, is going to be the majority of companies that are going to do that. Again, I have a small sample size, but the number of businesses that I've spoken with have said: "That's exactly what we're doing. We're not going to use it to expand and hire. We're going to take it as additional profits for the difficult few years that we had."

For me, the challenge is that with this tool, the government is trying to use it as a silver bullet. I appreciate they have other pieces of legislation. We know and we've spoken to the legislation on the MGA, which does nothing new. That gives municipalities the powers that they already have, so that's a smoke-and-mirrors bill.

Really, we have introduced tools over the last few years like the different tax credit programs that were asked for by the business community, by the chambers of commerce that said: "Help us compete. Help us encourage Albertans to invest in the province to keep our dollars here, to help our companies grow in scale." We've seen successes that way, Madam Speaker. Our government focused heavily on trade and attracting investment into the province. You know, we've seen companies relocate to Alberta, and that's even with the 12 per cent corporate tax rate of companies that have come. Again, I think this is where my frustration is. This UCP government thinks that the only tool to attract companies is reducing the corporate tax rate. The reality is this. Even with the 12 per cent corporate tax rate and the carbon tax Albertans still paid billions of dollars less than any other jurisdiction across Canada. When members stand up and talk about how uncompetitive Alberta is because we're 12 per cent, Ontario and Quebec are 11 and a half per cent, but they have massive PSTs. We have none. That is significant.

The other thing is, you know, that when we look at the billions of dollars being invested northeast of Edmonton in our petrochemical sector, so adding value to our resources, they weren't here when we had a 10 per cent corporate flat tax. Alberta had that for decades. Why is it that Inter Pipeline is building the first propane-to-plastics facility in Canada? If the corporate tax rate being at 10 per cent flat is all it took, they would have been here decades ago, but they're not. You know why, Madam Speaker? I've spoken to this company numerous times. They said that that simply does not level the playing field because in jurisdictions like the Gulf coast in Louisiana they receive significant incentives and subsidies to set up shop there.

Our government introduced a program that levelled the playing field, that saw that kind of investment. We're seeing investment in Grande Prairie through Nauticol. We're seeing investment through Seven Gen. We're seeing investments all over the province. Cavendish in Lethbridge: the largest investment that they're making or that they've made in Canada is in southern Alberta, and they did it with the corporate tax rate being 12 per cent, Madam Speaker. For me, it's not a matter of saying that this isn't going to work. It's a matter of saying that there is no guarantee. What the government is doing is blowing a 4 and a half billion dollar hole in the budget that will come at the cost of presumably – and the government has already hinted at this – teachers, nurses. We now are anticipating a piece of legislation that's going to legislate contracts for public-sector workers, which is unbelievable, quite frankly.

The one thing that I also wanted to mention. You know, the member – forgive me; I don't remember where he's from – who got up and spoke about that we'll compare the numbers under their term versus our numbers: well, first of all, you're comparing apples and oranges. In the last four years Alberta has been in the middle of a massive recession because of the global collapse in the price of oil, something that this government still thinks – now, I appreciate how powerful the former Premier is, but she's not that powerful that she sets the global price of oil. I know the members opposite would paint our government that way. Interestingly, she does not. Alberta does not.

You know, talking about the job numbers, yes, we recognize Alberta has been through a very, very tough recession, where many Albertans have lost their job because Alberta's economy, first of all, was not adequately diversified. We were overreliant on a single commodity, selling to a single buyer for a single price, which we didn't sell.

This is part of the reason our government focused on pipelines, on diversifying the economy, on market access, on attracting investment back here into the province, on supporting Alberta businesses with accessing new markets through programs like the Alberta export expansion program. Programs that we have seen have supported businesses to grow despite the fact that we were in the middle of a massive recession. I will continue to ask this government if they will continue to fund these programs that are seeing job creation and helping the economy to recover.

4:40

The other thing I just want to comment briefly and quickly on is that, you know, the one member stood up and tried to characterize the NDP position on business, which couldn't be further from the truth. We support Alberta businesses. We support the job creators in this province. That's why we reduced the small-business tax rate to 2 per cent. It's the second lowest in the country. That was done under the NDP government. News flash for members across the way: the only province that has a zero per cent small-business tax rate is Manitoba. Was that under a Conservative government? No. It was a New Democrat government that took that small-business tax rate to zero.

We have worked with the private sector, and I'm proud of the relationships and work that I've done with the private sector to introduce programs like these tax credits that they asked for to help them grow and diversify. So I take offence when members opposite get up – first of all, that doesn't do anyone a service. I mean, the arrogance that has come out of some of the mouths of the members in this place is quite, I think, offensive to Albertans. That doesn't reflect how Albertans feel. What I can tell you is that we know that there is more work to do, that the economy has been tough, that businesses have been struggling. The former Premier and our government admitted that over and over again, that there's more work that needs to be done.

With this bill I appreciate the spirit of it and where the Minister of Finance wants to go. I'm not convinced it's going to deliver the results that this government is betting on. Again, the cost is a 4 and a half billion dollar hole. That has to come from somewhere. Even the minister has said that in the first two years there won't be the recovery of what we are giving up, so something has got to give. I'd appreciate if the minister would talk about what services or programs are on the chopping block in order to fund this 4 and a half billion dollar corporate tax break and how the government will keep their campaign promise of a balanced budget by 2022. I think now we're going into the realm of unicorns and rainbows.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available. Any comments or questions?

Seeing none, the hon. minister to close debate.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to close debate. I rise feeling very privileged to close debate on Bill 3, the Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act. During the election campaign we made a commitment to Albertans to bring in a series of policies, a series of legislated commitments to improve the business environment in this province and to create jobs and opportunities for Albertans, and Bill 3, the job-creation tax cut, is a major piece in that commitment to Albertans.

