



Province of Alberta

The 30th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday evening, June 4, 2019

Day 8

The Honourable Nathan Cooper, Speaker



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 30th Legislature

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UCP), Speaker  
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UCP), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Milliken, Nicholas, Calgary-Currie (UCP), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Hon. Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Strathmore (UCP)  
Allard, Tracy L., Grande Prairie (UCP)  
Amery, Mickey K., Calgary-Cross (UCP)  
Armstrong-Homeniuk, Jackie,  
Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UCP)  
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Bilous, Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (NDP),  
Official Opposition House Leader  
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-West Heday (NDP)  
Ceci, Joe, Calgary-Buffalo (NDP)  
Copping, Hon. Jason C., Calgary-Varsity (UCP)  
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)  
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South (NDP)  
Deol, Jasvir, Edmonton-Meadows (NDP)  
Dreeschen, Hon. Devin, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (UCP)  
Eggen, David, Edmonton-North West (NDP),  
Official Opposition Whip  
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (UCP),  
Government Whip  
Feehan, Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (NDP)  
Fir, Hon. Tanya, Calgary-Peigan (UCP)  
Ganley, Kathleen T., Calgary-Mountain View (NDP)  
Getson, Shane C., Lac Ste. Anne-Parkland (UCP)  
Glasgo, Michaela L., Brooks-Medicine Hat (UCP)  
Glubish, Hon. Nate, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (NDP)  
Goodridge, Laila, Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche (UCP)  
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)  
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (NDP)  
Guthrie, Peter F., Airdrie-Cochrane (UCP)  
Hanson, David B., Bonnyville-Cold Lake-St. Paul (UCP)  
Hoffman, Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (NDP)  
Horner, Nate S., Drumheller-Stettler (UCP)  
Hunter, Hon. Grant R., Taber-Warner (UCP)  
Irwin, Janis, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy Whip  
Issik, Whitney, Calgary-Glenmore (UCP)  
Jones, Matt, Calgary-South East (UCP)  
Kenney, Hon. Jason, PC, Calgary-Lougheed (UCP),  
Premier  
LaGrange, Hon. Adriana, Red Deer-North (UCP)  
Loewen, Todd, Central Peace-Notley (UCP)  
Long, Martin M., West Yellowhead (UCP)  
Lovely, Jacqueline, Camrose (UCP)  
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)  
Luan, Hon. Jason, Calgary-Foothills (UCP)  
Madu, Hon. Kaycee, Edmonton-South West (UCP)  
McIver, Hon. Ric, Calgary-Hays (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader

Nally, Hon. Dale, Morinville-St. Albert (UCP)  
Neudorf, Nathan T., Lethbridge-East (UCP)  
Nicolaidis, Hon. Demetrios, Calgary-Bow (UCP)  
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (NDP)  
Nixon, Hon. Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre  
(UCP), Government House Leader  
Nixon, Jeremy P., Calgary-Klein (UCP)  
Notley, Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (NDP),  
Leader of the Official Opposition  
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (UCP)  
Pancholi, Rakhi, Edmonton-Whitemud (NDP)  
Panda, Hon. Prasad, Calgary-Edgemont (UCP)  
Phillips, Shannon, Lethbridge-West (NDP)  
Pon, Hon. Josephine, Calgary-Beddington (UCP)  
Rehn, Pat, Lesser Slave Lake (UCP)  
Reid, Roger W., Livingstone-Macleod (UCP)  
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (NDP)  
Rosin, Miranda D., Banff-Kananaskis (UCP)  
Rowswell, Garth, Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright (UCP)  
Rutherford, Brad, Leduc-Beaumont (UCP)  
Sabir, Irfan, Calgary-McCall (NDP)  
Savage, Hon. Sonya, Calgary-North West (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Sawhney, Hon. Rajan, Calgary-North East (UCP)  
Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (NDP)  
Schow, Joseph R., Cardston-Siksika (UCP),  
Deputy Government Whip  
Schulz, Hon. Rebecca, Calgary-Shaw (UCP)  
Schweitzer, Hon. Doug, Calgary-Elbow (UCP),  
Deputy Government House Leader  
Shandro, Hon. Tyler, Calgary-Acadia (UCP)  
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-City Centre (NDP)  
Sigurdson, Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (NDP)  
Sigurdson, R.J., Highwood (UCP)  
Singh, Peter, Calgary-East (UCP)  
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (UCP)  
Stephan, Jason, Red Deer-South (UCP)  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (NDP),  
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader  
Toews, Hon. Travis, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (UCP)  
Toor, Devinder, Calgary-Falconridge (UCP)  
Turton, Searle, Spruce Grove-Stony Plain (UCP)  
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UCP)  
Walker, Jordan, Sherwood Park (UCP)  
Williams, Dan D.A., Peace River (UCP)  
Wilson, Hon. Rick D., Maskwacis-Wetaskiwin (UCP)  
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (UCP)  
Yaseen, Muhammad, Calgary-North (UCP)

### Party standings:

United Conservative: 63

New Democrat: 24

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Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel

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Jason Copping	Minister of Labour and Immigration
Devin Dreesen	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Tanya Fir	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism
Nate Glubish	Minister of Service Alberta
Grant Hunter	Associate Minister of Red Tape Reduction
Adriana LaGrange	Minister of Education
Jason Luan	Associate Minister of Mental Health and Addictions
Kaycee Madu	Minister of Municipal Affairs
Ric McIver	Minister of Transportation
Dale Nally	Associate Minister of Natural Gas
Demetrios Nicolaides	Minister of Advanced Education
Jason Nixon	Minister of Environment and Parks
Prasad Panda	Minister of Infrastructure
Josephine Pon	Minister of Seniors and Housing
Sonya Savage	Minister of Energy
Rajan Sawhney	Minister of Community and Social Services
Rebecca Schulz	Minister of Children's Services
Doug Schweitzer	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Tyler Shandro	Minister of Health
Travis Toews	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
Rick Wilson	Minister of Indigenous Relations

### **Parliamentary Secretary**

Muhammad Yaseen	Parliamentary Secretary of Immigration
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## STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

### **Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Gotfried  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Orr

Allard  
Eggen  
Getson  
Glasgo  
Irwin  
Jones  
Nielsen

### **Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. van Dijken  
Deputy Chair: Ms Goehring

Allard  
Barnes  
Bilous  
Dach  
Dang  
Gray  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Reid  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor

### **Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goodridge  
Deputy Chair: Ms Sigurdson

Amery  
Carson  
Ganley  
Glasgo  
Guthrie  
Irwin  
Long  
Neudorf  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Rutherford  
Walker  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Goodridge  
Gray  
Lovely  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Rutherford  
Schmidt  
Shepherd  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Sweet

### **Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Cooper  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Ellis

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Dang  
Deol  
Goehring  
Goodridge  
Gotfried  
Long  
Sweet  
Williams

### **Standing Committee on Private Bills and Private Members' Public Bills**

Chair: Mr. Ellis  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Gotfried  
Horner  
Irwin  
Neudorf  
Nielsen  
Nixon, Jeremy  
Pancholi  
Sigurdson, L.  
Sigurdson, R.J.

### **Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Mr. Smith  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schow

Carson  
Deol  
Ganley  
Horner  
Issik  
Jones  
Loyola  
Neudorf  
Rehn  
Reid  
Renaud  
Turton  
Yao

### **Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

Chair: Ms Phillips  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Gotfried

Amery  
Barnes  
Dach  
Feehan  
Guthrie  
Hoffman  
Renaud  
Rosin  
Rowswell  
Stephan  
Toor  
Turton  
Walker

### **Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Mr. Hanson  
Deputy Chair: Member Ceci

Armstrong-Homeniuk  
Feehan  
Getson  
Loyola  
Rehn  
Rosin  
Sabir  
Schmidt  
Sigurdson, R.J.  
Singh  
Smith  
Turton  
Yaseen



## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, June 4, 2019

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, good evening and welcome. Please be seated.

### Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

Ms Glasgow moved, seconded by Ms Rosin, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows.

To Her Honour the Honourable Lois Mitchell, CM, AOE, LLD, the Lieutenant Governor of the province of Alberta:

We, Her Majesty's most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Legislative Assembly, now assembled, beg leave to thank Your Honour for the gracious speech Your Honour has been pleased to address to us at the opening of the present session.

[Debate adjourned June 4: Mr. Nally speaking]

**The Speaker:** Do I see the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud rising?

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been a bit of a long day. Okay. Well, I'm pleased to rise in response to the Speech from the Throne. As I know there is a little leeway on these speeches, I hope you will all indulge me while I tell you a little bit about myself.

I am a child of immigrants to this country from Tanzania and India who came to Canada and Alberta because of the open arms of this country and the wide-open opportunities of this province. My father was a small-business owner. My mother was a former teacher and a provincial civil servant. I grew up in southwest Edmonton, lucky to enjoy the privilege of a great public education system and world-class universities. I'm the daughter of two parents who both had significant health issues in their 40s but who never had to question whether or not they would have access to high-quality and exceptional health care.

I am a lawyer who worked for 13 years in public service and in private practice and who understands the role and significance of strong and effective government on the lives of the people it serves. I'm the partner and wife of a public school teacher and assistant principal, who has been a mentor and an advocate for his students. I'm a mother of two young children, who look around and don't question seeing people of all races, religions, abilities, sexual orientations, and values as part of their community. They certainly don't see anything unusual about a strong, progressive woman as a politician or as their Premier.

I am a feminist, a social justice advocate, a volunteer, and a woman of colour who believes that government should reflect the people that it serves, and I now stand before this Assembly as the elected representative for the fantastic riding of Edmonton-Whitemud. I'm the first woman to hold this seat and the first person of colour, and I'm very proud.

Edmonton-Whitemud is a beautiful riding established in 1971. It draws its name from Whitemud Creek, a tributary of the North Saskatchewan River that runs through the riding. The name Whitemud comes from the white mud from the hill used by Hudson's Bay Company men as a whitewash on their posts.

Edmonton-Whitemud is a constituency made up of people from a multitude of ethnic, religious, language, and socio-economic backgrounds. From the grand homes on Whitemud Road to the

character homes in the closely knit community of Terwillegar Towne to the vibrant diversity of Brander Gardens, it is filled with young families working hard to provide the best life for their children now but also wanting a secure future for them, families that are growing and need sufficient school space and teachers to ensure that every child has every opportunity to succeed.

There is a thriving community of newcomers to Canada in the heart of the riding thanks to the great work of local community groups like Brander Gardens ROCKS, a local community group which provides ways for these families to connect and find support from each other.

There is a long and proud history of volunteerism in this riding. Community leagues such as Riverbend, Brookview, Oak Hills, the Ridge, Hodgson, Terwillegar, and Ogilvie Ridge are active and strong in Edmonton-Whitemud. These community leagues have come together under the Terwillegar Riverbend Advisory Council, or TRAC, one of the first of its kind in the city of Edmonton, which just hosted its 14th annual community run to support the great work that it does in the riding.

The riding is busy with events all year-round, from the Southwest Edmonton Farmers' Market to the SouthWest Edmonton Seniors Association's live active expo to community carnivals to the family and kid sporting activities at the Terwillegar rec centre.

It is a riding that also has a lot of natural beauty, including the well-loved and well-used Terwillegar off-leash park, that connects to the other natural areas in our river valley park system. It's no wonder that the Terwillegar off-leash park is so popular as Edmonton-Whitemud has the highest level of dog ownership in the city. This brought me no end of joy as I was door-knocking, since I am a very big dog lover, although it might have put off a few of my volunteers who had allergies since I insisted on giving every single dog that I met an ear rub or a pat on the head if they'd let me.

The political history of the riding is also fascinating. Three of Alberta's Premiers have represented this area: Alexander Rutherford, Don Getty, and Dave Hancock. Nellie McClung, part of Alberta's and Canada's Famous Five, who brought the Persons Case, represented part of the geographic area that is now in Edmonton-Whitemud.

Since the establishment of Edmonton-Whitemud as a riding in 1971 it has been held at times by three different political parties, for multiple terms each: the Progressive Conservatives, the Alberta Liberals, and, of course, the NDP. The former MLA, Dr. Bob Turner, paved the way for the NDP in the riding, and for that I am forever grateful. Mr. Speaker, this very political history means that the voters of Edmonton-Whitemud cannot and should not be taken for granted by any political party. These are electors who pay close attention to what candidates and politicians say that they're going to do, and they hold them accountable. They are reasonable and pragmatic voters who are not swayed by highly ideological or partisan positions.

The people of Edmonton-Whitemud care about supporting their own families but also care a great deal about how other families are treated. There are people who told me that they could not abide any political party that would make LGBTQ students, who are already vulnerable, more vulnerable or would accept or brush off intolerant or hateful views by anybody. They are voters who lived through the Klein years and 44 years of Conservative governments and watched them fail to diversify and invest during the boom of high oil prices and then slash and burn public services during the bust of oil prices.

The people of Edmonton-Whitemud told me that they were grateful to see a different approach from the NDP to the precipitous drop in oil prices that took place late in 2014. They appreciate that instead of hurting Albertans more, which is what Conservative governments always did and indeed will continue to do, the NDP



invested in Alberta workers by refusing to cut Alberta public-sector jobs and by creating jobs by putting Albertans to work on desperately needed infrastructure projects. They recognized the commitment and pragmatism of former Premier Notley on advocating for and moving Canadians in support of building pipelines so that we could get value for our resources. But they also saw, for the first time in decades, that the NDP government demonstrated a commitment to diversification, which was a commitment to a more stable and secure future for all Albertans.

Like all of us in this Assembly, I chose to run for many reasons. I ran because after working hard to encourage gender parity in politics as a board member of ParityYEG, I knew that when I was asked to run, it was time for me to walk the walk. I ran because I wanted my children to see how important it is to be an engaged citizen and to stand up for the values that you believe in. I ran because I watched the NDP government over the previous four years, and I saw a government and a leader that, for the first time in 40 years, actually planned ahead for our future by diversifying our economy, investing in people and services when times are difficult, and standing up for the vulnerable and the disenfranchised. I ran because I saw the alternative that was proposed and how regressive and backwards it was, and I knew that I was not going to sit idly by and let it happen without doing something about it. I needed to fight for a more just and secure world for my children.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be a member of a strong Official Opposition. I'm not afraid of being a minority voice in this Assembly. I grew up in Alberta as a woman of colour. I've spent my life as a minority. I've immersed myself in the experiences of marginalized people. I've learned from the stories of those voices who are ignored. I do not feel powerless in the opposition. In fact, I feel empowered. I feel the awesome privilege and responsibility of speaking for those who may be in the minority, and I'm proud to do it. So while the members on the opposite side may gleefully drag this province backwards again, just know that I am not afraid to be a voice to challenge that, and I will challenge that because that is what my constituents elected me to do and that is what a strong opposition voice must do.

The people of Edmonton-Whitemud have put their trust in me and elected me to be their voice in the Legislature. I commit to ensuring that their voices, priorities, and needs are strongly represented in the House, and I look forward to working as a member of the NDP caucus to ensure a better life for all Albertans.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available if anyone has questions or comments with respect to the hon. member's speech. I see that the Member for Edmonton-Glenora has a question or a comment.

**Ms Hoffman:** Yeah. I just want to say how inspiring I found the speech that the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud just gave. I got to know the hon. member because she was a mom at one of the nonprofit daycares that ended up being a \$25-a-day child care site. I thought maybe she would indulge us and talk a little bit about some of the policies that came into play over the last four years and what it is about them that she thinks should continue on. I would appreciate hearing that.

Thank you.

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

**Ms Pancholi:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question from the Member for Edmonton-Glenora. You know, the reason I'm here is actually because of the Member for Edmonton-

Glenora. She was the one who took my passions, my interests, my values and helped me funnel them into political action. I believe strongly in women asking other women to run, and this was a perfect example of why it's important. I was very honoured to be approached by the Member for Edmonton-Glenora, who obviously saw something in me, and I appreciated her seeing that. She believed in me and supported me. That is a very important role of all members of the Assembly, to support each other. But I strongly believe particularly in women supporting other women to make their voices heard in political office. So thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

7:40

You know, the \$25-a-day child care program was one of the things where I realized this is the first time – I've grown up in this province. I've lived here for a long time. It was the first time I'd heard a government actually take active measures to support women's entrance and full participation in the workforce. It had been something that had been ignored for so long. I was so thrilled to see a government actually take action. If you look at any civilized and developed country in this world where they have really got full participation of women in the workforce, it's because they have affordable and accessible child care.

I'll actually never forget the night that the NDP government was elected in 2015. I was not a member. I was not a candidate. I was a mom who was eight months and three weeks pregnant, very emotional, watching on the couch. I'll never forget when I saw our former Premier stand up on election night and in her victory speech mention things that I never thought I'd hear an Alberta Premier talk about. She thanked women. She thanked First Nations. She thanked the public service. As somebody who has worked in government, in public service as a woman, worked with First Nations, I could not believe it. I had never heard an Alberta politician or Premier, in particular, stand up and say those things.

I could not believe it. I actually wrote it down. I couldn't believe that I'd ever heard a Premier not just talk about those things but then I watched for four years as this government walked that walk as well. There was a true commitment to reconciliation with our indigenous people, again something I had never seen before in this province. There was a true commitment to supporting women. The actions they took to support the LGBTQ children and community in this province was just inspirational to me.

But more than that, I'm also a practical person who wants to look forward to my children's future, and I want to know that there will be a future. I have watched and been on this roller coaster, just like we all have who've grown up in this province, and watched our services and the things that we depend on, like health and education, just roller coaster with the prices of oil. You know, the members on the other side might be comfortable in saying, "Oh, you know, it's the economic situation that the NDP government left this province in," but they're forgetting the 44 years of history behind that, which is that previous Conservative governments have let us ride a roller coaster for so long. This was the first government that actually committed to investing in people and investing in public service and investing in infrastructure at a time when times were tough because that's an investment in the future.

So when I saw the vision laid out by this party, by this leader, I knew I had to be part of it because it was actually a vision for a progressive future. When I was at the doors in Edmonton-Whitemud, that's what I talked about. We can talk about, "Oh, yeah, it's a tough time; it's a tough economic time," and we can get right back on that roller coaster, which is exactly where I think this government is going to take us. There is no plan to invest in our future, to diversify. There's no plan for climate change. We're just



going right back to what we did for 40 years. I'm happy to stand up here and say that I don't believe that, and I won't believe that. I'm going to continue to advocate for those voters in Edmonton-Whitemud who felt the same way that I did, which is that, no, we don't want to move backwards, we want to move forward.

We'll bide our time. I'm happy to talk. I'm happy to stand up and say the things that I believe in and that I know the voters in my constituency believe in, and we'll see what happens in four years.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any others wishing to briefly bring comments or questions to the hon. member?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Red Deer-North and Minister of Education.

**Member LaGrange:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is both a great pleasure and a true honour to rise in this House today and express my deep appreciation to the people of Red Deer-North for the trust and faith they have placed in me to represent them during the 30th Legislature. Further, it is humbling to present my maiden speech today, which I have entitled as my model for life: *The Lord Leads Me Where He Needs Me*.

As articulated in the throne speech, what the good people of Red Deer-North and Alberta verified through their election choice was a strong mandate for our government to reignite the economy, to get people back to work, and to build pipelines to tidewater. Equally strong was their desire for a government who is concerned about the health and welfare of its people, especially the poor, the vulnerable, the disenfranchised, and the marginalized among us. As my dear friend Lorna stated, and I quote: we want a Conservative government with a social conscience. Unquote. Being an idealist, it is this element of social justice in politics that I was most drawn to when considering whether to run for provincial politics.

My desire to be a voice for the voiceless and the forgotten began when I was quite young. I am blessed to have been born into a very close-knit, faith-filled Italian family. My parents were both from the same poor farming community in northern Italy, not far from Venice. While I remember many stories of the joy of surviving World War II and then the struggles of the postwar time with the scarcity of food and money, I also recall how they said that their family and friends were able to depend on each other. They took care of each other and supported one another's needs with love and charity for all. They even found reasons to sing as they worked long hours in the fields.

