



Province of Alberta

The 31st Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, March 11, 2025

Day 83

The Honourable Nathan M. Cooper, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 31st Legislature

First Session

Cooper, Hon. Nathan M., Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (UC), Speaker
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie-East (UC), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees
van Dijken, Glenn, Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock (UC), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (UC)
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Boitchenko, Andrew, Drayton Valley-Devon (UC)
Boparai, Parmeet Singh, Calgary-Falconridge (NDP)
Bouchard, Eric, Calgary-Lougheed (UC)
Brar, Gurinder, Calgary-North East (NDP)
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Chapman, Amanda, Calgary-Beddington (NDP),
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Vacant, Edmonton-Strathcona

Party standings:

United Conservative: 48

New Democrat: 37

Independent: 1

Vacant: 1

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, March 11, 2025

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

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

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, I have two guests to introduce to you today. They are two staff from the Legislative Assembly Office that are seated in the Speaker's gallery today. Cynthia Marks is a Bills and Journals Clerk who has been assisting temporarily in my office over the past couple of weeks, and I'd like to say thank you so much for your professionalism and assistance, Cynthia. Secondly, a new staff member joining the Speaker's office team. I'm pleased to introduce Ana Vega, who will do a wonderful job in her role as the administrative co-ordinator to the office. I hope you will all make her feel welcome, and please feel free to stop by the office any time to say hello. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South has a school group to introduce.

Member Hoyle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you the amazing students and dedicated teachers and volunteers from the grade 6 of Monsignor Fee Otterson in the Edmonton-South riding. Please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

Member Ceci: Mr. Speaker, through you, to you, to members of the Legislature: Marlene Heidemann, Adrienne Bursey-Harris, Clara Sunwoo, and Jason Seaward are all RSWs. Three of them are senior child intervention practitioners. One is a court co-ordinator. Mr. Speaker, March is Social Work Month. Please stand up and receive the warm congratulations of the Assembly.

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

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As my colleague just said, March is Social Work Month in Canada. Therefore, as a social worker myself I'm proud to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly the following amazing registered social workers: Shamanthi Cooray, program reporting verification officer; Adesola Olawale, disability services caseworker; Michelle Lecompte, rehabilitation practitioner supervisor. All work for the government of Alberta. Please stand and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. minister of children's services.

Mr. Turton: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through to all the members of the Assembly some fantastic students from Boyle Street Education Centre today,

joined by their teacher Jennifer Bennett. Please rise and accept the warm welcome of this Assembly.

Dr. Metz: Mr. Speaker, as a neurologist it is my honour to introduce to you members of the Edmonton Epilepsy Association. We have Valeria Palladino, Tammy Humphreys, Erica and Sydney Takats, Noella Desaulniers, Karima Ewig, and Cristy Alexander, all here to advocate for a new drug for resisting epilepsy. Please rise.

Members' Statements

Government Policies

Mr. Eggen: If the UCP is serious about stopping Trump, they need to stop acting like Donald Trump. For years now almost every new policy this government has tried to impose on Albertans is nothing more than a copycat from their MAGA friends from south of the border. Attacks on academic research and science, attacks on immigration and minority groups, antivax rhetoric: the list goes on and on.

The UCP must stop with their slogan that Canada is broken, stop the attacks on the national institutions that Albertans depend on. The Canada pension plan works, and we all need it. Stop trying to dismantle it. Our public health system works when you invest in it. Stop tearing it apart. Now more than ever we need a strong, well-funded RCMP. Stop attacking the Mounties.

The UCP's corrupt care scandal, which is now being investigated by the RCMP, lies at the heart of all of this. By tearing out pages from Trump's playbook and applying them here in Alberta, the UCP appears willing to break the law for the sake of undermining our public health system and enriching their friends to boot.

Sunlight is the best disinfectant, Mr. Speaker. The corrupt care scandal needs a public inquiry with a judge empowered to call witnesses, and the RCMP must be allowed to conduct their investigation without constraints nor fear of retribution. The corrupt care scandal undermines the important work that needs to be done by this government to protect Albertans from the threats of tariffs and threats to our sovereignty as a nation.

Throw down the MAGA hats, start flying the Canada flag the right way around, and if you are serious about stopping Donald Trump, stop acting like Donald Trump. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon has a statement to make.