I've made many comments around Bill 3, so I will keep this short. I do want to note, though, that I've heard concerns from members opposite that this job-creation tax cut will simply result in profitability for shareholders and that money will be gone. Well, I want to suggest this, Madam Speaker. Profits don't sit idle. Profits land somewhere, and they will be reinvested. Profits will be reinvested at some point. We're looking to create a business environment that will attract that investment, where profits will be reinvested in this province. I think we have a long history of, in fact, profits being reinvested by successful businesses in Alberta, and our goal is that we will create that type of business environment through a series of measures, with the job-creation tax cut being one of those.

I think the other point that I would like to just again make on closing is that this very broad-based tax cut will encourage diversity. It will encourage every sector in this province. It will encourage, certainly, the energy sector. It will encourage agriculture, it will encourage the tech industry, and it will encourage those sectors that we haven't even thought about in this House. We know that forward-thinking Albertans will bring forward creative ideas. They'll bring forward opportunities that all Albertans can benefit from as they invest in this province.

Again, this corporate tax reduction is a key piece of a multi-faceted approach to improve the competitiveness of the Alberta economy. We're confident that this will attract investment. We're confident that this will create jobs and opportunities for all Albertans, Madam Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 3 read a third time]

Committee of Supply

[Mrs. Pitt in the chair]

The Chair: I'd like to call Committee of Supply to order.

Supplementary Supply Estimates 2018-19
General Revenue Fund

The Chair: Hon. members, before we commence this afternoon's consideration of supplementary supply, I would like to remind members where the committee left off in rotation. There are four hours and 30 minutes remaining for consideration of supplementary supply pursuant to Government Motion 13, agreed to yesterday. We will begin with the members of the Official Opposition. The rotation in Standing Order 59.01(6), which was outlined this morning, is deemed to apply for the time remaining to the extent possible. The rotation outlined in clauses (b) to (e) shall apply, with the speaking times set at five minutes at one time, as provided in Standing Order 59.02(1)(c). The rotation will then repeat for any time remaining.

Speaking times are now limited to five minutes. However, provided that the chair has been notified, a minister and a private member may combine their speaking times, with both taking and yielding the floor during the combined 10-minute period.

Finally, at the conclusion of six hours of consideration, including the one hour and 30 minutes taken this morning, or earlier if no members are wishing to speak, the Committee of Supply shall vote on the supplementary supply estimates. Understood?

The Official Opposition. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Just to clarify, I'll have five minutes for my first question, or are we blocked total time 10 minutes, and then it can rotate through the opposition?

The Chair: Total time 10 minutes combined for all speakers from here on out if you go back and forth, but five minutes max in that time period for any one speaker.

Mr. Bilous: I prefer to go back and forth with the government.

The Chair: Okay. Do you agree?
Okay. Please proceed.

Mr. Bilous: Excellent. My first questions are under Culture and Tourism, page 34, for the government. There is $7.8 million for capital grants for the federally funded investing in Canada infrastructure program. I was hoping that the government can give some detail as to the specific programs that this funding will go towards.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. The government of Canada has approved two investments in Canada infrastructure projects for Culture and Tourism. These projects, though funded by the federal government, are the YWCA Calgary hub facility project for $6 million and the Jerry Forbes centre for community spirit renovation project for $1.8 million.

4:50

The Chair: Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you. Thanks, Minister, for that answer. I'm curious to know the funding percentage. Is it 50-50? How much is Alberta putting in compared to what we're getting from the feds?

Mr. Toews: Madam Chair, we will have to get back to the hon. member on that question.

Mr. Bilous: Okay. Thank you, Minister. I appreciate that. If it's possible to get that in written correspondence, that'd be greatly appreciated.

I'm going to jump to the ministry of economic development and trade. That's page 38. It's a sup of about $500,000 to enhance funding for industry associations. I know that the Small Brewers – or at least my understanding is that the Small Brewers were one of the associations getting a grant. I'm wondering if the minister has the other associations readily available of who will get the increase in funding.

The Chair: The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. The industry associations include the Alberta Estate Winery and Meadery Association, the Alberta Small Brewers Association, and the Alberta Craft Distillers Association.

The Chair: Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

Mr. Bilous: Yes. Thank you very much, Minister. That's what I had thought, but I appreciate the clarification.

I'd like to jump now to Energy. That's page 46. I appreciate the minister jumping around with me on these. These are questions related to crude by rail. I can see here that there's a sup amount of $6.7 million together with the $300,000 that was made available from other budgets that came in lower, so $7 million for costs associated with the crude-by-rail initiative. Now, I'm curious if the minister can give details as to where the $7 million will go. What is the breakdown of cars? I see an additional amount. I believe it's an additional amount of $310 million for payment to secure the needed rail cars. If I can get a bit of a breakdown on how this applies to the crude by rail, that'd be greatly appreciated.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. The $310 million was for payments needed to secure rail cars from CN and CP. Of course, that is an expenditure that this House will need to approve today, but I do want to note that this is an expenditure, again, that we really believe was an irresponsible decision by the opposition just prior to the election, when they were in government. The $7 million was for estimated or set-up costs, and I believe that related to infrastructure related to the load-out terminal. If it is anything different than that, we will advise the member opposite.

I would also like to respond to a couple of questions that we committed to responding to this morning, the questions around some education capital planning, if I may, Madam Chair. There was $500,000 for capital grants, and they were to support school boards in preparing their capital plan submissions. There was a question as to where these funds went. They went to Northland school division, $116,000; Pembina Hills regional division, $12,100; Northern Lights, $78,500; Lakeland Roman Catholic, $155,500; Foothills school division, $16,000; and $123,000 was used for value scoping sessions led by the department.