Due to my paternal grandfather having a stroke, my father's family was hit especially hard, with my father, Luigi Dametto, age 11, having to drop out of the Italian version of grade 3 to go to work to help financially support his parents and siblings. I can't even imagine how difficult it must have been for an 11-year-old boy to be shouldering such a heavy burden. While my father never begrudged the childhood he missed, he did impress upon me the value of an education and the blessing of putting service above self. My father's resiliency and ingenuity served him well as he went on to become a respected finishing carpenter and construction worker who could figure out how to build just about anything, in fact, building our family home in Guelph from scratch. He did this after marrying my mother, Rina Perin, in Italy in the late '50s. Shortly thereafter they immigrated to Canada. They came in search of a better life.

Leaving most of their friends and family behind and with little actual money in hand, my parents took a huge risk moving to a foreign land so different than their beloved native land and culture. There were many obstacles to overcome, not least of which were the language barrier, the much colder climate, the diversity of

cultures blending as other nationalities were also immigrating in large numbers, and, yes, even racial prejudice.

As a young child who, I might add, was born in Canada, I never truly understood until much later in life that when someone would shout out a racial slur at me as I walked down the street, they only displayed their own ignorance through their lack of respect and intolerance. While these occurrences were uncomfortable, the way my younger brother Louis, born with Down syndrome, was sometimes treated in public hurt me much more deeply. While the majority of people were kind and could see beyond the disability label, others were quite cruel: jeering, making fun at his expense, ridiculing, and, yes, even physically abusive at times for no other reason than that he was born different.

As his older sister by two years I became one of his defenders. After all, if they only knew him, they'd know that Lou knew two languages, had a great sense of humour, worked a steady job, enjoyed bowling and the company of his girlfriend, a relationship that lasted over 25 years until his death at the age of 49 of Down syndrome Alzheimer's. It was gratifying to see at his funeral that while there are those who would have discounted his life as being less valuable and yet others who would have advocated that he should never have been born at all, our church was full to overflowing with approximately a thousand people in attendance. There was not a dry eye to be found as they paid their respect to a life well lived.

Inspired by my daily interactions with my brother while growing up, this contributed immensely to my decision to become a rehabilitative practitioner working with the developmentally and physically challenged and ultimately led to my move to my forever home in Red Deer in 1981. I've always found Red Deer to be a welcoming and caring place filled with generosity of spirit and a keen desire to help the less fortunate. Fast forward 38 years, and I am now married to the love of my life and soulmate, Darren. I have seven amazing children, Chantelle, Jason, Neil, Brandon, Aaron, Vanessa, and Yvette; four beautiful grandchildren, Ava, William, Charlotte, and Benjamin; a family farm; a trucking business; and an active personal and professional life. I have been truly blessed, and I have enjoyed every minute of this journey. It has been extremely rewarding.

7:50

I still very much appreciate the community of Red Deer and the willingness they show to honour and respect all, whether it is the immigrant, the mentally or physically challenged, the single mom, someone of a different faith or culture, the addicted, the homeless, and I could go on and on. Everyone, no matter who they are, can find a caring heart and an open hand of assistance in Red Deer. This is why I truly love the people in the city of Red Deer, and I am most humbled and honoured to be their provincial representative and also to be only the second female Minister of Education in 114 years of Alberta's history.

As MLA for Red Deer-North and Minister of Education I am committed to ensuring that every human being is valued and cared for. I was recently asked what my definition of inclusion is. My definition of true inclusion is when we as a human society can remove all labels and barriers, when we can look across the room at each other and no longer see the colour of skin, the gender, the sexual orientation, the religion, the disability, the nationality, immigrant or refugee, born or unborn, the very young to the very old, and so on. Rather, let us see that we are all brothers and sisters united in humanity and then treat each other with genuine love, care, and compassion.



In closing, I would like to quote one of my favourite Disney movie song lyrics from *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*:

God help the outcasts  
Hungry from birth  
Show them the mercy  
They don't find on earth  
God help my people  
We look to You, still  
God help the outcasts  
Or nobody will . . .  
I ask for nothing  
I can get by  
But I know so many  
Less lucky than I  
Please help my people  
The poor and downtrod  
I thought we all were  
The children of God  
God help the outcasts  
[The] children of God

I truly believe that we are all outcasts in one way or another, and I look forward to serving the people of north Red Deer with honesty and integrity and especially with great care and compassion for all. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, before we head to 29(2)(a), I'd just like to acknowledge the presence of Mr. Darren LaGrange in the gallery this evening. I believe that he is the husband of the hon. minister. If you'll welcome him to the Legislative Assembly.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available for questions and comments if anyone would like to bring some. I see the Member for Cardston-Siksika rising.

**Mr. Schow:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the Minister of Education for her moving remarks. Clearly, family has played a massive role in your life, and I listened with great interest as you discussed your brother. I was hoping that maybe you could elaborate on your experience with family and how you intend on helping families in your ministry and as an MLA moving forward and how your experience will influence you in your role.

**Member LaGrange:** Well, thank you for the question. I've always been very blessed to have wonderful family support, and I really feel in my new role as Minister of Education that I can extend that love and care to all children. I look at the 700,000-plus children that are in education from K to 12, and I just look at them as if they were my children. What can we do to support those families? There are so many disadvantaged young people out there that need our support, our love, our care, and our attention. Anything that we can do as a society and as an education system to give them the leg up that, as I said, my own father didn't have – my mother went to a grade 6 education. I was the first female in the family to have even gone into postsecondary, so I just want to see that for all children and to really remove those barriers of labels. If we can remove those labels and really help each child to develop to their full potential, then we will be doing a great service to our community and to our families.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Are there other members with questions or comments with respect to 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there other members wishing to speak to the throne speech? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

**Member Irwin:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise this evening for my maiden speech. Before I begin, I'd like to acknowledge that we are here on Treaty 6 territory. This land acknowledgement is something that means a lot to me. My riding of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood is home to a diverse First Nations and Métis population, in fact, the largest urban indigenous community in this province.

I want to thank my family, my friends, and my supporters for everything they did to help get me here.

I want to thank Brian Mason. Brian has had an absolutely incredible political career spanning 30 years. I always tell people that he's a legend, and, trust me, after years of knocking on doors in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, I've lost count of how many people share their love of Brian. It never failed that when I was out knocking on doors, someone would say: "I love Brian. He was a bus driver, you know." He's left a lasting legacy and a very high bar to meet.

With Brian, I must also point out Pam Barrett and Ray Martin, two incredible representatives in the Highlands and Norwood neighbourhoods, who were principled, passionate leaders for our communities.

I'd also like to thank our leader, the Member for Edmonton-Strathcona. She's been a true fighter, and I'm so proud to be a part of her team, surrounded by incredible colleagues.

Most importantly, I want to thank the voters of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood for electing me to serve them here in the Legislature. It's a great honour that they put their trust in me to represent them. I ran for office because I wanted to better serve my community, and I wanted to make life better for my neighbours and their families. Strong communities are exactly what makes Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood a great place to live. Our riding is home to so many amazing schools, strong neighbourhood community leagues, local businesses, service organizations, and cultural groups.

It's an area made up of vibrant neighbourhoods that I'm so privileged to represent. There's Highlands and Bellevue, both neighbourhoods that are committed to preserving their history and building a sense of belonging through community events. There's the central neighbourhoods of Boyle Street and McCauley, with some of the most committed local citizens and home to many service and community organizations. There's Newton and Montrose, a mix of long-time homeowners and new families, and a few neat hidden gems in the form of businesses tucked away. There's Alberta Avenue, formerly known as the Norwood neighbourhood, with its main area of 118 Avenue, where you'll find local businesses with a vibrant cultural food and art scene. It's a community that's been really focused on revitalization thanks to the efforts of community members, and they're seeing the rewards of their hard work.

There's Eastwood, Delton, and Elmwood Park, just south of the Yellowhead, communities with a growing sense of neighbourliness as they see new residents moving in. In the south of the riding you'll find Riverdale, a beautiful river valley neighbourhood located just east of downtown with a deep commitment to the environment, progressive values, and one of the strongest networks of local community and co-operation that you'll find in Edmonton. Not to be outdone for beautiful views, there's Virginia Park in Cromdale, the Viewpoint neighbourhood, just north along our river valley, historical neighbourhoods with strong community connections. There's my home community of Parkdale, where my friends and neighbours are committed to democracy and community involvement. When election time came around, they were the only neighbourhood that stepped up to host a community forum and to encourage civic participation.



Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood is a diverse riding, one of the most diverse in our province. I'm proud to say that we're a welcoming constituency made up of many cultures and communities living together as friends and neighbours. It's comprised of young families and of many seniors as well. We're home to a vibrant indigenous population. We've got incredible organizations doing such important work here: Bent Arrow, Ambrose Place, the Métis seniors' lodge, Renaissance place, the Native Friendship Centre, Ben Calf Robe Society, and many more. I've met many community members who are committed to addressing systemic issues within the community, and I've joined marches and rallies with hundreds of others in support of addressing the issue of missing and murdered indigenous community members. I know that we've got a lot of work to do to address this issue, particularly with the 231 calls for justice that were just released, and to continue in our journey of reconciliation. It's going to take commitment, and it's going to take real action.

Over a quarter of the folks in our riding are new Canadians who were born outside of Canada, and I'm so proud to have met a lot of friends from Somalia, Eritrea, Portugal, Brazil, Vietnam, and the list goes on. I think of the many folks I've met in our neighbourhoods from various cultural communities, including the Muslim community, and I wish them Eid Mubarak as we mark the end of Ramadan. I've shared with community members that I'm committed to continuing to fight racism and Islamophobia because we cannot allow hatred and intolerance to grow in this province. The province that I know and I love is kind, is open, is accepting, and we must ensure it remains that way.

8:00

Many in the LGBTQ community live in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, and I'm a proud community member. Twice during the campaign I received messages from folks that I'd met at the doors, who reached out to me after I knocked on their door to say how proud they are to support someone who's a member of the community. One young woman shared that she never thought she'd see someone like her in politics. That means a lot to me, and it shows that representation truly does matter. But this is a community which, sadly, this government continues to disrespect and ignore in its actions.

While my riding is a fantastic place to live and to work, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood is also an area with its share of challenges. As I said, working to address these challenges is why I ran for office, challenges like tackling poverty. We are a riding with some of the highest child poverty rates in the country. I was so proud to see child poverty rates reduced by half under our government, but this government's throne speech does nothing to continue that important work of reducing child poverty.

During the campaign I met many families who shared with me just how life changing the \$25-a-day child care program has been for them and for their children. One woman shared with me that she's been able to go back to work, which has made a world of difference. Her story of how beneficial affordable child care has been to her family is a story of countless other families. We know that when families have access to affordable, quality child care, the statistics show that women are able to re-enter the workforce and that family incomes are boosted, and we also know that child poverty rates are reduced. Offering affordable child care to families is, of course, just one way to decrease child poverty, but it's a crucial one.

Many of my constituents rely on public transit, affordable housing, disability supports, and many other services and programs to make ends meet. I heard first-hand from constituents about their

struggles as I knocked on doors in the riding. I met one young mother who shared with me how important our government's minimum wage increase was to her. I knew that the evidence showed that a \$15 minimum wage is good for the economy, has a positive impact on women, single parents, people who are working more than two full-time jobs but struggling to put food on the table and pay their rent. This woman shared with me her story, and that really made it hit home. She makes minimum wage. She's raising a daughter. She shared that that minimum wage hike meant that she could afford a bus pass on a regular basis and that most of her prescription medications would be covered so that she wouldn't have to do without. She's of course just one person, but her story, again, is that of many. I'm committed to fighting for her and for all those who deserve a right to a fair wage that affords them the dignity they deserve. But I worry about my constituents like her because I see nothing in the throne speech that will improve her life or that of her neighbours.

We also see challenges like improving public health care and education. As a former teacher the education of our young people is obviously something that's really important to me. Growing up in the town of Barrhead, Alberta, I was lucky to have great teachers who inspired me to be a teacher myself. It's so critical that we invest in education and ensure that the funding goes to where it's needed most: mental health supports, proper resources for teachers and educational assistants. I know what it was like as a teacher to feel like there were never enough resources to meet my students' needs. We must prioritize our province's young people so that they get the best start in life, and we need to protect our students to ensure that no child feels unsafe in our schools.

My constituents enjoy fantastic local schools and health care services, yet again I see nothing in this throne speech to improve on those. All I see is the same Conservative rhetoric about efficiencies, cuts, red tape, and privatization, which history has shown will do nothing to support the public education and health care that my constituents need. With this reckless approach this government is not just putting our health care and education at risk but our environment as well. So many of my constituents, young and old, shared with me just how important protecting our environment is. They recognize that we have a climate crisis, and they know that it's on us to take action. If not us, who?

This government's throne speech and legislative agenda does very little or nothing to meet the needs of the many people and communities that make up Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. It does nothing to create good, clean jobs or help those who are struggling now. It does nothing to help them prepare for the future that lies ahead. It does nothing to preserve our Earth for future generations. My constituents deserve better than this. All Albertans deserve better than this.

My constituents elected me to represent Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood in this Assembly. They elected me to work to make life better for them, and I'm committed to doing just that, which is why I will continue to fight for this government to do better. That's why I can't in good conscience support this government's throne speech.

While I spoke about the challenges that I'm ready to take on in my riding, there's so much to be proud about. Each day, even when it's tough, I'll remind myself how lucky I am to be here in this building representing the incredible people of Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Thank you, colleagues, and thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** I see the hon. Member for Lethbridge-West rising with a question or comment under Standing Order 29(2)(a).



**Ms Phillips:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's wonderful to hear from the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. It was one of my first campaigns, too, in 2000, 19 years ago, when I worked on the by-election for Brian Mason. At that time I was also his STEP student. So that gives us an idea of how long I've been doing this. I say this not to share how old I am but to discuss the deep roots that the New Democrats, the social democratic movement, in particular the labour movement, has in the Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood area.

People in that area have for a long time struggled for a better life for people, Mr. Speaker, and that is one of the reasons why, having been around that struggle for some time, I myself am so proud to see that tradition of representation continued through this member's service to her constituents in Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. I wonder if the member might want to talk a little bit about some of the folks that we know who have been around for a long time, for years and years, contributing to that community and to the progressive vibrancy that we see in that particular area of Edmonton and how some of those constituents inform her work and inspire her work.

Thank you.

**Member Irwin:** Great question. Thank you for that. Honestly, you're putting me on the spot here. I'm afraid to name folks independently because I know I'll miss some. The member is right. I mean, as I said, I'm just so honoured and humbled to be able to represent an area where folks are fighters. Right? People have been around the party for a very long time and have been just around the movement, even if they're not affiliated with the NDP. There are so many people who are just fighting for a better life every day and so many people – this is where I hate to name names – who do it without credit. That's something I notice day in, day out – right? – without recognition.

I was just at my community league AGM, Parkdale-Cromdale. We recognized somebody who'd been volunteering, doing incredible work for 30 years. She was mad at us because she didn't want an award. Her name is Josefine.

**Ms Hoffman:** Now it's in *Hansard*.

**Member Irwin:** Yeah. That's right, Josefine, if you're watching.

For every Josefine there are so many others throughout Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood. Like I said, it's just an absolute honour. I also feel – I mentioned Brian Mason – a burden, for sure, you know, having to try to carry on that legacy, but having the support of such incredible colleagues really helps me to know that I can hopefully do the community a service.

Thank you for the question.

**The Speaker:** Are there others who have questions or comments for the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Hon. colleagues, it's truly an honour to stand here today at the Legislative Assembly of Alberta as a representative of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville. I want to express my sincerest gratitude to my constituents for placing their trust in me as their government begins enacting a plan to reignite our economy and get Albertans back to work.

I would like to take a moment to express gratitude for those that represented the constituents of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville before me: former Premier Ed Stelmach, a man whose leadership earned him respect and whose kindness and warmth were ever-

endearing qualities; former MLA Fenske, who worked hard to represent the riding; and former MLA Littlewood, who passed the baton on to me as our UCP government embarks on a new era of Conservative leadership in this province, an era which will also be etched into the proud history of our Legislature. Indeed, the corridors of this building, steeped in the history of our province, are an inspiring reminder of the leadership that shaped Alberta. It's deeply humbling, standing in the presence of such history, and it's an inspiring reminder of what a great honour and responsibility it is to be elected to this body.

**8:10**

The history that lives within these walls is inextricably bound to the lives and stories of all Albertans. The paths that brought people to this province and the stories accompanying them are all diverse, but the unifying thread that connects us all, whether we're new to the province or our roots stretch back to Alberta's earliest days, is the sense of community, hard work, and opportunity that forged and continues to shape our collective identity. Diversity truly is our strength, especially when we strive towards common goals, galvanized by a shared sense of values.

My own family traces our roots to the early Ukrainian settlers. In 1911 at the age of 17 my grandfather, Mike Huley, left Bukovina, a country predominantly populated by ethnic Ukrainians despite being ruled by Austria's autocratic Hapsburg monarchy. Like so many others, my grandfather sought freedom and opportunity in Canada, emigrating on the word of abundant land and hope for a better future. His timing was fortunate. Just a few years earlier Europe plunged into the dark misery of war. Invading Russian armies were driven out of Bukovina in 1917 as Russia itself was gripped by a revolution, but this turned out to be a temporary reprieve from Russian ambition. By the 1940s my grandfather's homeland was swept into the tyranny and bloodshed of the Stalinist rule. The options for his countrymen were profound and limited: join the Soviet army or languish in a Siberian gulag. Either way the outcome for many was death.

My grandfather settled in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan, and took a job with the railway. The arc of the story here in Alberta began with an invitation to a wedding in Chipman in 1915. He came, he saw, and he never left. Imagine that, Mr. Speaker, following a wedding invitation west to Alberta and deciding to never leave. Even then he saw that the Alberta advantage was a potent one. In 1929 my grandfather met my grandmother Anna, a descendant of Ivan Pylypiw, one of the first Ukrainian settlers in Canada. Ivan Pylypiw's early passage across the prairies formed the vanguard of Ukrainian settlement in Alberta. My grandparents had nine children, one of whom was my mother, who taught me that there is good in everyone and that everyone has something to contribute.

My paternal grandfather, Walter St. George Armstrong, was born in Milk River, and he settled in Westlock, where he was a postmaster and a justice. He and my grandmother Clara had four children, one of whom was my father, Jack. My dad left school in grade 8 and took a job to pay his sister's way through nursing school. When he came of age, he was inspired to join the RCMP but found out he was an inch too short. Fortunately, the height of a man's character is not measured in inches. He was always working hard and made sure we were brought up right. My father's mantra was the importance of self-reliance. Like the great American intellectual Ralph Waldo Emerson, my father believed that self-sufficiency gives one the freedom to discover one's true self and attain true independence. It was the example he set for me growing up and reinforced as parting advice when I left home to forge my own path.



I've lived in Vegreville since the 1970s. It's where I raised my family, built my business, which I've owned for over 30 years. Self-reliance got me there, but growth and continued success were possible because of the support of my siblings, family, friends, and community.

I'm grateful to my wonderful husband, Joe, my two amazing children, Joseph and Jacklyn. Their support through my journey here, throughout the campaign and now as a member of this House, has been an honour.

When I entered the political fray, the part I loved most was visiting small communities in my riding because time and time again I saw the examples of the familiar spirit of Albertans supporting one another, each fiercely proud of the communities they believed in. Over the past few years their optimism has been tested by the stress of one of the deepest recessions ever faced by this province. Communities like the village of Andrew, the town of Bruderheim have uncertain futures. As economic woes deepen, people are moving away, and as the resources deplete, many towns and villages are one infrastructure disaster away from insolvency. It's not just these communities at risk, Mr. Speaker; it's a way of rural life that is the core of our identities as Albertans, an identity we must fight to protect.