Edmonton Downtown Revitalization

Mr. Boitchenko: Mr. Speaker, the stats don't lie. Alberta is the best place to live, work, and raise a family, full stop. Our province's population is growing at a record rate. Our tourism industry is booming, with visitor spending reaching an all-time high in 2023. This creates a need for us to develop more world-class attractions and facilities that will create jobs, spark economic growth, and serve more residents and visitors. This is why our government has entered an MOU with the city of Edmonton and the Oilers sports and entertainment group to make a historic investment in downtown Edmonton.

The MOU will further unlock Edmonton's potential to be the destination for sports, entertainment, and much more. Our investment of up to \$183 million will help fund priority projects right here in our capital city. This includes a brand new event park in the heart of the Ice District, site servicing for the village at Ice

District to develop much-needed housing, and the demolition of the old Coliseum for future developments.

We are building Edmonton into the capital city that will turn heads, Mr. Speaker, all while improving public safety, creating more affordable housing and opportunities for families, visitors, and residents to get together and make memories that will last for a lifetime. The work that our government is doing will strengthen communities and solidify Edmonton's position as a world-class destination.

Thank you.

Sexual Assault Services

Ms Hayter: Mr. Speaker, just days after International Women's Day and during Women's History Month, I want to speak about what's happening to women in Alberta under the UCP. While we should be celebrating women's achievements, I must instead speak today about the harsh reality being imposed by this UCP government.

Their choices – and make no mistake, these are their choices – are systematically dismantling the essential support that women across our province depend on. Yesterday the Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton announced that they could no longer accept new clients for many vital programs. Let me be clear what this means. When a woman gathers the courage to say, "I need help," this government has ensured the answer will be: "Sorry. We've been defunded."

I wonder if members across have ever had to look into the eyes of a survivor and explain that their healing isn't in this year's budget priorities. Two out of 3 women in Alberta will experience sexual violence in their lifetime. Let that sink in. Look around this Chamber. Look at your colleagues. Look at your staff. Look at your families. Two-thirds of women in our lives, and this government's response: cut the lifelines they depend on.

1:40

Each night across our province shelter workers make that impossible choice about which women and children they can protect and which they can turn away because of the UCP cuts. I invite any member opposite to spend one night explaining to a terrified mother why there's no room for her and her children. Just one night. These are decisions no one should have to make, consequences no government should accept. This government speaks of fiscal responsibility while leaving women to bear the true cost. This is mismanagement. Alberta women deserve better, not corruption, chaos, and cuts.

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

Safer Communities and Neighbourhoods Unit

Mr. Wright: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On February 20 the Alberta sheriffs successfully shut down another property known for drug activity in my riding of Cypress-Medicine Hat thanks to the dedicated work of our safer communities and neighborhoods unit working alongside the Medicine Hat Police Service. Since April of 2023 this property has received 18 complaints related to drug and criminal activities, with most originating from its detached garage. It is situated in a high-traffic area, with two schools and a daycare nearby, making the situation even more concerning.

This goes to show how these dangerous criminal organizations can operate very close to home and how much harm they can cause in our communities. They directly threaten the well-being of children and families. The safety of Albertans and their families remains a top priority for our government. Through collaborative enforcement efforts and community engagement we're taking

actions to ensure that Medicine Hat residents can feel safe in their neighborhoods.

Again today there's even more success for the SCAN unit. The Alberta sheriffs have shut down a property in Innisfail where complaints of drug activity disrupted a residential neighbourhood. We will continue to do whatever it takes to keep our province safe. SCAN's closure of this notorious property is a huge win for the residents of Innisfail. This continued success demonstrates our Alberta government's commitment to empowering our communities to actively participate in the creation of safer environments, because public safety is a shared responsibility. Together we can create a stronger and safer Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans deserve to feel safe no matter where they live. The SCAN units help provide and improve that public safety by giving police more tools and partnerships to combat criminal activities. This is why we've expanded it. The success of these operations prove that the efforts we are making are making a significant difference in our community. We're sending a clear message to criminal organizations and drug activity everywhere: you have no place here in Alberta.

Budget 2025

Member Batten: Mr. Speaker, constituents say the funniest things. Residents of Calgary-Acadia, like many Albertans, have been paying close attention as the fine print of this proposed budget is made clear.