Value scoping is a structured problem-solving process. Value scoping aims to identify solutions that provide the highest value for money while maximizing the utilization and functionality of school infrastructure to optimize the learning environment and educational program delivery for Alberta students, just in case you didn't know what value scoping was.

There was $6,667,000 for capital payments to related parties for operations and maintenance for school facilities and for school playgrounds. I know there was a question on the details of that spend. One million dollars of this was provided to three school boards for four new playgrounds: Edmonton Catholic, Father Michael Mireau Catholic school, $250,000; Edmonton Catholic, Christ the King Catholic school, $250,000; Red Deer public, Don Campbell elementary school, $250,000; Calgary Roman Catholic, St. Marguerite school, $250,000.

And $1.3 million of this was provided to the Alberta schools alternative procurement contractors responsible for providing operations and maintenance services to the 38 schools over the life of the contract. These were ASAP schools, Alberta schools alternative procurement. The amount relates to indexing of the original payment stream to the contractor, and this indexing recalculation is a provision within the contract that the contractor exercised.

The list of 40 school projects covered under the three ASAP school project bundles are as follows, and bear with me as I read these out. These are: Bridlewood; Cranston, Evergreen; Royal Oak; Saddle Ridge, West Springs; Cranston, Christ the King; Evergreen, Our Lady of the Evergreens; Saddle Ridge, Light of Christ; Rutherford East, Monsignor Fee Otterson; Terwillegar Heights Monsignor William Irwin; The Hamptons, Sister Annata Brockman; Belle Rive, Florence Hallock; Carlton, Elizabeth Finch; Hollick-Kenyon, Dr. Donald Massey; Rutherford West, Johnny Bright; Tamarack, A. Blair McPherson; Terwillegar Towne, Esther Starkman.

Schools that were also included were: Sarah Thompson school, Ted Harrison school, Captain Nichola Goddard school, the Twelve Mile Coulee school, Nose Creek school, Westmount school, St.

Isabella Catholic school, Major General Griesbach school, Bessie Nichols school, Michael Strembitsky school.

An Hon. Member: It's a lot of schools.

Mr. Toews: A lot of schools.

There was also the Beaumont school; Penhold; Uplands elementary school; Red Deer, École La Prairie; Cochrane, École Notre-Dame; Medicine Hat, Dr. Roy Wilson.

The Chair: Hon. members, it is now time for private government members to ask some questions. Same rules: 10-minute block; you may take no more than five minutes per person. Are there any government members wishing to speak?

Seeing none, we will go to the Official Opposition. Hon. Member for Lethbridge-West, would you like to combine your time?

Ms Phillips: Yes, I would like to share my time if I could.

The Chair: Okay.

Ms Phillips: I'd like to go back and forth with the hon. minister.

Thank you for this opportunity. I have a series of questions that are mostly in the yes or no, sort of confirm kind of column of seeking information from the government estimates. I'm wondering if, first, on page 8, the minister can just provide a little bit of information on which projects are contained in the $3.3 million in transfers from expense of E and P for emergent climate projects to I believe the Department of Indigenous Relations. If the minister could provide some detail on which projects Indigenous Relations will be funding through that $3.3 million transfer.

5:00

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Madam Chair. We will have to get back to the member opposite with the answer.

Ms Phillips: Yeah. That is fine and perfectly reasonable. If the minister would like to – if a follow-up is undertaken, that would be great.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

I have a further question on – we're going to move around a little bit. Sorry, Minister, but we're going to go over to culture and tourism now, on page 34. Can the minister just confirm with me two things: one, is the $2 million for the antiracism community grant program part of the commitment around security for mosques, and if yes, when can the officials undertake to communicate some of the details around disbursement and how the geographic disbursement will be determined?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just want to again point out that these were funds that were already spent in the previous year that this House has been asked to approve in order to conduct the business of the province.

Ms Phillips: Yeah. The province.

Mr. Toews: Okay. Sure. Very good. I will say that antiracism is a high priority for this government, and I know that there will be very comprehensive details coming from all the ministries on all of our priorities as we present a budget this fall.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Lethbridge-West.

Ms Phillips: Yes. Thank you. Thank you for that answer, Minister.

I want to now bump over to page 46 in the Energy sups, $1.2 million and change for payments to mineral land right owners as a result of the conservation of land areas. I suspect that this is the biodiversity stewardship area that was part of the four-party agreement between Teck, the government of Alberta, the government of Canada, and the Mikisew Cree. I was just wondering if officials can either undertake later or confirm now that that's what this supplementary supply is going towards.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Government House Leader is standing.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Chair, we think so. We will confirm with the department as well and table something to that effect and provide it to the hon. member.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Minister.

On page 50 now, moving over to the Indigenous Relations sup estimates, we have enumerated here – and forgive me; I don't think this question has been already asked – $6.6 million for consultation and land claims in addition to the $18.5 million for the Lubicon land claim settlement. Thank you, first of all, for ensuring that those funds are there. That is an important land claim, the Lubicon one, and one I think that we can agree on all sides of the House needs to be funded. Around the additional $6.6 million, I'm wondering if there is any detail there on the specific consultation and land claims. Is this, in fact, the regularization of the Big Horn reserve or the highway 1A regularization that is contained within this? Those were close, and I'm wondering if the minister can confirm with me what is contained in that $6.6 million.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would remind the member opposite that, in fact, this was their spending. I will say this. We are happy to get back to the member opposite with this level of detail. Our officials just don't have it with them at this point in time.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Minister. I'd now like to turn our attention to page 74, the Treasury Board and Finance supplementary supply estimates requested in the amount of $25 million to provide $30 million for market access advocacy in communications and public engagement. I just want to confirm with the minister that that $30 million has been and will continue to be accounted for in the same way with respect to third-party contracts, done in the usual way with RFPs, the usual way of contracts being disclosed in the blue book subsequently. I'll start with those two questions.