Central to rural life is a strong agricultural sector. With the rising cost of everything thanks to the carbon taxes designed in the halls of academia without common-sense input from folks on the family farm, our farmers are having an even harder time making ends meet. Add this to the challenges of looming trade wars and geopolitical disputes beyond the scope of provincial politics, and the situation is serious. I'm honoured, Mr. Speaker, to be the voice for these people, channelling their concerns into the Legislative Assembly, ensuring that they're heard and understood.

For years now it has been a common refrain, not just in my riding but across the province, that with the collapse of oil and gas, job losses have been legion. The future of building a pipeline coupled with unhelpful federal policy has only exacerbated the challenges we face. People are desperate, and they desperately need government focused on fighting for their interests. I committed long ago to never stop fighting for our oil and gas and agricultural industries and these people whose livelihoods depend on it, a commitment I reaffirm today as the MLA for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

My riding is also home to Alberta's Industrial Heartland, one of the most attractive locations for chemical, petrochemical, oil and gas investment and one of Canada's largest hydrocarbon processing regions. The companies invested in our Industrial Heartland operate on a global scale, providing fuels, fertilizers, power, petrochemicals, and more to consumers world-wide. The importance of the Industrial Heartland and its contribution to Canada's economic engine can't be overstated, and it is my great privilege to represent this industry and constituents whose wealth and prosperity rely on it.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to leave my colleagues, on both sides of the aisle, with a few thoughts on the importance of our democratic traditions, which we are now tasked with upholding. Any given news source on any given day reminds us that democracy everywhere is at risk. The traditions and norms and the checks and balances designed to protect them are facing unprecedented challenges.

Much of the problem traces to the tone of our political discourse. Too often people view their political opponents as enemies and their perspectives as illegitimate. This approach cannot sustain healthy democracy for it undermines what Harvard historian James

Kloppenber identifies as three foundational pillars that make such democracy possible.

First, deliberation. Achieving a conclusion, even a provisional one, is the result of stating positions, arguing the nuance of agreed-upon facts, and reaching compromise as opposed to proclamations from on high. It must emerge through interaction by people with different points of view.

The second is pluralism. Unless we see diversity as strength instead of weakness, we are unlikely to value freedom or equality because a lack of pluralism drives us to exclude ones from the body politic who are not like us.

Finally, the ethic of reciprocity. This is the ability to see things from the point of view of the person who disagrees with you. To try on a way of looking at the world and to do it imaginatively, enter the ways of thinking and being embraced by those who oppose us on political, cultural, or social issues. The ethic of reciprocity allows us to understand our opposition, who we need not always agree with, but in understanding their thoughts and motivations, we can locate common ground. We should be confident to trust them to do the right thing, especially when it comes in the form of difficult compromise. The ethic of reciprocity is the very foundation of democracy, and without democracy it cannot exist.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member. I feel like you may have missed an opportunity to invite members to the world's largest sausage, the world's largest perogy, or the world's largest pysanka, but I'm sure you'll make up for that in the future.

Any members under Standing Order 29(2)(a) that would like to ask a question or comment of the member? The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Lac La Biche.

**Ms Goodridge:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for your fantastic statement. It was wonderful to hear about some of your family's earlier times.

To elaborate on what the Speaker has previously said, could you share with this Assembly some of the other large items that the Speaker might have forgotten that exist within your riding?

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** Thank you, hon. member. In my riding I'm very blessed to have the largest kubasa and the largest pysanka. The largest pysanka was actually built in 1974 in recognition of the visit of the Musical Ride to Vegreville. I'm also proud to have the largest mallard duck in my riding. That's in Andrew.

You've put me on the spot here.

8:20

**Ms Goodridge:** Mushrooms in Vilna.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** No. That's not in mine.

**An Hon. Member:** It's just around the corner.

**Ms Armstrong-Homeniuk:** It's just around the corner from me.

In every particular town around my area there are many, many great travel areas. There are great places to go. For example, in Mundare, if you go to check out the sausage, they have a great grotto there. There are wonderful places in my riding, all the way from Bruderheim to Mannville.

**The Speaker:** Any other questions or comments for the hon. member?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow and Minister of Advanced Education.



**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great privilege for me to stand here today and deliver my maiden speech in this Assembly. I am truly honoured that the residents of Calgary-Bow put their trust in me and in our party. They did so with hope in their hearts. Fundamentally, they chose to reject the politics of fear. Rather, they decided to embrace the politics of hope.

Before I begin, I wanted to take a moment to recognize and thank those who made my journey to this place possible. First and foremost, I want to acknowledge and thank my incredible wife. I am forever grateful that God brought her into my life and filled my heart with love and happiness. Her unwavering love and constant encouragement drove me to keep fighting when times were tough, and I am forever grateful.

I also want to acknowledge my dedicated and hard-working campaign team, who gave their time and efforts in pursuit of a better Alberta. Thank you, all, for believing in me and for believing in a stronger province.

Lastly, I also want to thank the residents of Calgary-Bow who put their trust in me. I wanted to let them know, all residents of Calgary-Bow, whether you voted for me or not, that I will be a strong representative for all of you. Earning your support is truly an honour, and I commit to being a transparent and accountable representative to you all.

As I stand here, I also want to acknowledge two very important and specific individuals who've allowed me to be here. Those two individuals, of course, are my parents. My father, Mr. Speaker, is a carpenter by trade. He was born and raised in a small village on the Mediterranean island of Cyprus. He grew up in a very small and cramped house with very few modern amenities. At a young age he travelled around the region finding whatever work he could. But he wanted more, and filled with courage and optimism, he made his way to a place of opportunity. That place was Canada.

While working here, my father met my mother. She was also born in Cyprus and was raised in a growing but small seaside town. In her household, Mr. Speaker, they didn't have very much, and singing Christmas carols in the bitter cold was how she got her spending money. After losing her mother at a young age, her father decided it was time for a change, and the entire family relocated here to Canada. To deal with this change, my mother was unable to complete her schooling, and she waited tables to bring in a few extra dollars for the family. It was during one of her evening shifts when she met my father.

After marrying, they moved to Calgary to start their new life together. Like many other Greek immigrants, they opened a restaurant and got straight to work. They did so by emptying the college savings fund and remortgaging their home. They put everything on the line and opened a small restaurant in Calgary on Elbow Drive and began their new future. They were guided, Mr. Speaker, by a belief that hard work and perseverance were enough to shatter any barrier to success, and they were right.

Forty-five years later they are still in the restaurant industry, and while a lot has changed, some things have not. They continue to open and close their restaurant, Mr. Speaker, every single day, but now they can reflect back on a lifetime of accomplishment. They built their dream home, they travelled the world, and most important to them they gave their three children educational opportunities that they did not have. My sister found success in the energy sector, my brother became a pilot, and I pursued public service. As you can see, their determination gave my siblings and I new opportunities. It allowed me to open new doors. Their foundational success has allowed me to stand in this Assembly today.

Mr. Speaker, this story is not unique. It's one that we've heard before. That's because it's the story of Alberta. The story of Alberta

has always been one of hope and opportunity, where anyone can find success and prosperity, just as Alberta's First Peoples did over 8,000 years ago when the ancestors of today's First Nations communities arrived in the area. As the first inhabitants they found a world rich in natural resources, which provided abundant food, clothing, and shelter. Pioneers and new immigrants persevered through harsh environments to build towns, cities, and the foundations of a vibrant national economy. The Fathers of Confederation established a new nation across this great land, which, in my opinion, is the greatest country on earth.

As I took my seat in this Assembly, my parents and wife watched from the gallery. So, too, did my two beautiful daughters. As I looked up, I was reminded of why I fought to come to this place. I did so, Mr. Speaker, because I wanted to ensure that my two girls and all future generations inherit a better province. I am a passionate Albertan and a proud Calgarian, and this place is worth fighting for.

Mr. Speaker, I've had the fortune of travelling around the world and visiting places like Cambodia, Japan, South Africa, London, Austria, Thailand, and more, and I can say, without reservation, that Alberta is the best place on earth. I consider myself a son of the Alberta advantage, and I was concerned that the province that rewarded hard work and entrepreneurship was being lost. I never planned on running for office. I was preoccupied with advancing my career, being a good dad and a loving husband. But like many Albertans, I began to see my neighbours lose their jobs, I started to see friends and family struggling to pay their bills, and I started to see businesses closing down. I knew it was time to take action, and that's when I decided to run.

While on the campaign trail my resolve to improve my province strengthened as I heard more stories of Albertans who were suffering, like Denise in Coach Hill, who choked back tears because she was unsure if she was going to be able to make next month's mortgage payment; like Andy in Bowness, whose business was being crushed by the weight of the NDP's carbon tax; and like Theresa in Wildwood, who sold her car and her furniture just to keep a roof over her head. These stories are always on my mind, and as I was sworn in, I felt the weight of responsibility settle on my shoulders. Denise, Andy, Theresa, and hundreds of thousands of other Albertans are counting on us, Mr. Speaker, and we can't let them down.

What inspired me, though, is that none of the people I spoke to looked for a handout. They are proud Albertans, after all. All they want, Mr. Speaker, is the opportunity to work. That is why on April 16 we witnessed a historic election, where a record number of people voted. They sought a solution that would once again open the doors of opportunity. On April 16 they put their trust in our United Conservative Party, and I am incredibly humbled by the trust that has been given to my colleagues and I. They also chose a bold and ambitious man to open the doors of opportunity again, and that man is Jason Kenney. I am proud to stand with him in creating a better province.

A better province is one without a carbon tax. A single mom should not be punished for driving her kids to school, pensioners should not be forced to buy less groceries, and hard-working Alberta families should not pay more to heat their homes in the dead of winter.

**8:30**

A better province is one where a strong economy helps get Albertans back to work. Unemployment is not just a statistical figure; it's about human beings, their families, and their futures. That is why our government will be obsessed with job creation. We will fight to give Albertans the dignity of meaningful work, and



with that bring hope, prosperity, and happiness to the hundreds of thousands of unemployed Albertans.

A better province, Mr. Speaker, is one where a better health care system is possible. Too many Albertans are suffering in pain as their condition deteriorates while they wait for treatment, and that is simply unacceptable.

Colleagues, as we begin our work to create a better province, we must do so with humility. We must reject the politics of fear and embrace the politics of hope. As United Conservatives we don't care who you love or what god you worship; we care about how hard you will work and how you will help contribute to a stronger Alberta. Together we can renew Alberta as a place of hope and opportunity. We will build a better Alberta for the next generation, and together we will reignite the spirit of Alberta, a spirit that drew my parents here and gave them success and opportunity, where young, new Canadians with limited opportunities can open a restaurant and 47 years later their son can be elected to the Alberta Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans deserve the opportunity to create a better future for themselves, and I will dedicate my efforts in this Assembly to ensure all Albertans have the same opportunities that my parents had. Thank you very much.

**The Speaker:** I'd just like to thank the hon. member for his comments. I would just like to remind him that no matter what the circumstances are, it would be wildly inappropriate to use the name of a Member of the Legislative Assembly. There are a number of ways that you could refer to the Premier or the Member for Calgary-Lougheed. I think you catch my drift.

I might just add, though, that I've had the pleasure of meeting your parents, and they do have a very firm grasp on enjoyable Greek food. So I hope that they will be happy to share with everyone.

I see the Member for Edmonton-Glenora is very, very keen to ask a question or make a comment.

**Ms Hoffman:** Yeah. And I'll keep my question very short. I believe at the beginning of the statement there was a reference to indigenous people arriving here, and I was just wondering if the hon. member could elaborate on what exactly he's saying about the history of First Nations in this territory.

**The Speaker:** Would the hon. member like to comment?

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Sure. My comment is recognizing that Alberta has always been a place of hope and opportunity and that recognizing all different peoples who have made Alberta home and have chosen Alberta as their place of residence and all those who have come before, including the first inhabitants and the first peoples of this land – that they were successful in finding hope and prosperity in a variety of different ways. My comment is just recognizing that going back 8,000 years and recognizing the long history of this province, all people have enjoyed opportunities for prosperity and success in one way or another.

**The Speaker:** Thank you to the hon. member.

I believe the Member for Calgary-Currie has a question. No. My apologies.

The minister for status of women and multiculturalism.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Through you, I just wanted to mention to the member how much the words that he spoke about the people that he met, about what was happening with our economy, the impacts on them – as having been elected to the Official Opposition in the past and having had the privilege of having an office and meeting with people consistently, the things

that we heard in our offices were heartbreaking. Many, many people walking into our offices telling of hardship and the difficulties of how it was that they were going to be able to continue to take care of their families, to choose sometimes between feeding their families and heat, to choose between whether to keep the family farm or to sell it off in order to be able to downsize because they're not able to keep things going because of policy decisions.

I was wondering if the member could elaborate on some of the discussions that he had with respect to the incredible Albertans he met out on the doorsteps and maybe just elaborate a little bit more on some of those stories because I think it impacts all of us very deeply here.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow and Minister of Advanced Education.

**Mr. Nicolaides:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. There were, you know, apart from the three individuals that I made specific reference to, countless stories of individuals who were struggling to pay their bills and struggling to make ends meet. As I mentioned, it gave me continued resolve because there's the strong realization that what we do here has significant impacts on people's lives. As I mentioned, the thing that really stood out the most for me was the fact that nobody was really asking for a handout. Nobody was looking for something to be provided to them. The only thing that they were looking for was an opportunity to put their skill set to work.

I didn't mention them in my statement, but my immediate neighbour has been out of work for about four years and is unsure what the future will hold for him. He put his house on the market as a last-ditch effort and, after 90 days, didn't get a single offer, had to take it off the market. He's really unsure of what the future is going to hold for him. My other neighbours had to move back to Nova Scotia and leave the province entirely. It's truly been a challenging time.

I, again, recognize and keep those thoughts and keep those stories at the forefront as much as possible. We have an opportunity to improve the situation for hundreds of thousands of Albertans, and we have to always remember that, and we have to always be guided by that recollection, that the decisions that we make here can have a very meaningful impact on the future of people's lives.

**The Speaker:** Well, thank you to the hon. member.

I see the Member for Edmonton-Meadows is rising.

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

**Mr. Deol:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my deepest honour and privilege to rise and deliver my maiden speech in the 30th Legislative Assembly of Alberta. Before I start, I would like to congratulate all the elected members of this House, who were chosen to represent the people of their respective constituencies. I would also like to acknowledge that we are all here today on the traditional territory of Treaty 6, and I want to recognize the Métis people, who also share a deep connection with this land. Let me also offer my warmest wishes to all my Muslim brothers and sisters, who have been fasting for the holy one month of Ramadan and are celebrating Eid al-Fitr, and to the Filipino community, who are celebrating this June as Filipino Heritage Month. This month allows us to celebrate with and learn more about the Filipino community in Canada and recognize the valuable role they play in creating an open and diverse society.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to start sharing a little bit about my family and my journey to this House. I was born in a village named Haripur in the beautiful state of Punjab in India. I inherited an



interest in political activism from my family. Our grandfather, a great pioneer, became one of the first priests at a Sikh temple in Stockholm, U.S.A. in 1908. I grew up watching my uncle who was vigorously active in politics as a key leader during the panchayat movement in 1959. My mother was elected as a member of the village's panchayat, a village council, and she became one of the first female members of the panchayat in our village in the '70s.

8:40

During my college years I was a part of numerous student associations and was actively involved in defending students' rights regarding affordable education and political activism. I also worked closely with youth organizations, which, after years of advocacy and struggle, helped change the voting age from 25 to 18 years in India, an important step forward for the rights of young people. Following this work as a young person I came to Canada in 1993. Postarrival I got the opportunity to join the NDP and got a chance to be a part of the election campaign as a young worker the very same year.

Mr. Speaker, I've had the honour to live with my wife, two sons, and three aging parents and run a small insurance business in this community for 26 years. During these past years I've had the privilege to work with a number of community organizations. I am proud to be a part of organizations to promote multiculturalism, literature, art, ethnic media platforms, volunteerism, leadership in our youth, theatre, sports games, and tournament activities. I was also able to serve on the board of the Edmonton Taxi Drivers Association. My core values are defending the rights of workers, better care for seniors, strong public health care, affordable child care, and affordable and quality education for all.

Prior to getting elected and during the last one and a half months, I have had the honour to meet many people from all walks of life. These people either work or live in Edmonton-Meadows. I am blessed to be able to live and be part of such a great and diverse community. My riding of Edmonton-Meadows was created in 2017, after the recommended renaming from Edmonton-Mill Creek. With a population of over 50,000 and nearly 30,000 electors in it, it is a vibrant and strong community. Edmonton-Meadows is one of the ridings in the south side of Edmonton where a large number of permanent residents and new immigrants are moving in to start their new lives, build their families and loved ones, and call Edmonton-Meadows their home. Edmonton-Meadows is a riding which is truly an example of multiculturalism in Canada as immigrants from different ethnicities around the globe, predominantly from south Asia, the Philippines, Somalia, Latin America, and many more, continue to build a strong sense of community. As the representative for this community I look forward to being a strong voice for them in this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, parents have raised concerns about the need for a new high school in our community. There is a need for funding our education system so that we can hire new teachers for the increasing number of new students coming to schools this fall. Due to the shortage of funding, courses are already being transferred from our schools, and people are worried and angry.

People have also expressed concerns in regard to their future and, as a whole, Alberta's future. My constituents want to know if there will be enough resources for the children with special needs and affordable daycare for all the hard-working parents under the policies laid down by the new government.

Mr. Speaker, the Grey Nuns hospital was built more than three decades ago in southeast Edmonton. Since then the community has grown substantially. We still have only one hospital in southeast Edmonton to handle the growing pressure in the south side. We need a new hospital in the south side to release the pressure from

the Grey Nuns so that patients have better access to health services in south Edmonton.

My riding has a new recreation centre where people from all walks of life come by the thousands to take in its benefits. This facility is already falling short due to the growing population in the area.

Mr. Speaker, my community of Edmonton-Meadows needs sustainable funding for multiculturalism-related activities. It would help the major community organizations establish various multiculturalism activities that help build bridges between communities and be part of the larger Canadian mosaic.

Mr. Speaker, for me, this journey from playing in the dirt roads and streets of my village back in India as a young child to a member of the Alberta Legislature has been a great honour. On this very day I remember my uncle and aunts who were always proud of me for my social and political activism but are not with us today. I'm also grateful for our elders, seniors who are still with us today and those who have gone before us, that have laid out a great platform for us with their contributions to our society and gave us an identity, who we are and what we can do to make this place better for all. I remember my role model, my mentor, my cousin, who passed away at the age of 64 last year, who helped establish student organizations in colleges and universities, youth organizations, and teachers' unions and who defended workers' rights and inspired political involvement in me and many more.

I thank my parents, my wife, my sons, my brothers, my sisters-in-law, my nieces, nephews, cousins, who encouraged me to step up for the common cause and to choose public service. I want to thank my core team, my friends with whom I had a chance to work together. From them I have learned a lot in those 26 years in Edmonton, which has helped shaped me into the kind of man that I am today. I am thankful to my volunteers, my donors, and my community, who helped me build a strong team in this election. All the hard work put in by my team during my campaign kept me motivated. I want to thank Dr. Raj Pannu for his political mentorship and our leader, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Strathcona, for her inspiring leadership, inspiring me and many more to stand up to protect our health care, strengthen our education system, and focus on making sure that those without a voice, those people that are left behind have real representation.

Finally, again I want to thank my constituents for putting their trust in me and giving me the new role and the great privilege to represent their voices in the Legislature. I am here to represent each and every constituent of Edmonton-Meadows, irrespective of their race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, or beliefs. It is an honour to represent the voice of the constituents of Edmonton-Meadows, and I look forward to being a strong voice in this Legislature to make life better for all Albertans. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Under 29(2)(a), are there any questions or comments? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Glenora.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for his lovely remarks. I was hoping he could maybe elaborate a little bit on the mentor that he mentioned, who passed away last year, as well as Dr. Pannu, who, I think, was the first person to ever say to me: get involved in politics. I know he inspired many of us in our party to engage more democratically. I thought that maybe he could talk about those two influences on his journey. Of course, if he wants to talk about his mom some more, I have no issue with that either.

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



**Mr. Deol:** Yeah. My cousin back home: first off, I hate to say that my cousin lost his mom when he was just two years old. He was raised and grew without having a mom. During his college life, you know, he emerged as a young role model to the students and the youth of his time. He was elected as the provincial leader to the student organizations back there. His organization actually subscribed him a duty in the district, where he showed an example by winning 12 college elections out of 13 colleges in that region.

8:50

From there, like, from student activism, he aspired to transition, as he completed his degrees in science and M.Ed, to being a teacher. It was not actually very easy to find a job in those days in India, and he kind of, you know, developed the idea to organize all those people, educated people. The organization was called the unemployed teachers' association. He put together that association, launched a struggle, and in years of struggle that association was able to help find, I think, 21,000 people a job. From those kinds of activities he emerged, as a very young person, as a role model to youth back home.

My mom's road to getting elected as a panchayat back in the '70s: I would say that she was young at that time, especially for our feudal society and feudal culture. We were still emerging and growing. For women to come, to step up for public service still was a stigma. I think a lot, you know, of the kind of privilege and – how would I say? – the views of not only my father and my family, who encouraged her to step up to that job. I'm so honoured and humbled to see that my mother was able to get that job.

This is the kind of the environment I got to grow up in and that helped me actually become an engaged citizen as I was growing up and be more involved politically and think, you know, further than my individual problems and look, as a broad vision, like, at the society as a whole. You can't do much if your society doesn't move forward as individuals. This was the kind of thinking I was able to develop due to all the circumstances I got back home.

Dr. Raj Pannu: I think everybody loved him. So you're talking not only this; you know, this is on the record. The former Premier of our province Ralph Klein once said to me, mentioned: "I may not have always agreed with what Dr. Raj Pannu says, but every time he stands up to say something, I just listen. I want to listen. It's amazing to listen to him." After retiring from active politics, it was our privilege – we had discussion forums in our community, and a number of organizations involved in that – to get the advantage of Dr. Raj Pannu. On a monthly basis we would have discussions.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Acadia and the Minister of Health stand.

**Mr. Shandro:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Congratulations to you on your election. While I have this opportunity, congratulations as well to the Member for Airdrie-East on her election and to the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills for his election as Speaker.

I'm very pleased to be able to rise today as the Member for Calgary-Acadia in this maiden speech. First, let me take a moment, Mr. Speaker, to thank the previous Member for Calgary-Acadia for her service in the previous four years, Ms Brandy Payne. I should note as well that Calgary-Acadia is a name which has existed only since 2012, but the constituency itself has a history dating back to 1971 under a different name, Calgary-Egmont. Unfortunately, the close similarity to the Calgary community of Edgemont was too confusing, and the constituency was renamed, which means that the history of being named after Egmont house or Fred Perceval, the 11th Earl of Egmont, is lost.

Calgary-Egmont and Calgary-Acadia have been represented since 1971, starting with Merv Leitch, a former Attorney General and minister of energy, who many credit as being the architect of section 33 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the notwithstanding clause. It was also represented by a former occupant of your chair, Speaker David Carter, as well as the former Minister of Advanced Education Denis Herard and Jonathan Denis, another former Attorney General. I'm proud, Mr. Speaker, to be included in the same company as these former members.

Mr. Speaker, I first became involved in politics in 1992. I was 16, and I bought a membership in a political party because, although I was only 16, I could vote. I could vote in the leadership of a party and, as a result, was one of 46,000 Albertans to put an X beside the name of Ralph Klein. Now I get to sit in this Assembly and sit at a desk which in its drawer has the signature of Premier Klein. It is very humbling.

I note as well that I'm not the first member of this Assembly with my last name. There was another, the first Ukrainian-Canadian to serve as an MLA in Alberta, Geedo's oldest brother.

Alberta is fortunate to have some 350,000 Albertans who officially count ourselves as people of Ukrainian descent. We were given the toughest land. When Sir Clifford Sifton opened the prairies to homesteaders at the turn of the last century, he chose to focus on what he called the men in sheepskin cloaks, including my great-grandfather, who came from the steppes of what was then known as Bukovina. The first wave came by the tens of thousands to the tough parkland area north of Battle River, where they had to clear trees and plow tough soil over those first years. My baba told me stories of surviving those first winters and that it was only possible through immense perseverance. That's the frontier spirit, which we need to renew as a province if we are once again to see a renewal of the Alberta advantage.

Geedo, Mr. Speaker, lived a tough life. When his mother passed and his father remarried, Geedo was invited to leave the home. That is to say, he was kicked out of the home at eight years of age. He was homeless and never again able to continue with his education, but he toiled for the rest of his life, as did my baba, to provide for my dad and my two uncles. Geedo ran a grain elevator and drove a school bus while my baba ran a school cafeteria.

Their hard work meant that although my dad grew up with little, he was given opportunity. He ended up being the first of his family to go to university, where he went on to become an otolaryngologist, described by some who knew him when he practised as a legend. When they got married at a young age, my mom worked to support my dad during med school. She was a flight attendant for Wardair. It was only through the grace and the hard work of my mom and dad, Mr. Speaker, that I'm able to stand here today.

My mother's family homesteaded in the Carstairs area, originally from Pennsylvania. I've been to the Pennsylvania monument in Gettysburg, and I've seen my grandfather's family listed with those who fought for Lincoln's Union during the Battle of Gettysburg. My grandfather's family from Indiana county in Pennsylvania were a last stop in the Underground Railroad. Early settlement of Scottish Presbyterians with their own history of persecution laid the grounds for vibrant antislavery sentiment in Pennsylvania, Mr. Speaker, in the decades before the Civil War. It's not possible to overstate the influence of my grandma and my baba and my mom. I was blessed with having such strong, loving, and supportive women in my life.

When I was campaigning, I was asked why I'm a conservative. My answer is that conservatism is the politics of gratitude, a respect and an admiration for the generations that came before us. With every vote I make in this Assembly, I will remember my parents



and my grandparents. I'll remember and respect all their hard work, that gave me this unique opportunity.

I was also asked on the campaign trail why I'm running, and that answer, Mr. Speaker, is my children, Phineas and Archer. I met my wife at the age of 15, and when people hear that, they ask what it's like to marry a high school sweetheart, but I have to correct them very quickly. I met her when I was 15, but it took me 16 years to convince her to go on a date with me. I'm blessed to be the husband of the fiercest, strongest, most capable person I know, the most competitive air hockey player I've ever met, my sushi-making, dogsledding, axe-throwing, karaoke-singing, bathroom-renovating wife. To her and to my two boys: I thank them for letting me be able to serve here in this Assembly. Those two boys are the reason I decided to run, to make sure that they have the same opportunities which my wife, Andrea, and I had when we grew up in this province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I find myself in the position of being a minister of the Crown, and I enter upon those arduous duties assigned to me with the deepest sense of the responsibilities they involve. I've been on the job now for one month, and I'll admit to being overwhelmed when I get to meet all the amazing men and women in our health care system who want to serve their fellow Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for this opportunity, and through you thank you to the fellow members here. I look forward to an opportunity, a productive four years over the next term in working with all these colleagues.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

9:00

**The Acting Speaker:** Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), are there any members with questions or comments?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak? I believe I see the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw and the Minister of Children's Services standing.

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour to rise in the House this evening and stand before you and my colleagues as a new member of this Assembly in this 30th Legislature of Alberta and to have the opportunity to respond to this government's plan as outlined by Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor in the Speech from the Throne.

Mr. Speaker, the last seven weeks since the election on April 16 have been nothing short of extraordinary. Stepping into this building and into this Chamber for the first time was absolutely incredible. Being sworn in alongside my colleagues, officially taking my seat in this Assembly on behalf of the people of Calgary-Shaw, and the next day hearing Her Honour deliver the Speech from the Throne: there was something about that moment where the promises we made during the campaign became more than a platform. It was our commitment being shared through the Queen's representative in our province that we as a government are here to do what we said we would do. Having been given the opportunity to come to work every day in this truly beautiful and storied building, experiencing the grandeur and the ceremony of the opening of a new Legislative Assembly: well, I am grateful for this privilege.

It's also surreal because while I had dreams and a passion for public service, I really didn't expect them to lead me here. Most importantly, Mr. Speaker – and I think you and all other members here today can relate – I am where I am today in part of because of where I've come from. Growing up in small-town Saskatchewan taught me many of the lessons that led me to this place: hard work, humility, honesty, good humour, and service, service to your neighbours and to your community, service to something larger

than yourself. These are the values I learned growing up, these are the values that led me to seek elected office, and they are the values that will continue to guide me for as long as I have the honour to sit as a Member of the Legislative Assembly. Like any good prairie kid, I know that springtime is the most important season, when the snow finally melts and seeding and calving are under way, when hope and optimism abound and we can see the promise of renewal unfolding around us.

That was the theme of this throne speech, and in many ways it was the theme of our spring election: renewal. Albertans clearly wanted change. Albertans wanted a government that would stand up and advocate for the things that matter to them, for economic growth, for job creation, for real support for our energy sector, and they wanted a government that would take Alberta back to its rightful place as a leader in Confederation. Albertans made their choice very clear. They chose renewal. They chose a positive vision set out in a platform of thoughtful and fully costed policies, policies that will benefit families, that will maintain and enhance public services, policies that will jump-start our economy.

Mr. Speaker, after four years of punishing tax increases on families and job creators, reckless overspending, and deficit budgets from an NDP government that increased our provincial debt, Albertans chose a new government that will return to fiscal management, get our financial House in order, and ensure that Alberta will be an appealing place, the best place to invest, to start a business, to raise a family, to build a life. That is the Alberta advantage. It's a recognition that the incredible natural resources we are blessed with, coupled with the ingenuity and entrepreneurial spirit of her people, make Alberta a truly special place, a place where everyone has the opportunity to succeed.

It's the reason my husband and I chose to move here. Like so many people from across Canada and around the world, we made a conscious choice to become Calgarians and to become Albertans, to raise our family in a place with amazing opportunity and potential. But here's the unfortunate thing, Mr. Speaker. There is a sad reality that those of us who grew up in Saskatchewan are all too familiar with, and it was a sad reality that Albertans experienced these past four years. Poor government policy has the ability to hamper opportunity and potential, dampen that entrepreneurial spirit, stunt economic growth, job loss, and people leaving this province. Then a vicious cycle sets in where governments, usually NDP governments, increase taxes, run deficits in order to maintain public services. Worst of all, Mr. Speaker, we began to lose hope and that optimism for the future.

But it doesn't have to be that way. My experience working for a pro-growth, pro-free enterprise government in another province showed me just that. Under a conservative government, Saskatchewan went from the place to be from to the place to be. When I saw that a new united, compassionate conservative movement in Alberta was coming together under strong and experienced leadership, I chose to get involved. Then, a little over a year ago, Mr. Speaker, when I saw that this United Conservative Party could present an alternative vision for our province, a vision for renewal, one that would get Alberta back on track, I chose to run to represent the people of Calgary-Shaw.

Every day since then has been a new adventure: not always easy, Mr. Speaker, but always rewarding. I am honoured to represent the people and the families of Calgary-Shaw in this Chamber, no matter how they voted. It is on their behalf that I will carry out my work in the months and years ahead. I want to mention that the boundaries have changed quite a bit since Calgary-Shaw was first created. Since this is my maiden speech in this Assembly, I do want to honour some of the members who came before me, those such as Jim Dinning and Cindy Ady, who advocated tirelessly for their



constituents and who certainly know the importance of fiscal responsibility and the difficult decisions needed to get there.

Calgary-Shaw includes Shawnessy, Somerset, Silverado, Chaparral, Walden, Legacy as well as the new developments of Yorkville and Belmont. I want to thank two very special constituents, Tasha Schindel and Karin Henderson, for leading a campaign that allowed me to meet with and hear from people in each of these south Calgary communities. It is a diverse riding with seniors, professionals, many young families, working families, families who rely on the energy industry to make their living, many from all over the world with different backgrounds, cultures, and faiths, and many of whom are Albertans by choice. Every single day I heard it over and over that we need to get the economy growing, we need jobs, we need to provide opportunities for people to provide for their families, and we need a government that will support our oil and gas sector and a government that will unequivocally and relentlessly fight to get pipelines built in this country.

But, Mr. Speaker, the constituents of Calgary-Shaw were not just concerned about the economy. They shared with me their concerns about the need for strong public services and infrastructure, that despite all the rhetoric many did not believe that the former government made things better for students or patients or front-line workers. Again and again I would hear concerns about the ideological approach to education, and I heard genuine concerns at the doors about why health care spending was increasing but that it was making no difference for patients. In fact, spending was going up and so too was the time it took to access important services. Those are challenging questions, and I know that the solutions are not simple. They require innovation, new perspectives, and frankly, in some cases, just some common sense. Hearing these questions and concerns every day drove home for me the gravity, the weight, and the responsibility of this role. It is a great honour to serve my constituents in this Assembly but also a solemn obligation and one that I do not take lightly.

As I said at the beginning, Mr. Speaker, I will draw on the lessons I learned growing up to guide me. I draw both strength and inspiration from my family. I was fortunate to have parents who encouraged my brother, sister, and I to be independent, to ask questions, to pursue knowledge in all of its forms, to do better, to be better, and to help those who need it most, to seek the truth wherever it might lead, and that taking responsibility for my actions matters. My grandparents on all sides believed in community involvement, but my grandma specifically would often remind me of how hard women fought to have a voice at the table and that we owe it to those who came before us to not just use that voice but use that voice for positive change and to make things better for those who will come after we're gone.

Mr. Speaker, in acknowledging those who have helped me get here today, I have to save my greatest thanks for my husband, Cole. I am so fortunate to have a partner in this life who shares a passion for politics, is one of the smartest people I know, and who is so incredibly supportive. Sometimes his support comes in a pretty straightforward manner. When I was wrestling with the decision about whether or not to pursue this path, I'd gone over it and over it and over it. Finally, he said that I either needed to run or just stop talking about it. I am very thankful for his encouragement, and in many ways his service and sacrifice is far greater than my own.

Mr. Speaker, that brings me to my children, William and Lauren. My son has been telling people that since his mom won the collection, she now works at the castle in Edmonton. While they don't yet know the sacrifice they are making for this province, they are absolutely the reason that I am here today. People certainly have

asked: how will I do it? How will I be an MLA, a minister in cabinet, and have two young children? But here's the plain truth, Mr. Speaker. I'm a working mom. I've always been a working mom, and like hundreds of thousands of other working parents in Alberta, it requires a lot of effort, a lot of help, and is not always an easy balance. In that I thank my colleagues for their ongoing support and confidence in me.

9:10

Ultimately, I didn't decide to seek elected office in spite of having two young children; I did it for my children. I do this work for my children. I hope to instill in them the importance of serving others, that if you see an opportunity and a need and you have something to offer, you ought to contribute. I know that nothing worth while comes without hard work and sacrifice, and I know my colleagues on both sides of this House will agree that there is absolutely no more important work we will do here than we do in an effort to leave things better for our children and all future generations.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to briefly thank and recognize a few of the leaders who I've had the privilege to know and to work with and who are true examples of servant leadership; first and foremost, our current Premier. The leader of our party and the person whose unwavering vision for a United Conservative movement is a key reason I chose to run for office. His work ethic is well known and unmatched. His efforts to reach out to diverse communities, grow our party, and unite our province are unrivalled. He is someone who has offered me and all members of our team guidance and encouragement as we embark on this journey as a new government. He has shown true leadership in staying the course, listening to Albertans, offering a positive approach and hope for the future of our province. I know he has Alberta's best interests at heart. I admire his example, and I appreciate his candour, his humour, and his friendship.

I'm thankful for the encouragement of other strong Conservative leaders like Rona Ambrose, an outstanding Albertan and a truly inspiring woman. I think often of the words she spoke just over a year ago about the ways that we as women all too often tell ourselves we aren't experienced enough or educated enough or accomplished enough to seek office. She had much to offer in the political process. At the time I was the mom of a four-month-old, and those words resonated with me. I then knew I had a choice. I could sit back and be a spectator of the process, or I could put in the work to ensure that people like me, young women, young parents from everyday working families, were reflected in this Assembly and had a voice at this table.

Finally, I've made reference to my Saskatchewan roots. During my time in Saskatchewan I was proud to have the opportunity to work for a fiscally responsible government who encouraged investment and created jobs but also listened to people, made critical investments in public services and infrastructure, and supported those most vulnerable in our communities. I was fortunate enough to work for another Premier who went to bat every single day on the national and international stage to promote and advocate for his province, a regular person who chose to take the front steps up the front of the Legislature to remind him of the responsibility entrusted to those of us who serve.

But beyond the economic or political lessons I learned working for former Premier Brad Wall, the most important was what integrity looks like, that while politics can be a rough sport sometimes, if you stay close to the people you serve and remember where you came from, you can be successful in this work and you can do a lot of good in the process.



Mr. Speaker, to close, in tribute to my own rural roots, in deep gratitude to my family, in service to my constituents with the steadfast leadership and commitment of our Premier alongside an incredible team of MLAs, very cognizant of the challenges that lie ahead but also hopeful in the spirit of renewal that comes with springtime in Alberta, I offer these words from scripture from Galatians, chapter 6, verse 9: "Let us not become weary in doing good. For at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up." I look forward to the work ahead.

**The Acting Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), I believe I see the hon. Member for Brooks-Medicine Hat.

**Ms Glasgow:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw, of course, through you, Mr. Speaker, for that moving speech. You know, I really was touched by the way that she was speaking about the strength of Conservative women and exactly what motivated her to run. For me, I know that part of the process that made me so happy to be involved was that our Premier was taking a merit-based approach to appointing women to cabinet positions, to higher up positions. That has been a goal of his to have more women involved in our movement on the basis of our own merit, not some lockstep identity category that the left claims to own. I was just wondering if the minister could give her thoughts on that and how she feels being a part of such a strong government.

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

**Ms Schulz:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, when I decided to put my name forward, it was really important to me that in all things I would be genuine and true to myself and honest with people who asked about the process of seeking elected office because I so much valued people who shared that very, maybe, candid feedback with me.

You know, I see also in this House the Minister of Culture, Multiculturalism and Status of Women. That very same weekend hearing Rona Ambrose speak about how we are sometimes our own worst critics and tend to second-guess, she was one of the first people who said: if you're thinking about running, you need to do this; we could use you at the table. But also nobody cleared the path, and I certainly wouldn't ask for that.

Our nominations were extremely, in many cases, hard-fought battles, and I think that when it comes to integrity, that's the key piece. You know, be yourself, show how you can work hard regardless of if you're female or male. I ran against three gentlemen in my nomination, one of whom was in the House yesterday and still incredibly supportive. I also want to note that members, certainly, across the province, again, female, male, are all incredibly supportive of the strong women that we have in our caucus, and I am incredibly proud to be part of this group.

**The Acting Speaker:** With a couple of minutes left, any other members under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I believe I see the hon. Member for West Yellowhead standing.

**Mr. Long:** Mr. Speaker, I am thrilled to have the opportunity today to stand before you to respond to the Speech from the Throne with my maiden speech.

For a fellow like myself who cares deeply about people, this past couple of years have proven difficult, travelling across my constituency, hearing stories of struggle, uncertainty, and hardship. With the Speech from the Throne, however, I'm excited, as are many Albertans, to hear of a path to recovery, certainty, and prosperity. Indeed, hope is on the horizon.