Mr. Toews: Mr. Chair, could we just ask the member to repeat that question, just so we're clear?

Ms Phillips: Sure. Here we have $30 million for market access advocacy in CPE, for which, I think, on all sides of the House, while we may not agree on the content of those communications, we agree on the virtue of talking about market access, and indeed we undertook some of those activities as well. So I'm asking if the minister can confirm that that $30 million that is providing for market access advocacy – in the CPE branch, that is now within Treasury Board and Finance, after some changes that were made a couple of years ago – will be accounted for in the same ways as it has been previously; that is to say that any third-party vendors will go through the normal RFP process, that things will be disclosed in the usual way, that they are within the blue book, and that contracts for any additional employees will be posted, as is usual practice.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thanks, Mr. Chair. The $30 million here that this House is ultimately being asked to approve, as by virtue of approving the total supplementary supply, of course, are funds that have already been spent. Those funds are gone. They were spent by the previous government. Of course, this government has a significant advocacy effort planned, and that advocacy effort is certainly beginning even right now as we work to advocate with a very sharp and focused campaign advocating for approval of the Trans Mountain pipeline. Our advocacy efforts, of course, are going to be much broader than that. We laid out our plans to Albertans prior to the election, and they wholeheartedly endorsed our efforts to be advocates and defenders of our energy industry. The $30 million that we're looking at right now, again, relates to a spend made by the previous government. Perhaps I'll leave it at that.

Ms Phillips: Sure. Looking at the Children's Services estimates, then, can the member provide some insight into what is being funded around the early learning and child care centres and whether $8 million fully covers the recommendations of the child intervention panel?

The Deputy Chair: That is the conclusion of that 10-minute block.

This now is an opportunity for members from the government side, private members, to speak.

Seeing none, moving back towards the opposition side, I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. Is it safe to assume that you'll be sharing the 10-minute block with the minister?

Ms Pancholi: Yes.

The Deputy Chair: Okay. Go ahead, please.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm just going to pick up on, actually, the comments from my colleague the Member for Lethbridge-West. On the Children's Services numbers, just going to those – and I believe that's on page 26 – I just wanted, actually, to pick up on those comments to ask if there could be some clarification as to whether or not the $8.3 million in child intervention and early intervention services for children and youth in support of the implementation of the public action plan for the ministerial child intervention – I believe it means the Ministerial Panel on Child Intervention. Could the minister update this House on the progress of that plan and whether or not that commitment is going to ensure that that work is continuing without interruption and that it's the full implementation of the action plan from the panel?

5:10

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Schulz: Thank you. As we chatted about a little bit earlier today, there are three different phases that were outlined in the action plan in terms of steps that need to be taken moving forward.

In 2018-2019 Children's Services did request funding, $8.3 million for costs associated with implementation, mostly around the first phase of actions within the action plan. Some examples of where that funding went were to establish a funding model for the seven child advocacy centres, which provide vital front-line support to survivors of abuse and their families; assessing a made-in-Alberta kinship care program to better support caregivers and children across Alberta – that was something that not only came forward in the report but also in the conversations I had with the people who are on the panel, something that certainly needed to be improved – and to strengthen services and placement options for children with extremely complex needs.

This includes reorganizing how services are delivered across the province and improving how we support our young people with disabilities and making important changes and updates to the child intervention practice framework program policies and our case management system to align with the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act so that we can better meet the needs of children, youth, and families and ensure that those most vulnerable across our province are safe and supported.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you to the minister for that response.

I'm wondering, with respect to the child advocacy centres, whether or not the minister is able to speak to whether or not that includes a child advocacy centre located in Lethbridge, if that was completed.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Children's Services, if she wishes to speak.

Ms Schulz: I don't have that level of detail with me right now, but I'd be happy to get back to you on that.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you to the minister for that. I would appreciate it if perhaps she would provide that update in writing.

Can I just clarify, then, in terms of the $8.3 million into the implementation of the action plan? Can the minister speak to whether or not this means that the timelines that were currently outlined in the action plan will be met, not just for the short term but as well for the medium-term and the long-term commitments?

Ms Schulz: That's a great question. The previous government had outlined the actions that came from the report into short-, medium-, and long-term actions. While funding was allocated for the short term – and this is what this $8.3 million has gone to support – not all of the longer term recommendations have specific pieces that require a budget, but, you know, those are things that I think we will work towards in the coming months as we lay out our province's budget this fall.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you to the minister for that.

Just some fleshing out a little bit of the $14.9 million, almost $15 million for additional funding for child care subsidies and supports. I understand, of course, generally what that would include. Can you just break that down a little bit for clarification? Is that to support the continuation of the early learning and child care centres until the end of – will that fund them for the remainder of their contracts, or is there an investment in funds there that will go beyond the extension of their contracts right now?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Schulz: Thank you. The child care funds that were outlined, the $14.988 million for caseload pressures and carry-forward of the ELCC funding: the Alberta child care subsidy program provides financial support to lower income families with children in a licensed child care program. Additionally, the funding supported growth in specialized child care caseloads. Their supports assist child care programs to care for children who have high behavioural or developmental needs and can include additional staff, training, coaching, and other resources to support children.

As the member opposite does know, this was developed as a pilot program, and I think that, you know, to be responsible, the benefit of a pilot is to gather data and information and ensure that any program is meeting the needs of parents. Certainly, as a working

parent, and the member opposite being one as well, I know that we do understand that different parents need different things for their families, but we also know that not every child is the same. Certainly, we need to ensure that we have accessible child care, but we also need to make sure that we have choice in child care.

We have committed to maintaining the pilot for the three years, which is a good amount of time to get a baseline of feedback and data and information to make good decisions moving forward.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you to the minister. Yes, I do absolutely understand the pressures as a working parent as well as the minister is, especially, and I'm sure the minister would appreciate as well, how important it is to have some predictability when you do have children in child care. I think that for those parents who do currently have their children enrolled in one of those ELCCs, there's a lot of uncertainty about what's going to be happening at the end of those contracts and whether or not they'll continue to be able to afford child care and how to make arrangements if they can't. I appreciate the comments, but right now I think what we're looking for is some predictability and some assurances we can provide those families and those centres that are offering those programs.

I'm just wondering if the minister can comment at all about how the numbers that we see here on page 27 of the supplementary supply address indigenous services and indigenous services funding and whether or not there will be continued support for ensuring that there is no distinction in service between on-reserve and off-reserve services in the area of children's services. I'm wondering if the minister could comment on whether those numbers reflect that.

Ms Schulz: I do just want to remind the member opposite that supplementary funds are helping to keep services stable for Albertans and, obviously, are numbers that were put forward by the previous government. I certainly wouldn't want to presuppose what might be in upcoming budgets, but I can tell you that a lot of that work was what was brought forward in the action plan and part of what – you know, the changes to practice were a hugely important part.

Certainly, as I mentioned about supports for kinship care and supporting families and ensuring that our must vulnerable children, the things that we did learn through those panel consultations, things like, you know, looking at kinship care, ensuring that our children have connections to family and to culture – you know, I think that sometimes we look at the dollar amounts first. But I think that respect for indigenous culture and changing practices based on the good feedback – I know that members on both sides of the House took part in those discussions, and I really did, when I said it earlier today, take it really seriously. I know we put forward a lot of reports as a government, but I felt like it was really important to speak to the people who informed that work.

You know, if you have more specific questions about the budget and what's coming forward, we'll be in a better position to speak to that in a couple of months, but this is based on previous spending and keeping services stable and making good on the commitments that were made previously.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you. Nothing further right now. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Any others with 50 seconds left?

Going to the government side of the House, I see the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I appreciate this opportunity to rise right now.

The Deputy Chair: However, is it my assumption that you'll be sharing time?

Mr. Schow: Yes. I'll be sharing time with the minister. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I apologize.

I do have a couple of questions for the minister, if I could, and I would start by saying that I'd like to ask the minister if the $317 million in the supplementary supply for crude by rail was earmarked during the campaign period.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you to the hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika for the question. I appreciate it. I think it's an important question, Mr. Chair, and the answer to his question is quite simple. The answer is yes. At least the commitments would have been made during the campaign period. I suspect he probably has a follow-up question to that, but that's when the commitment would have been made.

5:20

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yeah. I certainly do have a follow-up question to the minister. I have been knocking on a lot of doors, wearing out shoes during the campaign period, and heard from a lot of constituents with concerns about this purchase of these railcars. They were worried about some of the ethical lines that this manoeuvre may or may not have crossed or, frankly, blown right over. I wanted to know if the minister could maybe comment about that and if he has anything to say about the ethical lines that may or may not have been crossed by this.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, Mr. Chair, the process, how it works in our province – in case some hon. members are not aware – is that in February 2019 we entered what is called the campaign period. While we know that the writ was dropped in March and ultimately the election date took place on April 16, our province ends up in a campaign period from February until, actually I think it ends on June 16 or something like that upcoming, when certain fundraising rules and those things that apply to our campaigns happen. At the same time government is to enter into a mode of starting to prepare for an election while recognizing that the end of their mandate is there.

Certainly, Mr. Chair, through you to the hon. member, I don't know specifically whether or not, you know, we could quote specific laws that were broken or something along those lines. What I can tell you is that I have heard from my constituents as well that it certainly looks inappropriate to do that during a campaign period, especially to make a commitment that ends up committing Albertans to spend almost $3.5 billion in a desperate attempt in the dying days of an administration. [interjection]

I think the hon. member's point – and I know the hon. Member for Calgary-Fort would like to get involved. Calgary-Buffalo now. See, the ridings have changed. I'm always happy to hear from the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo. He's welcome to rise when he has the floor, but I have the floor right now. We will stick with me talking for a little bit, if that's okay, Mr. Chair, and to the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo.

The reality is that the outgoing government committed us to $3.5 billion. Of that, they've had to spend in supplementary supply, which has already been spent, about $317 million as the hon.

member articulates very, very well in his question and I've confirmed. The point of his question, though, is whether or not it was appropriate for the government to make that decision in the dying days of their administration. I would submit to this Assembly and through you to the hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo that, no, it was not appropriate.

That is why our leader, the now-Premier of Alberta, the hon. Premier, made a commitment in February 2019 that any contract that the government entered into during that campaign period would be examined in the lens of what was appropriate for taxpayers. We made that very clear. In fact, he held a press conference. I remember we had a premeeting, the leadership of our caucus, to make a decision on what that announcement would be. We made it very, very clear that we would not automatically honour every agreement that the outgoing government did because our job, we recognized, was to protect taxpayers.

When you're dealing with something that is of a magnitude of that, $3.5 billion, the largest expenditure, as far as I'm aware, probably in the history of the province for a one-item expenditure, certainly it was, I think, very appropriate of us as the opposition at that time to be able to position ourselves in a spot, if we were fortunate enough to form a government, to be able to stand up for taxpayers. I think it was certainly inappropriate of the government at that time, now the opposition, the NDP, to make a decision like that, which is turning out probably to be a boondoggle. I think you're going to hear more about that in the coming days and the mistakes that they made along that line.