Mr. Speaker, I was born and raised in Nova Scotia to a mom who was a schoolteacher and a dad who was a handyman. My parents themselves were actually both born and raised on farms, so they instilled in my siblings and myself many things that I attribute to their upbringing. I would not be here today without the values that I learned from my parents, with two of the main values being to remain humble and work hard, very hard. Oddly enough, all these years later the message to stay humble, work hard, and earn every vote, that we heard repeatedly during the election campaign, incorporated two of those values. My parents also instilled in me the value of loving and respecting others, without which I also believe I would not be here today.

I will always remember a life lesson that I learned from my dad when I was seven years old. While I was helping my dad shovel the heavy, wet eastern snow from our driveway, he noticed that an elderly lady at the bottom of our street was out shovelling her own driveway. My dad told me to go and help her shovel her driveway but also told me to not accept any money for helping, so I listened. A few days later, after yet another snowfall, my dad told me to go shovel the same driveway and again told me not to accept any money, and again I obeyed.

Still another snowfall later I was given the same instructions, but unfortunately the lady's husband was home, and he told me that although he knew my dad told me not to accept money, he was going to pay me for shovelling their driveway. When he saw the hesitation on my young, innocent face, he said that he knew my dad taught me to respect my elders, so I would need to take the money in order to respect him. As a young boy placed in this impossible predicament, I accepted the money, and then, terrified, I went home to tell my dad. Thankfully, my dad let me know that it was okay for me to take the money that Mr. Wyer had given me. He then told me to never expect money and certainly never ask for it but to just do the job to help them out because it was the right thing to do.

**9:20**

This recent election has produced a number of people sitting here today, myself included, that are not here for a paycheck. We're here to do a job that needs to be done because it is the right thing to do.

The other person that I absolutely could not be here without is my beautiful wife. I must acknowledge her here today, as I do as often as possible, because she is simply amazing; so amazing, in fact, that she gave birth to a little boy and a little girl just 17 weeks ago in the middle of this election campaign, and still made sure that I went to work to ensure that the people of West Yellowhead had the right person representing them.

My wife, when I asked, was also kind enough to postpone her 40th birthday, which happened to fall a week before the election. She postponed that until after the campaign was over. Now, if *Hansard* could insert a facepalm emoji, I'm sure it would at this point. Needless to say, I am extremely fortunate to have support at home that understands the sacrifice it takes to serve others.

My wife, who happens to be a public high school teacher, is usually a very patient person when it comes to teaching me. Generally she is teaching me something to do with technology or how to include an attachment on an e-mail, but something she taught me a couple of years ago will stay with me for a long time. I came home one evening from a political meeting with the intention of having my wife sign up for a party membership to support me on the journey to become the candidate. My wife told me to show her that I am the best candidate, and that she would support me. My response was: "Of course I'm the best candidate. I'm your husband." Vanessa, leaning forward in the chair, looked me right in the eye and said: "You were the right candidate for that job. You



show me that you're the right candidate for this job, and I will support you."

Something that I've learned about my wife is that once she has her mind made up it is next to impossible to change. Some say stubborn; I prefer the much safer term "determined." Later on, after seeing the time and effort and dedication I was committing to move ahead on this path, my wife chose to come alongside on the journey. As members in this Assembly can attest, it is impossible to do this job without backing at home; however, it is empowering when we have that support. Mr. Speaker, it is an extreme honour and privilege for me to be the inaugural member serving the West Yellowhead constituency with its new expanded boundaries.

You know, Mr. Speaker, while many of my colleagues here today are representing very nice constituencies, I will be unabashed in stating that I get to represent not only the most beautiful constituency in Alberta but likely the most picturesque area in our country. Woodlands county, Yellowhead county, the municipality of Jasper, and the regional district of Greenview all make up the immense West Yellowhead constituency, which is comprised of vast forests, sprawling prairie landscape, and stunning rivers and lakes. Millions of people, including the people sitting in this very Chamber do not require invitation to be drawn to the picturesque mountain ranges in Jasper, and I will stand here today and share in the confines of this room of the breathtaking beauty of the hidden gems of Cadomin, Brûle, and Grande Cache, which I am fortunate enough to witness in my travels.

All of these aspects make my constituency the place of destination for those outdoorsy people who recognize the need to escape the business of the urban sprawl. They retreat to find themselves immersed in our rural version of yoga, which has activities like trail riding, quadding, fishing, trapping, hunting, skiing, hiking, and camping.

The communities of West Yellowhead have a history of drawing people in from all over Canada and around the world. As I mentioned, its sheer beauty attracts people, but many people opt to move to our communities for the same reason that I moved here, to work. When I left the east coast, I kind of got lost on the west coast for a few years until I found a place to call home in Alberta. For me, like so many others, I came here in the pursuit of a better life through the Alberta oil field. The ups and downs of the patch convinced me to move on to the Alberta forest industry, where I've spent the last nine years and have had the opportunity to become a power engineer.

Being at home these last few years instead of chasing rigs all over the province has afforded me the opportunity to do something that I'm very passionate about, volunteer. Whether serving on a board at a soup kitchen, volunteering with a youth group, or helping assess kids for minor hockey, there is seemingly nothing more fulfilling than helping others. I guess, Mr. Speaker, one could say, with the path that I have trod, that I am just an everyday guy who has worked everyday jobs and somehow has ended up here in the Legislature with the task of representing the everyday people who are fortunate enough to call West Yellowhead their home.

Mr. Speaker, as easy as it is to be drawn in and even distracted by the beauty of the West Yellowhead constituency, I am tasked with not getting distracted. You see, I believe it will be very easy to get focused on legislation, committee assignments, stakeholders, different causes, and everything under the umbrella of this political world. But what I am determined to do is what the people of West Yellowhead expect of me, which is to stay focused on what matters, the people. I hope something we can all remember is that this unique world that we have the opportunity to be a part of here in this Chamber is not actually about politics; it's about people. I will, before every decision I make, before every nay or yea, always

question: how does this decision affect the people of West Yellowhead?

Mr. Speaker, the people in the communities of West Yellowhead are great people. We are hard-working, generous, kind, and caring; the sort of people who don't ask for much, maybe a bit of respect and an occasional helping hand up, but certainly never a handout.

The communities that I am fortunate enough to represent are proudly involved in various industries which are essential to the survival of our communities. Things like agriculture, farming, forestry, mining, transportation, oil and gas, tourism, and electrical generation are prevalent in the communities of West Yellowhead. We have a history of contributing a great deal to the economic success of our province, yet people have been frustrated with a lack of progress in our resource sectors the last number of years and the uncertainty that that has provided for their families.

That, for me, is why the throne speech had myself and many of our constituents on the edge of our seats. The throne speech is one which is focused on making life better for Albertans. It focuses on using our abundance of resources as a way to provide for our families now but doing so responsibly so that we can provide for the future as well. Because I have spent so much of my life in industry, I have personally witnessed the pride that is taken to improve environmental performance in our province. I have seen the finances that companies invest to ensure that they are better tomorrow than they are today. So I am honoured to serve my constituents as part of a government which is committed to not only defend against the lies being spread about our province in order to land-lock our resources but will also boast of our world-leading innovation and technologies and our successes.

You know, I will always remember the time I spent walking through the halls of the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology and seeing the contributions wall of fame, seeing names like Repsol, Husky, Shell, Talisman, Millar Western, Weyerhaeuser, and the list goes on and on. I can only assume that other postsecondary institutions across Alberta are similar in the acknowledgement of industry's financial commitments, industry which has invested billions of dollars in our technology and innovation to improve our performance, especially our environmental performance, for our future and the future of our children. Knowing this creates a sense a pride across my constituency of West Yellowhead. It instills in us the determination for our industries to succeed for the benefit of our environmental contributions here and across our country and, indeed, around the world. We know that when Alberta succeeds and when Alberta creates, others benefit.

I've been fortunate during my campaigning to travel all around my constituency, and I cannot say enough about the resiliency that the people of West Yellowhead possess. Speaking of resiliency, I eagerly anticipate joining the people of Grande Cache to celebrate the 50th anniversary of their community this summer. This hamlet has had its ups and downs over the years but is full of amazing people who take pride in their community and are determined to see it succeed. I have had the pleasure of attending Peers Gold Dust Daze, the Wildwood fair and parade, Blue Ridge Logging Days, and numerous parades, trade shows, and events in other parts of West Yellowhead. I have personally knocked on thousands of doors all across my constituency, and I have met so many people, quality everyday people, who have eagerly anticipated the direction provided in the Speech from the Throne.

9:30

So, Mr. Speaker, I will spend the time I am given in this room and throughout my constituency focused on the people of West



Yellowhead in ensuring that their voices are heard, their concerns are raised, and their future is better. Thank you for allowing me to address this Chamber.

**The Acting Speaker:** Under Standing Order 29(2)(a) are there any members with questions or comments?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak? I believe I see the hon. Member for Calgary-East standing.

**Mr. Singh:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and congratulations on your election to Deputy Chair of Committees. My name is Peter Singh, and today I rise with great honour to speak to the Assembly as the representative for Calgary-East. I'm incredibly proud to have been entrusted with the opportunity to sit in the Assembly by the people of my constituency. I am humbled to have been entrusted with representing the people of such a diverse, hard-working, and unique population.

I'm honoured to follow in the footsteps of three great MLAs before me, who are as unique and diverse as my constituency. Calgary-East has retained three previous members to this Chamber, and their backgrounds are truly remarkable, from Mr. Ludwig in the 1960s, who was a lawyer and Second World War veteran; Mr. Amery, who served for many years, with his son now my colleague in this government; and Ms Luff, who was a teacher before entering public life.

My constituents are just as unique, with thousands of my constituents working in trades, manufacturing, sales and service, health care, agriculture, even the arts. Calgary-East paints a diverse portrait of the roles and responsibilities Albertans carry with them every day, and of that I'm proud. I hope that I will be able to live up to the expectations of my colleagues in the government caucus, every other member of this Assembly – past, present, and future – and, most importantly, the expectations set by my constituents.

My experience while door-knocking made me aware of the important issues the communities in the Calgary-East constituency are facing. Many of the concerns the community had voiced were around financial insecurity. During recent years Albertans in my community have been faced with a tremendous number of job losses that have greatly impacted their families. As the cost of food, gas, and housing are increasing, the job opportunities for Albertans are declining. As people become unemployed, crime rates and the use of illegal drugs have increased, where communities are frequently faced with issues of theft and break-ins.

Education was also an important topic brought forward among the community members, where questions were asked around the increased class sizes and programs.

Seniors of the community also raised issues regarding the lack of facilities and programs that can help support the lifestyle of the senior population in Calgary-East. As the number of seniors is increasing, and Alberta has the highest rate of early-onset dementia in Canada, more attention is needed on programs provided for seniors.

Calgary-East consists of small businesses that are facing difficulty due to the downturn in the economy, which makes it very tough for business owners to operate financially. The building of new pipelines will open many job opportunities for many Albertans. The elimination of the carbon tax will support the financial stability of Albertans. The reduction in corporate taxes will help job creators to reinvest in Alberta as the corporate tax will be the lowest in the country, lowering from 12 per cent to 8 per cent by 2022.

Of course, as with many of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle, my constituency has changed over the years, most recently with the past election. Having been in existence for 26 years now,

Calgary-East sits on the eastern edge of the city, stretching from the Bow River to the city limits at 116th Street. Running from north to south, Calgary-East runs from the Trans-Canada highway to the Peigan Trail.

Calgary-East is home to fantastic communities such as Southview, Erin Woods, Applewood Park, Abbeydale, Forest Heights, Fonda, Forest Lawn, east Dover, Penbrooke Meadows, and mobile homes. My constituency is home to businesses both large and small, residential areas and industrial areas, and newly constructed neighbourhoods. Calgary-East truly is a microcosm of all that makes Calgary great, and I am so proud to have the privilege to represent my neighbours, friends, and families in this Legislature.

Seventeenth Avenue S.E. underwent a transformation as the bus rapid transit, the BRT, project was completed and Calgary's new rapid transit system, called Max, launched in November 2018. The transit route known as Max Purple begins at the east side shopping centre and connects to downtown, allowing individuals to commute throughout the city with ease.

While I was not born in Calgary-East, I have come to call it home and have come to love it. Like many of my constituents I am extremely blessed to be a Canadian by choice, not by chance. Since moving to Calgary, I have become familiar with and interested in the culture and heart of my city, my province, and my country. Mr. Speaker, I immigrated to Canada from the Fiji islands in 1987 and settled in Ontario for a few years with my lovely wife, Reena, who I met while she was vacationing in Fiji. I got married that year in Ontario. I worked part-time and attended Centennial College and later graduated and worked proudly as a licensed automotive journeyman. My wife also did the same while working on her nursing program.

I was in Calgary in 1992 for a wedding with my wife and baby boy. There were so many opportunities at that time that we moved and settled here in 1993. It was the right direction, so we opened our small business in Calgary-East, worked hard to build our business, which also helped me to connect with the constituents of Calgary-East. I am very proud to have chosen to settle in Calgary. I am a proud father to my son, Kishen, and daughter, Komal. Like many other Canadians who own and operate their businesses, I as well as thousands of others across my constituency and our great province have become crushed by pointless regulations, increased taxes that have hampered my business.

I am deeply humbled and would like to acknowledge the community members and the hundreds of volunteers that took time out to take part in the election. I would like to give a warm thank you to my constituents in Calgary-East for entrusting me to represent you. Now I am here standing in this Chamber for my constituents. I have heard from them time and time again about the need to get our province back on track, and I along with my colleagues in the government caucus are ready to do just that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you.

Under 29(2)(a) are there any members with questions or comments?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak? I believe I see the hon. Member for Lesser Slave Lake standing.

**9:40**

**Mr. Rehn:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to rise and respond to the Lieutenant Governor's Speech from the Throne and to deliver my time-honoured maiden speech as the Member for Lesser Slave Lake. I want to start by congratulating all



the members of this House on their recent election victories. I would like to thank my sons, Noah and Landan, along with all my sisters and brothers and the rest of my family and friends for the love and support they have given me on this journey. This Legislature is truly facing an enormous challenge in getting Alberta's economy back on track, but Albertans need us to succeed and we will.

I've had the opportunity to do a lot of jobs over the years. I've been a lumber piler; handsaw tree faller; roughneck on the drilling rigs; trucker; high school teacher; a logger operating button tops, feller-bunchers, delimbers, and grapple skidders; a sawyer and sawmiller; a tree planter; a farmer; a crane operator and owner. I feel that my present job will undoubtedly be one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences of my life.

My riding is one of the greatest places to live, work, and raise a family in the entire world, rich with history, industry, and natural beauty. In the west of the riding you'll find High Prairie, a gateway to the Peace Country, with some significant farmland. It's a beautiful town that attracts leisure seekers for its many wonderful offerings, including the golden walleye classic fishing competition and the High Prairie rodeo.

As you head east on the south side of the lake you'll pass Enilda; Jousard; Faust; and Kinuso, which has a great rodeo each year; Canyon Creek; and end up at the east end of the lake in my town of Slave Lake, which hosts Riverboat Daze and the Icebreaker hockey game yearly. Travelling to the east you come to Smith and Hondo, who hold a great fall fair and rodeo. Continue east and you'll end up in Calling Lake. Head north to Sandy Lake and then a place that is close to my heart, Wabasca, located west of the Wabasca oil fields. As you head back west, you would pass through Red Earth Creek and end up at Cadotte Lake.

As you may know, Slave Lake fell victim to a devastating wildfire in 2011. Since then we've rebuilt, and the people are now opening their hearts and their homes to wildfire victims from across the province. I would like to commend all the firefighters, police, and ambulance personnel who have to work so tirelessly in keeping all of my constituents safe and protected. I have the utmost respect for all of these first responders as well as all the fine women and men who serve in our army, navy, and air force, putting it all on the line for us.

Lesser Slave Lake is also home to 11 First Nation bands: Bigstone Cree Nation, Driftpile First Nation, Kapawe'no First Nation, Loon River First Nation, Lubicon Lake First Nation, Peerless Trout First Nation, Sawridge First Nation, Sucker Creek First Nation, Swan River First Nation, Whitefish Lake First Nation, and Woodland Cree First Nation.

The riding was proudly represented by Pearl Calahasen for more than a quarter century. Ms Calahasen was a trailblazer as the first Métis woman to hold public office in Alberta, and her contributions to our riding and province are tremendous.

There are three Métis settlements in my riding: Gift Lake, East Prairie, and the Peavine Métis settlement, whose chairman Ken Noskey has already had positive discussions with me. I look forward to using my time in office to build strong relationships with First Nations people in our riding, like Chief Silas Yellowknee of Bigstone and Grand Chief of Treaty 8 Arthur Noskey, who I'm proud to call friends.

The truth is: I owe a great deal to Lesser Slave Lake as my relationship with the riding goes back decades. My grandfather Lennart Rehn immigrated to this great province in 1910 and started sawmilling shortly thereafter. He homesteaded a quarter section about an hour west of Edmonton by Wildwood. He and his wife, Helenna, had 10 children, seven girls and three boys. My grandparents' three sons – Harold, Jim, and my father, Pat – all became sawmillers like their father. Three of my aunts – Helen,

Karin, and Winnie – started a band called the Rehn Sister Trio, and they played for years at many country dances all over northern Alberta. Mr. Speaker, at this point I think it's only fair to warn you that music and singing does run in my family, so you could have some serious competition at this year's yodelling/karaoke-singing extravaganza.

**Ms Hoffman:** Prove it.

**Mr. Rehn:** Later. Later.

My father and mother, Pat and Helen Rehn, raised seven children in Wildwood, Alberta. I should clarify that because we really had a gypsy type of lifestyle, being in the sawmill business back then. Alberta forest service would auction off stands of timber, sawmillers would bid on them, and if successful, they would move their sawmill close to that stand of timber and saw it and then move on to the next stand of timber. We moved our sawmill all over, sawing timber: Wildwood, Edson, Cynthia, Whitecourt, Grouard, Chickadee Creek, Simonette Road off highway 43, Fort Assiniboine, and many other places.

Right after I was born in Edmonton, my mom whisked me off with her to our sawmill bush camp up by Fox Creek, right by the Little Smoky River. And, yes, when I needed some water, they filled my baby bottle right from the Little Smoky River. I'm not sure that Alberta Health Services would approve of that today, but I was a bush baby, and I survived to tell the story.

After finishing high school, I received a volleyball scholarship and attended Red Deer College and then the University of Alberta. I achieved an education degree, specializing in business and physical education. I come from a very humble background. When I graduated, all that I had was a big student loan and a desire to work hard and to try my very best.

I taught at a Catholic high school for a couple of years. While I love teaching, eventually I decided to go back sawmilling and to the forest, where my heart yearned to be, so I put every penny I had together, and I purchased a timber quota in the Edson area. Twenty-one years ago I purchased a sawmill in Wabasca called Wabasca Lakes Sawmill. Shortly thereafter I purchased another sawmill and timber quota in the Grande Cache area, where I sawed for nearly 20 years.

Sixteen years ago I started purchasing quarter sections of timberland in the Lesser Slave Lake riding, close to High Prairie, Sunset House, Triangle, and Jousard. I still own some of this land today along with four timber quotas.

Eleven years ago I started my own crane company, which experienced amazing growth until the NDP came to power in Alberta in 2015. Many of my competitors tried to hang on, but the economic catastrophe was too great, and many companies went bankrupt or had to auction off everything, great companies like Adam Crane, who had been in business for over 40 years. I was faced with some very tough decisions, and I decided that I needed to expand to the United States in order to survive.

I did expand into the U.S.A. in 2017. Today I own one of the largest single-person-owned fleets of cranes in North America, with cranes in operation across Canada and the United States. I would like to thank our great neighbours, the United States of America, for allowing companies such as mine to compete in their great free-market system.