Again, I'll close with this and go back to the hon. member, with his time that is remaining. Certainly, I think it was inappropriate, and I think most Albertans would think it was inappropriate.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I do have a couple more questions for the minister. This was certainly a large expenditure, my understanding is the largest expenditure in the history of the province. A number, I think it was $3.5 billion or $3.6 billion – maybe the former Finance minister can enlighten us at some point. But I'll move along. This is a big number, one that actually rivals a number that the former Premier's best friend, Mr. Trudeau, paid for a pipeline, a pipeline that he, as we understand, overpaid for by almost $1 billion. Now, I think sometimes people have a difficult time comprehending how much a billion dollars is. I can only imagine how many teachers' and how many nurses' salaries can be paid with that kind of money.

So, you know, I'm hoping the minister here can help me understand. Does this move, this purchase, this $3.7 billion that we paid for these rail cars, put us . . . [interjections] I appreciate the members opposite trying to occupy some time. The time is in fact mine to ask these questions, and I ask members to show some level of decorum in this House.

Does this move put the government in a bit of a financial crunch to pay for essential services like education and health care, and if it's an irresponsible move, which it possibly is, would it not be considered an attack on teachers and nurses, Mr. Chair?

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, again, thank you to the hon. member for the question. Certainly, that would be the concern, the outgoing government making a decision of that magnitude, again, in the dying days of their administration, when they knew that they were in fact more than likely to lose the election, in a desperate Hail Mary pass, if you will, to try to be able to save their government. Yes. They do position the next government in a tough spot. I think that's what was inappropriate about that decision. But mostly what's important, Mr. Chair . . . [interjection] The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, I know, doesn't have the same view about the protection of Alberta taxpayers as I do. Certainly, if you look at his time as Finance minister, that speaks for itself when it comes to how he cares about taxpayers.

But the reality is, to answer the member's question: yes. That makes another thing to add to the mess that the NDP have left us, some of which we're talking about here in supplementary supply and the challenge that we have to be able to overcome. What I can assure this House, though, as we have many times, is that we will work diligently to make sure that we can overcome the challenge that they left us with crude by rail, and Albertans can be confident that they now have a government in power that cares about taxpayers.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Cardston-Siksika if he has more questions.

Mr. Schow: I am done.

The Deputy Chair: Any others looking to finish off the last minute and 45 seconds?

Seeing none, we'll push it back over to the opposition side. I see the hon. Member for St. Albert standing.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Okay. I'd like to focus on page 31, line 4.2, the Ministry of Community and Social Services. My question specifically focuses on PDD services, persons with developmental disabilities. On page 31, line 4.2, we see an increase in funding for PDD services. Under our government we increased funding to this program by $150 million and launched a comprehensive PDD review of the program. To the minister: first of all, what has been the caseload growth for PDD over the last three years? You are going to need this information to budget. Does this supplementary supply amount adequately account for the mid-year changes in caseload?

Mr. Toews: The answer to that is yes. It does.

Mr. Chair, if I can just respond to a couple of questions that were asked earlier previously that we didn't have an answer for, I would like to take that time and do that. There was a question related to the climate leadership projects and specifically to the $3.3 million spend, what that related to. In fact, it was an increase in capital grants for an off-diesel program for four locations.

I also wanted to respond to a question related to culture and tourism. There was a question around the federal-provincial split for the YWCA Calgary hub facility. The federal amount was $6 million. The provincial amount was $8.6 million. Again, for the Jerry Forbes centre for community spirit renovation project the federal amount was $1.8 million, and the provincial amount was $5.8 million.

5:30

Ms Renaud: Okay. Thank you. The PDD review panel has been hard at work to make recommendations to improve the PDD program. A couple of things. Number one, when will the report be released to the public? Two, do the supplementary amounts reflect any supports for the panel?

Now, also to note, in the UCP platform document there was a reference to removing the IQ criteria for determination of eligibility under this program, so I'd like to know if that was factored in and how you got to those numbers.

Mr. Jason Nixon: We've gone quite a way into supplementary supply, and I think the hon. the Finance minister has done an

excellent job of trying to answer detailed questions, which are fair inside this Assembly, and come back with information. Again, we are in supplementary supply. Mr. Chair, through you to the member, this is about money that your government formerly, just a few weeks ago, spent. If your question is about something to do with supplementary supply, the hon. Finance minister will continue to do his best to answer that. But as far as policy direction or budget direction some of those questions that the hon. member just asked probably would make sense in interim supply later on today, when we get to that conversation, and I would submit to you that the bulk of them actually make more sense when we discuss the budget this fall.

Ms Renaud: Well, thank you for that, but I'm going to ask it again. Will this government actually commit to releasing the report publicly? The financial implications of this report are huge. I think the member knows that. You can deflect all you like. Let me skip that. Clearly, you're not going to answer that.

Maybe this question is better directed to Treasury Board. I'm wondering if or where there are supplementary amounts to support the work of the office of the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Mr. Chair, again, the report that the hon. member refers to is not a part of supplementary supply debate. I think that the best way for her to handle that is to send a note to the Minister of Community and Social Services, who is very accessible to all members of this House. I do know that. She's been able to provide me information on the same types of questions in the past. I think that would be probably the more effective way for her to be able to get a question about a specific report.

Again, I remind all hon. members, Mr. Chair, that this supplementary supply. It's not interim supply. It's not a budget debate. This is about money that the former government spent, and we're happy to answer the detailed questions about where that money went and what types of projects it was spent on. But this is not an opportunity for the opposition to have a conversation about interim supply or, more importantly, our budget process.

We've been clear that our budget process will take place over the coming months. There will come a day when we will first come before our standing committees as a part of the 30th Legislature, which includes members from all sides of the House, where we'll have to answer detailed questions on that. We'll be happy and excited to show what we intend to do on behalf of the province and how we think we've solved some of the problems that we have inherited. Then ultimately we'll come back to this Chamber, where this belongs, to have a budget that is passed and debated in a fulsome way – I welcome that – but not during supplementary supply.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Well, thank you. With all due respect for that second lecture I'm going to ask that again. To Treasury Board and Finance, I'm wondering if or where there are supplementary amounts to support the work of the office of the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities. It's a pretty straightforward question. Yes or no?

The other part is that the member referred to how accessible the minister is. Well, I'm sorry, but I've offered a few times to meet as the critic for that particular ministry, and I've not been successful so far, nor have I been able to have a meeting with the office of the advocate. I'm not sure what that means. I will turn to Treasury Board and Finance and ask that question. Are there supplementary amounts to support the work of the office of the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities? Yes or no?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I can only assume that the member opposite is asking whether the money spent actually went to that office. Again, this is all past tense. This was money that the previous government spent, and it is not money that this current government has any discretion in spending. It's gone. This money is gone.

I will just go through the summary of the supplementary amounts: $31,385,000 are related to the ministry; $18 million was for income support to people expected to work or working to support core and supplementary benefits rate increases indexed to the Alberta consumer price index and increased demand for financial benefits; $5,455,000 was spent for assured income for the severely handicapped, including $16,900,000 to support the benefit rate increase and indexation of benefits with the Alberta consumer price index, less $11,750,000 made available from lower caseload growth in financial benefit grants and $305,000 for the workload assessment model in program planning and delivery; $7,930,000 was for disability services, including $7,180,000 in persons with developmental disabilities supports to Albertans, including $7 million for caseload and cost-per-case growth and $180,000 for the workload assessment model; $750,000 in family support for children with disabilities for their workload assessment model.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Chair. First of all, that is quite interesting that there is a lower caseload – okay – considering AISH offices across the province get about 50 applications a day. I'll wait to find out more about that. Let me ask about AISH. On page 30 the ministry states there is a lower caseload growth than expected for the AISH program. Can you explain what the historical caseload growth rate has been, and how is it possible that there are fewer Albertans with disabilities in need of support?

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Again, to the hon. member, her commentary, quite frankly, probably not helpful to the conversation, but that's fine. That's her prerogative with her time. I would suggest that as she's looking for answers to these questions on how this money was spent before we were in government, that she ask her colleague the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall, who just a few short weeks ago was the minister that was responsible for the spending that she's referring to. Through you, Mr. Chair, to the hon. member, if there are concerns with the caseloads and whether or not the hon. minister formerly spent enough money on caseloads, I don't understand why that hon. member would not take it up with the hon. Member for Calgary-McCall, who was the former minister and ultimately responsible for the spending that the Finance minister is discussing with this House today.

Again, Mr. Chair, through you to the hon. members across the way, I know time is short, and I want to respect their time . . .

The Deputy Chair: Looking to the government side, are there any private members looking to ask questions? I see the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka sitting. Seeing none, looking to the opposition side. I believe I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie standing with the call.

Mr. Deol: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's my privilege and honour to serve one of the most diverse ridings in Alberta. In my riding numerous organizations do plenty of work promoting multiculturalism through cultural, literary, and theatre collectives

and help communities integrate into the greatest, largest Canadian mosaic. I just wanted to bring to your attention that on page 35, line 2.9 there's an antiracism community grant program. Our government was proud to create this historic program to fight racism, build awareness, and collaborate with amazing community groups that are championing antiracism work.

I think I forgot to ask for my five minutes. Do I take my five minutes?

The Deputy Chair: Oh. Yeah. There was actually . . .

Mr. Deol: I'll just read my questions, and you can respond.

The Deputy Chair: I hesitate to interrupt. One quick thing, I believe I introduced you as Edmonton-Ellerslie and not Edmonton-Meadows, so to clear that up.

Mr. Deol: It's good. I didn't hear you.

The Deputy Chair: Also, just as we get into the rhythm of this sometimes people just assume that the time is going to be shared. Is that your intention?

Mr. Deol: No.

The Deputy Chair: No, so five minutes to yourself. Please continue.

Mr. Deol: Thank you. I have a question. To the minister: do you agree that the program we created is important and should be supported going forward to support antiracism work in Alberta?

I have another question. Question 2: given the Islamophobic incidents we have seen in the province, will any of the funding go towards combating Islamophobia in Alberta?

5:40

I have question 3. Can you explain why your government has ended all acknowledgements of indigenous land given your supposed commitment to antiracism work?

Many multicultural organizations have advocated for antiracism training and education. Will any of these supplementary funds be directed to antiracism education, including education for elected officials?

Question 5: will you ensure that antiracism and LGBTQ2S organizations may apply to this grant as seed funding, or will this community be sidelined once again by your government?

Question 6: is this supplementary amount requested for one-time investment into the grant program, or will the program be maintained every year going forward?

Question 7: to the minister, will you be changing any grant criteria for the program?

Question 8: to the minister, given that the latest submission deadline was June 1, can the minister please advise when successful grant applicants will be notified?

Last question, question 9: will any of this funding support the antiracism council?

I will be happy to have answers for all those nine questions. Mr. Chair, the minister can get back to me even in written responses. I will be happy to have those answered in writing. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. minister, with five minutes.