For the better part of my life I have been working to create jobs and make life better for others. I've employed hundreds of Albertans, helping them find meaningful work and start their own families and companies. Some people would call me an overachiever. I say that I'm a very blessed individual who has an incredible work ethic and was fortunate enough to be born in the



greatest province in the greatest country in the world. Honestly, where else but in Alberta would my amazing life have been possible? I know the Alberta advantage because I've lived it. Now I want to ensure that it's alive and well for generations to come. I want to ensure that if a young person wants to start a company, they can right in Lesser Slave Lake if they wish to do so, just like what was done by the Buchannans, Vanderwells, Augers, Badgers, Willisrofts, Lukans, and many, many others in our great constituency.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Speaker, I didn't pursue this job out of self-interest. I don't need a job. I don't want the cushy perks, and I'm not interested in any fancy parties. I pursued this job because I know what it's going to take to make life better for families and businesses in our riding, province, and country, and I'm ready to get to work.

The people of my riding are some of the kindest, friendliest, and most optimistic people you will ever meet, but the past four years have been very difficult for them. We saw the introduction of the NDP carbon tax, the largest tax increase in Alberta's history, in the middle of an economic recession. We saw mass layoffs, business closures, and investment flight. We saw four major pipelines get cancelled or delayed indefinitely.

9:50

I've sat in this Legislature and heard members of the opposition trying to legitimize their horrific deficit accumulation while in government, often blaming it on the oil price collapse for the entire four-year period that they were in power. Mr. Speaker, I have a news flash. The oil price recovered years ago; it's the price differential that is killing us. This price differential is caused by lack of pipelines, which was caused by terrible decisions by the NDP not standing up for Albertans and Canadians to get pipelines built.

The policies of the past four years haven't worked, and I stand here strongly aware that Albertans elected our government to deliver bold Conservative change. The UCP has a strong plan to get Albertans working again, and it's already been put into action. We've passed several policies that will make life better for families and businesses, including repealing the carbon tax, implementing job creation tax cuts, and cutting red tape to give entrepreneurs the freedom they need to invest, grow, and hire right here in Alberta. We will be bringing in the groundbreaking aboriginal opportunities corporation, which will facilitate First Nations' financial participation in major resource projects, including pipelines. We will stand up to Ottawa any time they try to pass legislation that hurts our province, like Bill C-48, the west coast tanker ban, and Bill C-69, the no-more-pipelines bill. I'm fiercely proud and I'm glad to be part of the governing party of Alberta, and we will never apologize for that. We aren't anyone's embarrassing cousin.

Three years ago I listened as our Premier laid out a clear vision to get Alberta back on track, and I decided to get involved. I took time away from my crane company to help us campaign to unite Conservatives. Our Premier and our government represent a fresh start for Lesser Slave Lake and Alberta, and I couldn't be happier to be here with him today. We're going to deliver on our commitments and make Alberta once again a beacon of hope and opportunity for people from all over Canada and the world.

In summary I'd like to quote Dean Alfange.

I do not choose to be a common man. It is my right to be uncommon – if I can. I seek opportunity – not security. I do not wish to be a kept citizen, humbled and dulled by having the state look after me. I want to take the calculated risk; to dream and to build, to fail and to succeed. I refuse to barter incentive for a dole. I prefer the challenges of life to the guaranteed existence; the

thrill of fulfillment to the stale calm of utopia. I will not trade freedom for beneficence nor my dignity for a handout. I will never cower before any master nor bend to any threat. It is my [duty] to stand erect, proud and unafraid; to think and act for myself, enjoy the benefit of my creations, and to face the world boldly and say, this I have done.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you to the Member for Lesser Slave Lake for your remarks.

Standing Order 29(2)(a) is available to anyone who might like to ask a question or comment to the Member for Lesser Slave Lake.

Seeing none, I will call upon the hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park and Minister of Service Alberta.

**Mr. Glubish:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise and deliver my maiden speech in this House. Before I begin, I just want to say thank you to the voters of Strathcona-Sherwood Park for their support during the recent election. You have placed an enormous amount of trust in me and in this government, and I want you to know that I am here to fight for you, and our government is here to fight for all Albertans.

I also want to thank my family and friends who supported me on this journey to the Legislature. Thank you also to the many volunteers who worked so hard and sacrificed so much to help make this dream a reality. I won't let you down.

I would also like to say thank you to the previous representative of Strathcona-Sherwood Park, former member Estefania Cortes-Vargas. Thank you for your service over the past four years.

And thank you to all of the candidates who put their names forward in the last election: Albert Aris, Larry MacIse, Don Melanson, Dave Quest, Richard Scinta, and Moira Váně. I respect their courage to participate in the democratic process. Running for public office is challenging, demanding, and requires great sacrifice. I commend them for their dedication and for their well-run campaigns.

Speaking of congratulations, every member elected to this Legislature deserves strong congratulations. We will disagree at times, but I do look forward to our debates. At the end of the day, I think we can all agree that we are here because we want to create a better Alberta for all Albertans; we just have some different ideas on how to get there. Mr. Speaker, it would be remiss of me if I didn't offer you my congratulations on your election earlier in May.

Mr. Speaker, I have to admit that my journey to becoming an MLA almost didn't happen. You see, when I first approached my wife, Allison, back in the summer of 2015 to suggest that I was thinking of putting my name forward to run in this past election, I believe her first words were something to the effect of: that's a hard pass. I'm not even joking. My wife and I will celebrate our 11th anniversary this July, and we have been together for almost 13 years. In that time I have learned that you can't make any big life decisions without the full support and buy-in of your partner. As far as big decisions go, running for office in Alberta has to be near the top of the list.

Despite my wife's initial reservations, thankfully, over time she warmed to the idea and eventually gave me the green light. I would like to take this opportunity, through you, Mr. Speaker, to say thank you to my beautiful wife, Allison. She has been by my side through many ups and downs. I also know that she has my back and that she'll be there for me in good times and bad. She is by every measure my better half, which is why I'm also excited to share with you, Mr. Speaker, and with everyone in this Chamber, a little good news. My wife and I are expecting our first child this September, just a few short months away. [some applause] Thank you.



We are having a boy, and I can't wait to meet my son this fall. We have nicknamed him T.H., which is short for tiny human, but he's definitely big enough now that I can feel when he kicks, and that's really something special. You see, Mr. Speaker, I've wanted to be a dad for a very long time. My wife and I have been trying for quite some time to start a family, but sometimes life throws you a curveball along the way. Did you know that 1 in 4 pregnancies ends in a loss? I didn't until recently. I learned that statistic when my wife and I lost her first pregnancy a little over a year ago. We were the 1 in 4. I share that with you because I know that many Albertans have experienced this pain, and my message to them is: you are not alone.

Mr. Speaker, I can't talk about my family without also talking about my parents and my in-laws. I'd like to thank Allison's parents, Kevin and Gail Stone, for welcoming me into their lives. I'm so grateful for their support in this new role and for the support they provide to my wife when I'm working long hours in the Legislature. I also want to thank my parents, Brian and Terry Glubish, for their unconditional love and support. They have taught me so much and have set a great example that I can only hope to live up to with my son.

Mr. Speaker, talking about my parents reminds me of a story about my dad when I was studying at the University of Saskatchewan. As I was working through my third- and fourth-year finance courses, I often had to work long hours. My dad shared with me one of his favourite quotes. It was from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

The heights by great men reached and kept  
Were not attained by sudden flight,  
But they, while their companions slept,  
Were toiling upward in the night.

This quote was an inspiration to my dad for many years throughout his career, and it has been an inspiration to me ever since those university days, over 15 years ago.

Mr. Speaker, I could go on and tell you about my grandparents on both sides of my family, but perhaps that will have to wait for another day. Suffice to say that I've learned from them and their examples the value of hard work, the joy of a generous spirit, and the importance of a strong family.

Mr. Speaker, I know I've spent quite some time talking about family today, and I wanted to do that for a few reasons. One, family reminds you of where you come from. Two, family keeps you grounded. Three, probably most importantly, family reminds you of what is most important in life. So I just wanted to say that my family is the most important part of my life, and I just really wanted to share that with my colleagues on both sides of this House and also with my constituents back home.

10:00

Speaking of family, I'd like to talk a little bit about my community in Strathcona county, which in my opinion is one of the best places in the world to live, to work, and especially to raise a family.

**Mr. Walker:** Hear, hear.

**Mr. Glubish:** Thank you to the Member for Sherwood Park for those remarks.

My wife and I moved to the Sherwood Park area nine years ago, and we can't imagine living anywhere else. This community has so much to offer, especially to young families. The recreation centres are outstanding. We have access to the best of both urban and rural community offerings. We have a vibrant collection of active community leagues that provide programming for residents of all

ages, from Sherwood Park to the far corners of rural Strathcona county.

In addition to the rich, family-oriented programming and services, Strathcona county offers proximity to an exciting economic engine called the Alberta Industrial Heartland, which a number of members, I believe, in the last couple of weeks have spoken to. The heartland comprises of land shared by Strathcona county, Fort Saskatchewan, Sturgeon county, Lamont county, and the city of Edmonton, and it represents Canada's largest hydrocarbon processing region with over 40 companies and covering over 533 square kilometres.

Some advantages enjoyed by the businesses in the region include a cost-effective, secure supply of oil and gas and petrochemical feedstocks; excellent road, rail, and air infrastructure; access to a skilled and motivated workforce; and access to the freshwater supply of the North Saskatchewan River. Mr. Speaker, the heartland represents over \$40 billion of investment to date, and there are tens of billions of dollars of future opportunities in the region. I'm very excited to be able to work with Strathcona county council and Strathcona county Mayor Rod Frank to create the conditions for long-term economic success.

Mr. Speaker, despite all of this opportunity Alberta does continue to feel some pain and hardship that has plagued our province over the last number of years. We do face an escalating debt that is at frightening levels. We see high unemployment rates, especially among our youth. We see increasing rates of bankruptcies. We see rising vacancies in the downtown cores of our major cities, and we see rural Alberta communities struggling to survive.

Mr. Speaker, I can relate to what the great Canadian singer-songwriter Bruce Cockburn says in his song *Lovers in a Dangerous Time*. He says:

But nothing worth having comes without some kind of fight  
Got to kick at the darkness 'til it bleeds daylight.

Those inspirational words push me to move forward in the face of adversity and maybe to paraphrase in my own words along the lines of Henry Longfellow's quote that I referenced earlier: "I know there's a price, so I will toil in the night. The cost is no concern. I need the world to see that my dream is not fantasy."

Mr. Speaker, I want the constituents of Strathcona-Sherwood Park to know that they can count on me to give this job my all because I dream of an Alberta with endless opportunity. I dream of an Alberta that leads the country in economic growth. I dream of an Alberta that is once again debt free. I dream of an Alberta that is strong and free. These dreams are not fantasy. They can be a reality because over the next four years our government will be laser focused on creating jobs, attracting investment to Alberta, and standing up for our energy industry.

I may not be a poet like Longfellow nor a songwriter like Cockburn, but I do dabble from time to time as a hobby musician, so let me close with a quote from a work in progress from my own repertoire.

I know the way to greatness is hard-fought and not for the  
faint of heart.  
Still I say: let's go.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I move to close debate.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** No. Adjourn debate.

**Mr. Glubish:** Adjourn debate. Sorry.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** He definitely doesn't want to close debate.

**The Speaker:** Thank you to the hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park, and let me be the first to congratulate you on the arrival of your little T.H. I was doing some preliminary



mathematics, and I understand that you will have the 76th or 75th school-aged child, or from 18 under, of the United Conservative Party caucus. And I understand that as an Assembly we have nearly 100 under-18 or school-aged children amongst all members. So we are a very prolific group when it comes to the young people. Congratulations.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Government Bills and Orders

### Second Reading

#### Bill 3

#### Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act

[Adjourned debate June 4: Mr. Schow]

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any wishing to speak? The Official Opposition House Leader has the call.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. You know what? At the start of this I do want to give a shout-out to the Minister of Service Alberta for his maiden speech, his response to the Speech from the Throne. I wish congratulations to him and his family.

Honestly, Mr. Speaker, again, I've only been in this House since 2012, but I really appreciate hearing members deliver their maiden speeches because you get to learn a lot about the other members of the Assembly, their families, their ridings, their priorities. So, you know, I do appreciate all members this evening sharing their maiden speeches, for many, their responses to the speech.

Now, moving on, Mr. Speaker, to Bill 3, the job creation tax cut. As is probably no surprise to anyone in this House, I have a number of comments that I want to make on this bill. I'll start off by saying that I personally don't necessarily oppose a corporate tax reduction; however, I believe there needs to be caveats placed around it to ensure that it actually delivers what it's intended to.

I can tell you that there are numerous examples, especially within North America, where the corporate tax rate has been cut, but it has actually not led to job growth, it has not led to a stimulus for the economy, increased GDP, et cetera, and the reason is quite simple, Mr. Speaker. If there aren't provisions within a tax cut for companies to invest or reinvest what they're saving in job creation or growth, investing back into the company or in new machinery and equipment, there are a large number of companies that will take that savings, or tax cut, and pocket it or distribute it as a profit to shareholders. You know, I'm not criticizing companies for doing that, but what I'm saying is that if that is the only play or throw the government has to help the economy recover, Lord help us.

What I can tell you is that I will be grilling the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism on a number of initiatives that our government brought forward that have resulted in job creation, have resulted in growth in GDP, and have helped Alberta's economy start the recovery process.

Mr. Speaker, you know, over the last few years our government introduced three different tax credit programs that, I will say, came from the private sector, so I'm sure that there are members of the government caucus who are thinking – well, I'm not sure what they're thinking, quite frankly, but who may be critical of the tax credit programs. But I can assure this House that myself and our caucus engaged entrepreneurs, whether they were sole proprietors, mid-sized companies or multinationals. We engaged with chambers of commerce, with economic development agencies throughout the

province on what some of the best tools are that a government can possibly use to help the economy get back on track.

I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that over and over again two different tax credits came up in every conversation. These are tax credits that are enjoyed by other provinces. In fact, the province of British Columbia has had an investor tax credit since 1985. That has helped the economy diversify.

10:10

Really, how it works, Mr. Speaker, is that it gives the people of the province – our tax credit here in Alberta gives Albertans the opportunity to invest in companies in their own backyard. They get a 30 per cent tax credit. It helps companies, obviously, to raise equity, to grow and expand much quicker through this access to capital. It derisks Albertans' investments, and it's a win-win. I can tell you that initially our government wanted to limit which sectors this would be applicable to, but we heard, loud and clear, from the private sector that this needs to be sector-wide, so we listened to their advice. That tax credit has leveraged over – well, a \$30 million tax credit leverages over \$100 million worth of investment. We've seen that a couple of times over.

The second one is the capital investment tax credit, which, Mr. Speaker, is a 10 per cent nonrefundable credit. This one is critical in the sense that we are trying to encourage companies to deploy capital now to help the economy get back on track and not leave that money off to the sidelines. That capital investment tax credit – under our tenure we conditionally approved about \$100 million, which has leveraged over \$2.2 billion of new investment, creating thousands of jobs. These are tangible outcomes to government policy that we can point to. No one in this House or anywhere else can dispute the numbers as far as the impact it has had on the Alberta economy.

Now, we recognize that there is no silver bullet, Mr. Speaker, but there is a role for government to play in creating the right conditions. I know that the government will advocate that simply a corporate tax rate reduction will create the right conditions.

I need to remind the members opposite that Alberta has been and continues to be the lowest – lowest – taxed jurisdiction in Canada, under our government and under previous governments. Despite what the members opposite will say – I think hyperbole is an understatement when they talk about the effects of the carbon tax for the majority of Albertans. I'm not saying that for some businesses that did not place an additional burden on them. But the whole "companies are going out of business because of the carbon tax" – I'm sorry; if paying a few thousand dollars extra a month means you went out of business, maybe you need to look at your business plan or at least the management of your company. [interjections] No, no. For the majority of companies a tiny increase in the carbon tax – because here's the thing, members. Albertans pay \$11 billion less in taxes than the second-lowest taxed jurisdiction in Canada even with the carbon tax. Do the math on this. We have no PST. We have no payroll tax. We have no health care premiums. Albertans continue to pay the lowest taxes in the country.

I'm not arguing that some companies have been placed under a certain burden with a price on carbon, but the majority of Albertans received a rebate. There were programs for companies to help them through this. What we're left with now – and I appreciate that this bill has passed – is that we're open season for Ottawa, quite frankly.

My point is this, Mr. Speaker. Alberta already was the lowest taxed jurisdiction in Canada. So when members of the government say, "This is all we need to do to diversify our economy," well, guess what, folks? We had the lowest taxes in the country for decades, and it didn't help diversify the economy, which is why



Alberta suffered so greatly under the last drop in the price of oil. If that's all it takes, we'd have the most diversified economy in the country. But guess what? We don't. So going back to that, to say, "This is the silver bullet," quite frankly, naive is the first adjective that comes to mind. What we need are tools that will help ensure that companies are investing in this province. You know, again, within the corporate tax rate I'm not sure why the government didn't consider tying a decrease in the corporate tax rate to job creation.

For companies that are going to take the savings of the 1 per cent and then 2, all the way down to 8 per cent, or the 4 per cent savings, for companies that are investing in growth, in job creation, and reinvesting back into their companies, give them that corporate tax reduction. Don't just open it up to any company, because the majority of them – and surprise, surprise; believe me, I'll be the first one on my feet in this House when companies say: "Thank you. We're going to pocket that." I've spoken to companies already province-wide. I said: "Are you going to reinvest? Are you going to hire more? Are you going to upgrade your technology and your processes?" They said: "No. We're going to take the savings and issue it in profits to our shareholders." We've seen this in states like Kansas, where they did a massive corporate tax cut, and it did little to stimulate the economy, to stimulate growth, and to encourage job creation. You know, for me, my concern is that with the way the bill is currently, there is no guarantee that there will be significant job growth.

Now, I found it interesting when I looked at some of the economists who commented on this, who said: you know, frankly, if we've hit bottom through this recession, then the only place is up. So if there are some jobs created, the government will jump on their feet – I'm sure that especially the Government House Leader and the Premier will be on their feet – trumpeting how successful this was, but it doesn't necessarily correlate to the reduction in the corporate taxes. If you've hit rock bottom, the only place to go is up. So for the few jobs that may be created, they may say: "Look at us here. We'll pat ourselves on the back." However, it's not attributed necessarily to the corporate tax reduction.

What I'd like to see or what we'd like to see are concrete measures or tools to be used that will help stimulate the economy like the three tax credit programs that our government introduced.

We want to talk about trade, one of my favourite topics, Mr. Speaker. Something that I'm very, very proud of is the fact that in three years, from 2016 to 2019, the work that our government did with the private sector – I want to be really clear. I'm not taking credit for this stat that I'm about to give but very proud to be part of a province that increased its trade with China alone, one country. We increased trade over the last three years by 25 per cent. That is a massive amount. Trade increased by over a billion dollars because of, in part, the work that our government did, the number of trade missions that we did, the number of companies we brought to China. I was very proud to lead the largest trade delegation that the government of Alberta has ever led in the history of this province. Eighty-six different businesses and business associations accompanied me in November 2016 to China. This is significant. These are concrete actions that have helped increase trade, which has resulted in more jobs back here at home. It's helped our companies diversify the markets that they sell to.

I think one of the challenges that we all know that exist in Alberta and across this country is that the majority of businesses only do business within our own country, and of those that do go outside of Canada, the majority are in the U.S. Well, when we experience tariffs and, you know, challenges with trade deals within North America, it points to the fact that we need to do much more to open markets and help our businesses open markets internationally.

These are the types of initiatives that have a track record to create jobs and improve the economy, Mr. Speaker.

**10:20**

With that and with this corporate tax amendment, my concern, quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, is that what this government is doing is taking \$4.5 billion, betting it on number 16 on the roulette table, letting it ride, and hoping that this will result in job creation. Now, I'll be the first to say that some companies will in fact take this corporate tax reduction and invest it back into their companies, so, yes, there will be some job growth. I'm not about to say that this is not going to do anything for the economy. My concern is that without any type of collar or linkage between a corporate tax rate reduction and ensuring that companies are reinvesting it, it will actually not have the effect that the government thinks. I appreciate that there are economists who have forecasted 55,000 jobs. Great. I can name just as many economists who have said that it's going to do little to nothing to help stimulate the economy.