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Again, I want to preface my comments with: the amounts we're looking at here have already been spent. They've been spent. It's not discretionary spending. There's no ability for this government to make decisions around these funds. They were spent by the previous government, and so they're gone.

I think the other comment, though, I would like to make in response to your questions about efforts around antiracism. I just, again, want to assure all members in this House that this government takes racism seriously, and we certainly will make it a high priority to support efforts, antiracism efforts, going forward. Again, there will be very thoughtful and detailed budget deliberations by all the ministries over the course of the next weeks and months, and we will be rolling out a budget that will basically demonstrate our priorities in all areas, including the area of antiracism.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, and, Mr. Chair, I tried to listen to the hon. member's questions carefully. I have to say that, to the hon. member, I think you asked some important and meaningful questions. What we're having some trouble answering you about is that you're asking about the government's intentions in the future. There will be a place for you to ask those questions in interim supply and when the budget comes out and other times in question period and other committees and places to do it. This, respectfully, might not be your best source of information in this committee because we're actually asking about historical expenditures and what they're on. That's what's before us. A lot of your questions were on future intentions and expenditures.

I'm not berating your questions. I'm not berating the hon. member's questions. I'm actually saying that I think they're important. I'm just, I hope, in a friendly, helpful way suggesting the hon. member maybe ask his questions again in the future, in parts of the discussion, in parts of the budget discussion, in parts of the interim supply, where they would have a better chance of being answered. Because all we're really here to answer on this is on the way money was spent when the party that the hon. member belongs to was in government before we were here. This is an interesting piece, that we're actually answering questions about things that we didn't do or that the previous government did. I hope you'll accept my answer in the spirit of helpfulness with which it is offered.

The Deputy Chair: There are a few minutes remaining, and therefore there's an opportunity. None?

Vote on Supplementary Supply Estimates 2018-19 General Revenue Fund

The Deputy Chair: If there are no members who wish to speak, then I shall put the following questions after consideration of the 2018-19 supplementary supply estimates.

Agreed to:

Office of the Chief Electoral Officer	$8,874,000

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Department of Advanced Education	
Capital Investment	$42,000,000

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Department of Agriculture and Forestry
Expense $192,149,000
Financial Transactions $500,000

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Department of Children's Services
Expense $23,296,000
Capital Investment $225,000

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Department of Community and Social Services
Expense $31,385,000

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Department of Culture and Tourism
Expense $11,880,000

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Department of Economic Development and Trade
Expense $500,000

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Department of Education
Expense $500,000
Capital Investment $6,667,000

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Department of Energy
Expense $6,700,000
Financial Transactions $311,262,000

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Department of Indigenous Relations
Expense $24,342,000
Financial Transactions $33,300,000

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Department of Justice and Solicitor General
Expense $24,167,000

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

5:50

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Department of Municipal Affairs
Expense $91,013,000

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Department of Seniors and Housing
Expense $16,628,000

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Department of Service Alberta
Expense $300,000
Capital Investment $3,736,000
Financial Transactions $17,000,000

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Department of Status of Women
Expense $500,000

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Department of Treasury Board and Finance
Expense $25,565,000

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Transfer from the Capital Investment vote of the Department of Service Alberta to the Expense vote of the Department of Service Alberta $2,600,000

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Transfer from the Expense vote of the Department of Advanced Education to the Expense vote of the Department of Service Alberta $3,143,000

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Transfer from the Expense vote of the Department of Community and Social Services to the Expense vote of the Department of Service Alberta $3,000,000

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Transfer from the Expense vote of the Department of Indigenous Relations to the Expense vote of the Department of Service Alberta $250,000

The Deputy Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Chair: Any opposed? Carried.

The Committee of Supply shall now rise and report.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake – oh. The Mace. I think I got excited after all those votes. My apologies to the Sergeant.

The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again. The following resolutions relating to the 2018-19 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2019, have been approved.

Legislative Assembly, Office of the Chief Electoral Officer: $8,874,000.

Advanced Education: capital investment, $42,000,000.

Agriculture and Forestry: expense, $192,149,000; financial transactions, $500,000.

Children's Services: expense, $23,296,000; capital investment, $225,000.

Community and Social Services: expense, $31,385,000.

Culture and Tourism: expense, $11,880,000.

Economic Development and Trade: expense, $500,000.

Education: expense, $500,000; capital investment, $6,667,000.

Energy: expense, $6,700,000; financial transactions, $311,262,000.

Indigenous Relations: expense, $24,342,000; financial transactions, $33,300,000.

Justice and Solicitor General: expense, $24,167,000.

Municipal Affairs: expense, $91,013,000.

Seniors and Housing: expense, $16,628,000.

Service Alberta: expense, $300,000; capital investment, $3,736,000; financial transactions, $17,000,000.

Status of Women: expense, $500,000.

Treasury Board and Finance: expense, $25,565,000.

The Committee of Supply has also approved the following amounts to be transferred.

Transfer from Service Alberta capital investment vote to Service Alberta expense vote, $2,600,000.

Transfer to Service Alberta expense vote from the expense votes of Advanced Education, $3,143,000; from Community and Social Services, $3,000,000; from Indigenous Relations, $250,000.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker: Any opposed? So ordered.

I would like to alert hon. members that Standing Order 61(3) provides that upon the Assembly concurring in the report by the Committee of Supply, the Assembly immediately reverts to Introduction of Bills for introduction of the appropriation bill.

Introduction of Bills

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

Bill 5
Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2019

Mr. Toews: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 5, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2019. This being a money bill, Her Honour the Administrator, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to this Assembly.

[Motion carried; Bill 5 read a first time]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Jason Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank all members of the House for a good day of productive work, and I will move that we adjourn the Assembly until today at 7:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:59 p.m.]

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