Mr. Speaker, I have concerns with the bill as it is and look forward to bringing forward amendments.

**The Speaker:** I see the hon. Government House Leader has risen under 29(2)(a). If he has a brief question or comment, I might encourage him to do so.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, great that we have an opportunity. I appreciate that we have Standing Order 29(2)(a). It was built exactly for this moment.

I was interested in listening to the hon. Opposition House Leader's comments. There's so much to be unpacked there and not enough time under 29(2)(a), as you know, Mr. Speaker, to even begin to be able to go through the enormous, ridiculous statements that have repeatedly been said by the Opposition House Leader in his speech before this place today.

I'd like to focus on one issue in particular, the fact that the Opposition House Leader, who, you know, I have the utmost respect for and get along with well, Mr. Speaker, as I know you do as well – I appreciate the hard role that he has. I had to be an Opposition House Leader before, as have you. But the reality is that he accidentally showed exactly what the NDP think when it comes to job creators and businesses inside our province. He accidentally went and showed exactly why the NDP now sit on the opposition benches inside this Assembly after being decimated by the largest wipeout, probably, in the history of this province as far as votes cast against them for another party, the only time in history to be a one-term government because of the attitude that our Opposition House Leader just showed that his party has: talking about job creators and businesses inside our province, job creators and businesses inside your hometown of Olds, just to the east of me in Sundre, talking about them and the fact that if the carbon tax was causing trouble for their businesses, then they should go and re-examine their business plan.

To then try and say that somehow the ridiculous tax that they put on these people and these organizations that created jobs inside our province was their fault, that it was business's fault: no wonder this party is the only one-term government in the history of this province, if that's how you're going to treat the job creators inside our province. One-term government. Why? Because they think that and they have the nerve to say that. This is because they don't have the decency to go to places like Drayton Valley, who have been decimated by the policies of this government.

**Mr. Bilous:** I have been.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Well, it turns out, I guess, that the Opposition House Leader has been to Drayton Valley. That's great. I certainly



hope that when he was there, he didn't tell them that they had problems with their business plans and that that's why they were in this spot.

You know why they were in this spot, Mr. Speaker? You know why? I know. I spend lots of time in your home constituency because I have to travel through there quite often to be able to get to my home. In fact, it's the closest Walmart, so if we want to go shopping at Walmart, we've got to go there. And if I'm in the Walmart in Olds, what would I hear over and over from your constituents on why they have found themselves inside this problem? You know what I would hear, because I know you hear the same thing. They have found themselves in this situation because of the ridiculous policies of this opposition when they were in government. You heard it here tonight.

They tell a job creator that if they're struggling as a result of the tax that the NDP brought in, it's because they had a bad job plan. No. What happened was that a bad government got elected, brought in ridiculous policies that continued to punish the people of this province. And this opposition party has the nerve to continue to come to this House, sit there and insult the people of this province, insult the job creators that have struggled to keep their businesses open.

I know business owners inside my constituency that have taken things at a loss for multiple years just to keep their employees being able to go to work. I know that you have some in your constituency as well. Now, the job creators inside my constituency and your constituency are not watching the Legislature at this time of night, but if they were and they saw this, they would be extremely disappointed.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I don't care about the reputation of the opposition members in this place – they've already destroyed their reputation; the results of April 16 show that – but I do care about the reputation of Her Majesty. This is Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition inside this Chamber, and she would be ashamed to hear a comment like that. They should treat this role that they have as the opposition, the Official Opposition in this Chamber, to defend Albertans, not to attack Albertans and tell them that this ridiculous tax that they brought in when they were in government that hurt these companies is now their fault, that they somehow had bad business plans.

Mr. Speaker, is this the NDP's new political strategy? They tried fear and smear and to make things up about people and attack people and do all that stuff that resulted in them being decimated. This strategy would be ridiculous.

**The Speaker:** I might just remind the Government House Leader, you know, that he would know that Standing Order 23(k) speaks very clearly to speaking "disrespectfully of Her Majesty or of any other member of the Royal Family." To impute what Her Majesty may or may not think may border on a point of order. I would just urge some caution to the Government House Leader.

Are there any others that would like to speak to the bill? I see the Member for Edmonton-North West rising.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise with some interest in speaking to Bill 3, the Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act. You know, this morning I was driving from the Islamic Academy on the occasion of Eid. It almost seems like another day. It seems like we have two days built into one sometimes when we have these night sittings. On the radio, when I was driving back, there was an interesting CBC broadcast that was featuring the Gates foundation and I think her name is Melinda Gates, the wife of Bill Gates and one of the people that runs the Gates foundation. She was going on quite at length about the

dysfunctional state of American taxation and how it was distorting the economies of individual states and the nation as well.

Of course, the Gates foundation and that family is one of the richest families in the world, and together with billionaires and multimillionaires they are joining forces to say that they need tax reform in the United States of America because there is a huge distortion that is taking place by massive tax cuts, both corporate and personal, in the United States of America. There is a tremendous distortion that is having a number of very serious negative effects on the economies of individual states and on the nation as well.

I listened with quite a lot of interest. You know, they brought up a number of examples, and the one that stuck in my mind is this notion of so much cash being moved as a result of massive tax cuts to corporations and so forth that this cash literally gets stranded and is taken out of the economy. Let's not forget, members of this Legislature, through the Speaker, that money is used and printed based on value, and if that value is somehow stranded – right? – by a distorted taxation system that allows so much cash to be accumulated in one place or another, it literally has a negative effect on an economy.

This is just one small aspect of what I was thinking and reflecting on when I would speak on Bill 3 here today. What this government is proposing is a very significant tax change, almost like a sea change, for the province of Alberta and a distortion of the tax policies that might function and feature across the country. I must say that amongst the many things we learned in government is that you have to be very careful, to be reminded that you are part of a country, Canada, here in the province of Alberta, and you must make sure that your policies are not so far out of step with the rest of the nation that you're literally impeding or causing some distortion that can have a negative effect not just on Alberta but on the entire country. These are just a couple of things that I was thinking about this morning when I was thinking of my comments on Bill 3, the Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act.

**10:30**

Then, of course, the responsible thing to do as well is to look at expertise and analysis of such a thing both from economists looking at the potential effects on the economy of Alberta but also looking for some correlation to other jurisdictions across the country and/or in other countries that might have gone down this path. What were the effects, right? I mean, this is a responsible, scientific way by which you can approach these things. While you can always find different economists saying different things, certainly I think the consensus is that Bill 3, with such a massive tax cut to corporations, is risky, it is unproven, and it is certainly not necessarily the wisest choice.

It's bold, and I think that the new government was looking for ways by which to grab headlines and demonstrate, you know, boldness as much as they were at sound, sober economic analysis. You know, you can't make decisions like that, Mr. Speaker, for the sake of grabbing a headline or being the very lowest or the biggest thing of all time. I mean, this is sort of that showy, stacy politics that works okay for some times and some places but not when you're dealing with the entirety of the provincial economy. You can't just showboat off literally billions of dollars, in this case more than \$4.5 billion, that would be taken out of the economy and blow a massive hole in the capacity for this government to then make good on their promise to balance the budget, right? Those are all factors that we need to look at.



We have been working very hard to make sure that – we had a policy in the previous government to balance the budget as well by 2023-24. I think that's around the same time that this government wants to achieve that as well. How could they possibly do that by taking out this magnitude of money and revenue from the provincial budget?

[Mr. Milliken in the chair]

The provincial budget is responsible for health care; it's responsible for education, for social services, for infrastructure, for essential services that Albertans need to function. I believe Bill 3 is a signal that this government is not only not taking those responsibilities seriously but is projecting their plans for significant cuts to essential services that Albertans need and the economy needs to function and to survive here in the province. We know that Alberta's businesses are the best in the country and perhaps in the entire world, right? But this government wants at the same time to attack schools and hospitals to pay for such a risky experiment as what we're seeing here with Bill 3.

Certainly, you talk about the carbon tax and all of those things, but this corporate tax is exponentially riskier and potentially destabilizing. You know, in so many jurisdictions we see that borne out. People talk about the so-called Kansas experiment, which was an unmitigated disaster, but there are other jurisdictions that did exactly the same thing. We know that, you know, states like Louisiana, for example, went down a path similar to this, and as an oil-producing jurisdiction as well you end up with very poor education outcomes, privatized health care, lower life expectancies and so forth, and an extreme division between the haves and the have-nots of jurisdictions that have gone down the path of substantial tax cuts like what this government is suggesting.

I mean, I'm concerned, right? I think that that's why we do debate these things in the Legislature. I always take the opinion that this is a place, especially at 10:35 in the evening, where you don't just have to beat each other over the heads but rather expose each other to ideas and to amendments and perhaps sober second thought that would allow us to make sure we're making the right decision for Albertans, to make the right decision for businesses and for our public services in general.

We know that our population continues to grow. We have the youngest population in Canada, and this is borne out by a young, youthful population of school-aged children. I think the Speaker pointed out how prolific this House is in regard to school-aged children, and that is a microcosm of what we see across the province. Fifteen thousand new kids showing up in schools here in the fall: that's a conservative prediction or calculation. I can have full disclosure here now. We usually run those numbers a little bit down in the Ministry of Education, and then, lo and behold, there will probably be even more kids showing up in the fall, dollars to doughnuts.

That's a positive thing. I think it demonstrates hope and optimism. People are having children, like the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park. That's a good investment to the future, feeling like there are some positive things happening in the potential for the economy and for just creating your family, but you need to make sure that you are paying for the services that those young families need, right?

You cannot suggest that you compromise the integrity of an entire new cohort of kindergarten, grade 1, and grade 2 kids with a compromised education for those kids at that crucial time, when they're, say, seven years old, just learning language, just learning their basic math skills, just picking up those basic building blocks, those cognitive building blocks that they will carry with them for

the rest of their lives, and compromise that for the sake of making a \$4.5 billion hole in the budget, which would necessitate – I mean, everybody can figure it out. It means not hiring the teachers that you need, not hiring the nurses you need to provide the health care for that growing population, not building that infrastructure that everybody likes to salt their questions in during question period, asking about that school or that bridge or the twinning of that highway that your constituents need.

I mean, yeah, I think that's great to ask for those things. I think it's important to advocate for your constituents, but the cognitive dissonance – right? – the lack of logic that follows when you also vote so enthusiastically for a \$4.5 billion corporate tax cut that you know, if you think about it for a minute, ultimately will undermine the ability of your same government to twin that highway, to build that bridge, to make sure that school is populated by teachers and support staff, and that the nurses are there to provide the health care for your family when you need it.

So think about all of those things. You know, it's a modest proposal to put two and two together like that. I'm not suggesting that anyone is less than capable of making those connections. It's just really, I think, useful to point them out. Again, looking at ways by which we can learn from other jurisdictions: we know that other countries have gone down the path of zero or low or no taxes, and if you don't have something to offer a corporation besides, you know, just a race to the bottom in terms of tax rates; if you're not offering a place by which you can have the diversification of an economy built in and the services that a corporation might look for if they're to move into a jurisdiction, which include good schools, health care, a cultural community – right? – affordable places, a clean environment in which to live, then you're not looking at the whole picture, Mr. Speaker.

10:40

I would suggest that Bill 3 – I know that this government wants to go big, wants to go bold, but, you know, let's take a sober second look and see other ways by which we can stimulate the economy besides just having all of our eggs in one basket, dropping it with a big, corporate tax cut, which is what Bill 3 would suggest.

So with those comments, Mr. Speaker, I thank you and look forward to debate. Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Under Standing Order 29(2)(a) are there any members with questions and/or comments?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

**Mr. Schmidt:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak against this bill. It's interesting. Of course, we've managed to sit through a number of members' responses to the Speech from the Throne, and there are a couple of themes that I'd like to comment on in relation to this bill that I find highly ironic.

The first is that, of course, one of the things that a number of the members have said is that nobody believes in a handout but rather a hand up. Yet here we are considering a bill that gives one of the biggest corporate handouts in the history of the country of Canada, Mr. Speaker. It's funny that the members opposite seem to think that, you know, individuals don't deserve a handout, don't need a handout, but when it comes to the most profitable corporations in the province, of course, absolutely they need a handout right away. That's the third order of business that we're going to undertake here in the Legislature.

Of course, the second comment I heard in a number of the speeches is the deep religious faith, the Christian faith, that a number of members ascribe to, and I certainly do as well, Mr. Speaker. But my version of the Bible must be different from the



ones that the members opposite read, because nowhere did I read in the New Testament that blessed are the shareholders. Yet that seems to be the mantra here of the members opposite. I don't know when Republican Jesus moved to Alberta, but it certainly wasn't taught in the churches that I've gone to in my life.

So here we are, of course, talking about enriching the shareholder class in this province; a failed strategy that we're going to try again because having seen it fail in the United States and various subnational jurisdictions in the United States as well as federally isn't good enough. We need to try it again here to see if it'll fail here. Of course the members opposite won't heed the warnings that we're providing them. But, you know, I guess they want to see it in action and actually inflict their plan on the people of Alberta just to convince themselves that it in fact won't work, Mr. Speaker.

One of the things that I want to raise that hasn't been mentioned by my colleagues here on this side is the issue of what corporations are likely to do when they receive this massive, multibillion dollar handout that the members opposite are proposing. That, in fact, is the – there's no other way to describe it – evil practice of stock buybacks, Mr. Speaker. Of course, there are a number of articles that have appeared in the Canadian media over the past few months. I'm looking at one that ran by the CBC, dated November 25, 2018, that said that Canadian oil and gas companies are “driving a rise in share buybacks that's already reached a record high [in 2018]. Some 627 million shares had been repurchased in 2018 for cancellation by 209 issuer companies as of mid-October.” Of course, that's about 135 million more shares than in all of 2017 and well ahead of the previous record high of 557 million shares, in 2007, according to statistics going back to 1989.

Now, before Ronald Reagan became President, the technique of stock buybacks was actually illegal in the United States because that was stock market manipulation, Mr. Speaker, and it was an unfair way, in the view of many people, of manipulating share prices to enrich shareholders without providing any actual concrete value to the people who are affected by the activities of the corporations that are being undertaken.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, this primacy of the shareholder class is reinforced by the analysts on Wall Street and Bay Street. There's a recent example, American Airlines. They had a record profit a few quarters ago, and they announced, much to the delight of their employees, that they were finally going to give their employees a long overdue raise so that their pilots and their flight attendants were actually making salaries that were on par with American Airlines' competitors in that business. What did the analysts at Citibank do? They complained in the pages of the *Wall Street Journal* that labour was getting too much and that shareholders had to be stuck with the leftovers. In fact, Morgan Stanley downgraded the value of the stock because of the company's plans to actually invest in its workers rather than giving money to the millionaires and billionaires who own the shares of that company. So we can expect nothing different if we go ahead with this reckless plan to cut corporate taxes.

Of course, I referenced a CBC article from November 25, 2018. There was a much more recent article that ran in the *Financial Post* that was dated May 15, 2019, saying that Canada's oil patch has the most cash in five years and nothing to spend it on, Mr. Speaker. In that article, of course, it outlined the oil patch's plan to buy back shares, and in fact it stated Canadian Natural Resources as one particular company that has allocated half of its cash profits to buying back its own shares.

The reason that this plan is detrimental to the welfare of the people of Alberta is because, you know, the Albertans who work hard and contribute to the prosperity of those companies, I think, deserve a share of those companies' profits, Mr. Speaker, and

certainly when a company purchases the shares, it only serves to enrich the shareholders, many of whom aren't Albertans. We have to remember that the shares of many of the companies that are operating in Canada, in Alberta are held by people who don't live in this province. Of course it enriches the CEOs of many of these companies because a significant portion of their pay packages is derived from stock options rather than cash. Of course, by manipulating stock prices through the practice of stock buybacks, the CEOs will see a significant bonus in their annual pay while workers receive nothing. Of course, that's not fair.

Mr. Speaker, you know, the evidence is quite clear that 90 per cent of working Albertans, 9 out of every 10, haven't seen a raise in their income for a significant number of years. In fact, even as the economy of Alberta has become more productive, it's only the top 10 per cent of income earners who are seeing any appreciable gains in their incomes. Everybody else is being left behind. So we have this situation where millionaires and billionaires are continuing to make more money, corporations have more money in their bank accounts than they've had for the past five years, and we're just going to give them more that they can use to enrich themselves again through this process of stock buybacks. I think that just shows where the priorities of the government are. They are clearly on the side of the millionaires and billionaires of this province, not interested in the welfare of working people even though they profess they are.

10:50

You know, the people of Alberta will be gravely disappointed when the jobs that the members opposite are promising won't appear and, in fact, the giant corporate tax cut that the members opposite are proposing is used to enrich the shareholders of the companies and the CEOs of the companies and Albertans are left with nothing. They won't see a raise in their wages, there won't be an increase in jobs, and of course the province of Alberta will struggle to pay its own bills because we'll be 4 and a half billion dollars short at the end of all of this, which will come directly out of the health care and the education services that keep people healthy and educated and actually able to go to work for the employers that the members opposite so strongly favour.

Mr. Speaker, what I'd like to see is, you know – and of course, we can't get into this at this stage – perhaps some conditions attached to this massive corporate handout, that it shouldn't be just given to corporations without consideration for what they intend to spend it on. My hon. colleague from Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview quite rightly articulated that there need to be conditions attached to these massive corporate giveaways in order for the people of Alberta to see some kind of benefit from it. Of course, we have seen nothing yet from the members opposite to suggest that the money that they're so intent on giving to profitable corporations in this province will actually be invested in the things that create jobs and spur growth in our economy.

Mr. Speaker, for all of those reasons, I think that it's incumbent upon us to vote against this measure. I would highly suggest that the members opposite go back to the drawing board and come up with some different ways to spur economic growth and job creation in this province because we quite clearly know from past experience that massive corporate tax giveaways are not going to create jobs and prosperity for the middle-class Albertans that we're here to serve. It will only enrich shareholders and CEOs, people who, you know, are probably not at the top of our priority list when it comes to listing the people who need the help of the people here in this place.

Mr. Speaker, with that, I would encourage all of my colleagues here in the Legislature to vote against this bill, and of course I would



advise everyone to carefully consider some other ways to create economic prosperity and good jobs for the people of Alberta.

**The Acting Speaker:** I will take this opportunity to first remind the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar to table a copy of the article or articles that you referred to during debate.

Under 29(2)(a), I believe, the hon. Opposition House Leader, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar for his comments, and I do want to ask him to share – you know, I appreciate his comments as far as this bill and what it's proposing – or maybe hear some thoughts, from the member's comments or from the member, on other ways that we can support economic growth and job creation.

But before I get to that, Mr. Speaker, I want to take a moment to clarify comments that I made earlier. Quite frankly, I think many businesses in Alberta know – but I want all businesses to know – that I stand with them. As minister of economic development and trade I fought very hard daily to advance the interests of businesses throughout the province and, quite frankly, around the world. Now, I do want to apologize for the way that I characterized my remarks. Quite frankly, there's no question that the carbon levy did add burdens to businesses, some more than others. I think, unfortunately, I probably chose a poor choice of words in how I framed it.

But I think that, you know, the opposition is simplifying the last four years, the challenges that businesses have faced predominantly because of the global drop in the price of oil. That is to say, Mr. Speaker, that there is a recognition that the carbon levy that we introduced was a cost to businesses. We did try to offset that cost by reducing the small-business tax rate by a third. Again, with that I by no way or means meant to try to blame or lay the burden on businesses for the fact that the carbon levy was for many a very real challenge and did increase costs. We tried to mitigate that.

I'm proud of Alberta businesses. We have led the country in economic growth, even in the downturn, the last couple of years. We know that Albertans are resilient entrepreneurs, and Alberta really is the economic engine of the country and the lifeblood of this country, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud of the fact that within our province, Alberta businesses continue to pay the lowest taxes in the country. Again, you know, there is a significant tax advantage here because we have no PST or other forms of taxes.

[The Speaker in the chair]

Again, Mr. Speaker, I think I wanted to take this opportunity to apologize for my remarks, to clarify them to all Alberta businesses, recognizing that the price on carbon has posed a challenge for some, has resulted unfortunately, for some businesses, in pushing them over the edge.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will ask the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar to offer some thoughts on other ways, other than just reducing the corporate tax rate, to potential supports for Alberta businesses.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. There's approximately a minute and 30 seconds left in 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Schmidt:** Oh, well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I always appreciate your guidance in these matters. I want to thank the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview for his question. I also want to congratulate him on his apology. As someone who is no stranger to making apologies, I have to say that he did – you know, I'd give him maybe a C-plus or a B-minus. I'm sure that with practice he'll get a little bit better.

Mr. Speaker, I think my colleague from Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, in his initial comments on this, highlighted some of the good ways that we could actually spur investment, the successful ways that we could spur investment in the Alberta economy. Of course, he mentioned the Alberta investor tax credit and the capital investment tax credit. Those had demonstrable proof of spurring investment and creating jobs here in Alberta. I can't recall if the member also mentioned the interactive digital media tax credit which our government created, which, of course, is helping many businesses in the interactive digital media world locate and be successful here in Alberta.

**The Speaker:** Thank you to the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

If I could just encourage everyone that getting good at apologies is not a wonderful thing to aim for, certainly from the Speaker's perspective.

Is there anyone else that would like to speak to the bill? I see the hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

**Mr. Dang:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really am pleased to be able to rise today and speak to Bill 3, the Corporate Tax Giveaway Act. I think it's something that, really, all members of this Assembly should be excited to debate, and we should be proud to be able to be here at this hour and speak about this important work.

**11:00**

I mean, it's something that is really interesting. We have a government that talked about making sure they take care of vulnerable Albertans, especially in their maiden speeches that they made earlier this evening. We had government members who talked at great length about how they wanted to make sure they were protecting families and communities. Then we see a bill, Mr. Speaker, that comes forward, and really all it does is that it gives a big giveaway to their wealthy friends and donors and leaves many, many Albertans behind.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the Premier, when he comes up with these bills and ideas for bills, has a fondness for Ottawa. I know that the Premier comes from Ottawa and has been in Ottawa for decades, but he doesn't need to replicate everything in Ottawa. We can see that when the corporate tax cuts were implemented under the Harper government, that the Premier was a member of – I mean, over four years they decreased corporate tax rates from 22.1 per cent to 15 per cent, so very similar to what's being proposed here – they actually collected \$13 billion less than they would have if the Harper government hadn't made that change. I know that the Premier is very fond of what happened in Ottawa, what happens in Ottawa, and I know that the Premier may wish to return to Ottawa one day, but perhaps bringing losses in government revenue from Ottawa to Alberta isn't the move that we'd like to see here.

I mean, we can look at what happened. We can look at how businesses accumulated billions in cash reserves as a result of the cuts, but the Bank of Canada governor, Mark Carney at the time, said that it was mostly dead money and that there was no significant impact on investment. In fact, if we actually look at some other organizations like the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, they even suggested that not only did this result in no new investment in Canada but that it actually resulted in a reduced growth rate to the Canadian economy.

We've seen this happen right here in Canada at the national level. We've seen it happen, as members in the opposition have already spoken to tonight, at the subnational levels and national levels in other governments as well. I think it's pretty clear that when you do big, risky, ideological tax cuts like this, it doesn't result in the



investment that the government would like. It doesn't result in the investment that the government pretends it will.

Mr. Speaker, I think that's not a shame for anybody other than Albertans. When you give away 4 and a half billion dollars out of the provincial budget, nearly 10 per cent of the provincial budget, who suffers is Albertans. It means that you don't get to do the things like hire teachers and nurses, it means that you don't get to do the things like build support services and fund social services across the province, it means you don't get to invest in communities, and it means you don't get to build the services that Albertans rely on.

When we talk about these big, wealthy corporate tax giveaways and how they're so important for spurring investment, I think we really need to look at the evidence. The evidence, whether we look at the United States under the Bush administration and their large tax cuts or in Kansas under their large tax cuts as well, that both the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar and the Member for Edmonton-North West spoke about quite a bit, at length, tonight – I think it becomes abundantly clear that these tax cuts hurt ordinary people. They help large corporations, they bolster the bank accounts of wealthy businesspeople, but, Mr. Speaker, ordinary Albertans like you and me get nothing. We get left out to dry. Really, what it means is that our families and our communities and our neighbours are the ones that have to suffer.

I mean, I think that's actually the real shame here. We can see time and time again that perhaps there were some wealthy donors and wealthy corporations that contributed quite heavily to the government's PACs, political action committees, and so forth, Mr. Speaker, and perhaps they do want these big tax breaks. Perhaps they do want 4 and a half billion dollars in handouts. But I think that 4 and a half billion dollars could go a lot further if we invested it in families, if we invested it in communities.

Mr. Speaker, we've seen through these cases at the national and subnational levels and right here in Canada that these massive giveaways to the wealthiest 1 per cent produce no new jobs, they produce no new investment, and they produce no new sources of income for families. I think that's something that when we look at these so-called responsible conservatives and fiscal conservatives, when we look at these so-called people who are convinced that they need to do everything they can to support the economy, the evidence shows that it shrinks in some cases or does nothing for economies.

I think that when we see these types of numbers, it becomes abundantly clear that the Conservatives in the government aren't necessarily trying to grow the economy, but they're wanting to make sure that their friends are taken care of. Now, I wouldn't presume that motive on anybody, but I would definitely say that legislation like this doesn't back up the evidence, Mr. Speaker. I think that that is something we should all be concerned about in this Chamber, especially if we're trying to make sure our communities get the services they so deeply need.

We've seen this government do this time and time again. We've seen the government go into employees' pockets with the pick-your-pockets bill just a few days ago, Mr. Speaker, and we see, as they move forward with legislation like that, that now they're willing to take the money out of employees' pockets with one hand and give it back to corporations with the other. I think that's a shame. I think that is something that we really need to take a look at and say: "Is this fair to ordinary workers? Is this fair to people that depend on working every day to feed their families and to pay their mortgages?" I think that we need to take a serious look and say: "We understand there absolutely was a massive collapse in oil prices in the last four to five years. We understand that there are definitely fiscal targets and economic indicators that we need to meet targets on." This is something that's very important for us, but

we need to make sure that we can balance a budget without putting at risk our services.

The government has now been revising their projection to balance: 2022, 2023, maybe 2024. I don't know. The number seems to change any time it's asked. Despite that, what we do know is that if you take away 4 and a half billion dollars from the coffers with one hand, like this bill proposes, it certainly does not mean you would be able to protect the rest of the services and not have to have significant cuts. Mr. Speaker, 4 and a half billion dollars: that's a lot of dough. I mean, if you shook me upside down, 4 and a half billion dollars would not fall out. But 4 and a half billion dollars pays for a lot of schools, a lot of highways, a lot of hospitals – well, one hospital – and that's the type of money that would make a difference in the lives of Albertans. Instead, the government wants to make a difference in the lives of the wealthiest 1 per cent.

I think that's something that the members of the opposition will fight against every single day because we know that that 4 and a half billion dollars should be used to ensure that Albertans get the services they deserve. It should be used to ensure that they have health care when they need it. It should be used to ensure that they have teachers in every classroom and that classes will not have 40, 50, 60 students, that they will not have to be taking courses, like in Ontario, online.

I think that it becomes clear that this type of government giveaway – really, it's an expenditure, Mr. Speaker. It's really a reduction in revenues, an expenditure. In the balance books it will look the same. It will look like a 4 and a half billion dollar hole. And if they're going to create a 4 and a half billion dollar hole, why don't we invest it in families? Why would they prefer to give it to wealthy corporations? Why would the government prefer, in this case, to give it to people who really don't need it? As we saw when this was introduced in Ottawa – I know the Premier saw it happen in Ottawa and perhaps was involved and voted on it in Ottawa as well – why does the Premier want to pad the pockets of the wealthiest 1 per cent while letting families suffer?

That is something that I am very concerned about. It's something that I think we should not stand for in this Assembly, it's something that I think we should not vote for in this Assembly, and I really urge members here to really consider the implications of blowing a giant hole in the provincial budget. I understand that the Conservatives here were elected on making sure there was a meaningful path to balance. I really believe that that is something important as well. I believe that we do need to make sure that we have a handle on our books.

But, Mr. Speaker, it becomes very clear that if you took 10 per cent of the revenue in your household away – I assure you that that is not the way to balance your books. If you are spending money and you decide, "Well, I'm going to keep spending money because these services are essential to me, things like health care and education, but I'm also looking to take away 10 per cent of my revenues to give to my friend," that's not responsible bookkeeping, and I think the government should recognize that. If they don't, I think that's something we should be very concerned about as the opposition and as Albertans.

*11:10*

I mean, we saw this happen also in British Columbia, at the subnational level. In British Columbia they cut corporate taxes from 16.5 per cent to 10 per cent. Politicians in British Columbia, just like here in Alberta, just like the Premier here in Alberta, said that this would pay for itself because the province's economy would grow X per cent, Mr. Speaker. We can see that it grew a little bit, but actually in the same time period as that cut what happened was



that the province's debt load doubled. It actually doubled. We can see pretty clearly that when we talk about these types of tax cuts, they don't create those jobs. They don't improve the provincial government's books. In fact, in most cases it actually increased the debt load of the government, which should be fairly self-evident. If you decrease your income, your debt load will go up if you're spending. If the self-proclaimed fiscal conservatives don't understand the simple concept that if you take away a significant amount of your income and give it to the wealthiest 1 per cent, it's going to hurt the province's books and that if we do that, it's going to have to come from somewhere – we've already heard members of the Conservative Party here talk about how these cuts are going to hurt.

Mr. Speaker, I did not come here to this Assembly and I was not sent here by the electorate in Edmonton-South to hurt Albertans. I was sent here to make sure that we could support them in whatever way we can. I was sent here to make sure that we did good fiscal policy and invested in good services. When we look at what is being proposed today in this bill, I think it's something that members should take a very hard look at and consider whether it's what they were sent here to do, whether they were sent here to give a giant giveaway to the richest 1 per cent or whether they were sent here to represent their community and try to find opportunities to invest in their communities.

Mr. Speaker, we can look at the corporate tax cuts and say, "Absolutely, we believe we do need to find a way to create jobs and investment in Alberta; we absolutely do need to do that work," but the evidence shows that this doesn't work every single time. It is a risky, ideological approach that will not work, and it will end up hurting Albertans, and it will end up hurting the government. I think that's something that we as an opposition have an obligation, a duty, really, to oppose and to let the members of the government know that this will not work.

We presented the evidence. I know that a number of my colleagues will be tabling documents to that effect in the near future here. Really, we can look at it, and we can look at economists from a number of reputable institutions such as a survey conducted in 2012 by the University of Chicago; a leading economist from MIT; Harvard; Yale; the University of California, Berkeley; the University of Chicago; Stanford; Princeton; and Northwestern. They found that not a single economy believed that cutting federal taxes would raise enough taxable income so that there would be a five-year return without the tax cut.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at these leading economists, people who fiscal conservatives proclaim they believe in – fiscal conservatives proclaim they understand the economics – and we look at this and see that they really haven't done anything at all around the research, that's very concerning to me. It's very concerning to me that the Premier is willing to go forward with these risky, ideological cuts that will hurt. Four and a half billion dollars and risky, ideological cuts that then come back and hit families right where they need it most: right in their health care, right in their education. That's something the opposition will never stand for. That's something that the opposition will always fight against. We will always fight to make sure that fiscal policy brought to this Chamber is responsible, is researched, and is something that works for Albertans, not something that works for the wealthiest 1 per cent.

I'm very proud to be able to stand up here and say that. I'm very proud to say that my colleagues here in the Official Opposition believe that as well. We want fiscal policy that actually makes sense, not ideologies, not dogma, not anything that the government

wants to ram down the throats of Albertans without consultation. Really, Mr. Speaker, I think it is our responsibility as legislators here today to say: we are not standing for ideology; we want responsible governance. So we should vote against this.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you to the hon. Member for Edmonton-South.

The ordinary Speaker recognizes the Minister of Service Alberta and Member for Strathmore-Brooks, Chestermere-Strathmore . . .

**Mrs. Aheer:** Something like that – thank you, Mr. Speaker – and Minister of Service Alberta, too. Woo-hoo. I'm all over the place tonight. Thank you so much, and thank you for the enthusiasm of the member across the way.

We had this wonderful thing called an election recently, and the most fabulous part about that was the immense consultation. I have to speak, based on the fact of having been in this incredible House for four years prior to actually being in government, to be able to discuss the importance of consultation, the importance of actually reaching out to people. We are here based on a mandate of consultation, in fact, a 28-day, very impactful consultation, where Albertans actually voted in favour of the very piece of legislation that the member is criticizing at this point in time. I have to believe that of the thousands of doors that all of us knocked on – the people that we spoke to, the understanding that they had about how it is that we bring back an advantage to this province, the importance of actually honouring business in this province, the thousands of jobs that are created by this sector in various places.

To be truthful, Mr. Speaker, the previous government and the impact that their policy had on big business and small business and our resource sector and the attacks on the resource sector and the attacks on our resource development, our responsible resource development, the inability to actually stand up and speak on behalf of this sector, especially when outside of this country, the inability to be able to stand up and say that we are the best in the world, that we bring people together – hundreds of thousands of people came to this province because of what this province offers. The information that we got at the doors every single day, day in and day out, was the need to have a government that understands business, that understands the mechanism of the fabric that built this province, whether that's small business or large business.

The fact that the opposition continues to attack business on a regular basis is absolutely astonishing to me, especially given the impact of how it was that Albertans voted in the last election. This isn't a surprise to anybody, especially not in this House, especially to the opposition. It was a platform commitment that we took out to the public, completely transparent, everything there in order for them to make a savvy decision based on information, nuanced information, I might add, that was given to them on a regular basis.

Mr. Speaker, the question that I have is: if Albertans, who knew what they were seeing, who understood the platform, who were absolutely able to make their own decisions based on what was given to them in a very strong platform, in a very, very strong mechanism, by 87 people, whichever side you were on, going out door to door, plus all of their volunteers who knew the background and knew the policy and were able to talk about it – in fact, I'm sure that the opposition can concur that these weren't small conversations at the door. These were long, 20-minute, in-depth conversations around fiscal policy and how to build the province. Where do you think this policy comes from? It comes from the very people of this province who know how to run business, who understand how it is that we make this province be the very best place it can be.



We have a former government here that aligned themselves with a federal government that attacked an industry that funds the entire country's prosperity. That actually attacks the very reason that we function in this province. You want to talk about schools? You want to talk about class size? You want to talk about all those things? Well, you know what? It was the previous government's policies that actually waylaid the opportunities to be able to do any of that because of their attacks on an industry that actually pays for all of those services in this province. Do you want to talk about bad policy? Why are we in a situation right now where we cannot figure out how it is that a previous government that said that they care so much about people were not able to reduce class sizes, were not able to do all of the things that they're saying that we can't do based on the inability to have any policy that actually came forward to build this province up?

Thank you.

11:20

**The Speaker:** We are on Bill 3. Are there any other members wishing to bring some debate? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

**Ms Goehring:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to discuss Bill 3, the Job Creation Tax Cut (Alberta Corporate Tax Amendment) Act, and to express my concern with this plan that the government has proposed.

We put a plan forward that was responsible to balance the budget. Our plan balanced the budget by 2023-24 while making life more affordable. We wanted to invest in schools and hospitals and strengthen our economy.

I was just recently at my daughter's grad on the weekend last week. She graduated grade 12, and, Mr. Speaker, a lot of the conversations that were happening with the students, with the staff, with parents was about concern over what was happening with our economy and what the government was proposing to do to it. They didn't see this as a solution. They're worried about what this means to our province and what it means to our children and what it means to everyday Albertans that want to be able to access hospitals that aren't in disrepair and want to be able to send their children to school to learn in environments that are productive for learning, environments where they aren't at 45-50 students in a classroom.

Just this week the Member for Edmonton-Glenora and I went to one of the schools in my riding to talk to the teachers and to talk to the support staff there about what their concerns were with education. They told us that they were going to be reducing their staffing by 1.6. What did that mean? That means that some of the students come to school without an aide. There was a teacher that requires an aide in her classroom for one of her students who has severe autism, and that might not happen next year with their budget.

They're worried, Mr. Speaker. They know that the kids that we have in our school systems need support. They need smaller classrooms. They need the reliability on funding. They need to know that when they send their children to school, there are proper supports in the classroom for them. Looking at what this is proposing, I don't see that. I see some major cuts that are going to happen to our schools and hospitals, and it's concerning. They are conversations that people are having at dinner tables all across the province. I know that they're having them in Edmonton-Castle Downs.

People reach out to me expressing grave concern for the future of our classrooms and our hospitals to pay for this massive tax cut for corporations. I know that our loved ones are going to suffer and that no one can see the benefit from this tax cut. I know that people are

talking about this plan from the UCP, and I've heard comments about it having an economic whiplash. It's very concerning. It's a plan that seems to be ill conceived, and frankly we heard this evening that this plan has failed in every jurisdiction that it has been tried. It's just concerning. We're opposed to any plan that guts classrooms and shuts hospitals in order to pay for a massive tax cut to corporations.

What's more is that the corporate tax reduction doesn't generate a dollar of economic return for two years, Mr. Speaker. Premier Kenney's own election platform made that clear.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Point of order.

**Ms Goehring:** Oh, I apologize.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Thank you. It keeps happening, though, guys.

**Ms Goehring:** Names. I'm sorry. It's late.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Yeah. Fair enough. I accept the apology.

**Ms Goehring:** Ultimately, Mr. Speaker, we know that this plan that they've put forward is not the right plan for Alberta and for families because we know that they're going to suffer as a result of this. [interjections]

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** House leaders, if you would like to continue your discussion, please feel free to do so in the peace lounge.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs, would you like to proceed?

**Ms Goehring:** I'm good. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Are there any others wishing to add questions or comments on 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, we are on the bill. Is there anyone who would like to add additional comments or debate? The President of Treasury Board is not here to close debate.

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** He declines to close debate.

**The Speaker:** Wonderful.

Seeing none, I would like to call the question.

[Motion carried; Bill 3 read a second time]

## Bill 2

### An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business

Ms Ganley moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 2, An Act to Make Alberta Open for Business, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

[Adjourned debate on the amendment June 4: Mr. Copping]

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on 13(2). I hesitated to do it during the vote, but I would like you to explain why you referred to the Minister of Finance's absence.

**The Speaker:** I just would respectfully ask that the Government House Leader wait to be addressed by the Speaker. While he might like to call a point of order and, of course, that would always be the Government House Leader's prerogative, it is a requirement that



the House leader would be addressed by the Speaker. Having said that, I would be more than pleased to withdraw my comments with respect to whether or not the President of Treasury Board is, in fact, here or not here.

We are on Bill 2, the amendment REF1. Is there anyone wishing to speak to the amendment?

[Motion on amendment REF1 lost]

**The Speaker:** We are now back on the bill. Any members wishing to speak to Bill 2?

**Member Irwin:** I move to adjourn debate on Bill 2.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

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

**Mr. Jason Nixon:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll start with this one. Pursuant to Standing Order 3(1.2) I wish to advise the Assembly that there shall be no morning sitting, Wednesday, June 5. I think I don't have to vote on that if I recall.

I will move to adjourn the Assembly, then, until tomorrow, June 5, at 1:30 p.m.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:29 p.m.]







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