In a time when things are scary, money is tight, and jobs are uncertain, Carolyn wants to know why they're seeing cuts to public education and a government gloating that 1 teacher to 48 students deserves an A plus. We all know that's a failing grade.

Chaos inside the health care system, where the mental health, work ethics, and commitment of health care workers are profoundly impacted by the incompetence of this government, shares Jessica, a registered nurse.

The corrupt care scandal has me at my wits end, and Lauren questions how to stop this madness.

How does this restructuring improve any outcomes for Albertans? Jess worries that in the end all we'll see are lots of severance packages, costly private contracts, and buddy deals.

Sam couldn't agree more. She urges that this can't be let go; the cronyism has to stop.

A \$10 billion swing in 12 months from surplus to deficit. Albertans are watching this government choose trips to Florida over supports for permanency. They pick fights with the federal government instead of securing child care in Alberta and are rewriting history by actively deciding what gets recorded.

Hilary was quite blunt: it's you, Premier Smith, who I do not trust.

Danny sums it up quite nicely: I understand fiscal responsibility, but I am dismayed that once again our province's most vulnerable children, who did not ask nor deserve to be where they are, are once again asked to do without.

Do better.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Acadia will know that the use of a proper name under any circumstance, including that in a member's statement, would be inappropriate, and I'm sure she'll govern herself accordingly in the future.

Continuing Care System

Ms Sigurdson: Back in 2021, the UCP released the facility-based continuing care review. There were 42 recommendations that

identified key changes needed to improve the well-being of seniors in our province. The review was widely heralded by many stakeholders as moving the sector in a positive direction.

This is in sharp contrast to many biased reports created by the UCP to further their backwards ideas. Remember Jason Luan's supervised consumption review in 2019, and, more recently, the Alberta pandemic data review 2025? Both reviews were widely condemned by academics, front-line workers, and the NDP caucus.

Today, four years later, regardless of the UCP having a blueprint for key changes, the continuing care system is still in chaos. From motel medicine, where seniors were put in rooms that did not accommodate their wheelchairs and fed fast food, to ongoing lack of staffing and facilities, which means seniors are neglected, the UCP have not improved the system. They say shifting the responsibility from Health to Seniors, Community and Social Services will improve things. Well, we're waiting, and waiting, and nothing has changed.

In addition, instead of fulfilling a key recommendation of the review, the Minister of Health changed the legislation last year to eliminate minimum daily hours of care for residents. This change means operators do not have to abide by universal standards and families cannot rely on consistent and sufficient care for their loved ones. The facility-based continuing care review recommended the minimum care hours be increased, not eliminated. Therefore, the UCP is ignoring the recommendations of their own review.

Here we are today in the biggest scandal of the Alberta government ever: the corrupt care scandal. Do you think the Premier and ministers are working hard to improve the continuing care system to support vulnerable seniors in our province now? Nope. They're busy firing CEOs and board members.

Introduction of Bills

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

Bill 40 Professional Governance Act

Mrs. Sawhney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today to move first reading of Bill 40, Professional Governance Act.

The Professional Governance Act would consolidate and streamline Advanced Education's professional governance legislation from nine separate acts into one. Bill 40 would modernize professional legislation, emphasizing good governance and consistency in the regulation of the professions it covers. It would also remain responsive to the unique needs and operations of each professional regulatory organization.

[Motion carried; Bill 40 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Ms Renaud: Oh, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table five copies of a letter that was written to Christenson residents talking about their work to lobby the government to reduce the interest rate on penalties.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Member Irwin: Thank you. I'm tabling some of the hundreds of comments on the Minister for Children and Family Services' Facebook post, where he is getting absolutely roasted, and rightly

so, for having the audacity to question striking education workers making poverty wages. They deserve fair pay and they deserve respect. Time to listen, Minister.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Mr. Kasawski: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Albertans know we debate in this Assembly, but in our communities we work together for a better Alberta. I'm providing a copy of the Inquiries Act provided to me by a UCP MLA that wanted to highlight the fact that the UCP cabinet is not calling a public inquiry.

Member Brar: I would like to table the statement from the Alberta Life Lease Protection Society which shows that 217 seniors are owed about \$72 million by the Greg Christenson Group of Companies.

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

Ms Chapman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the requisite number of copies of an e-mail from Krystle. Her 10-year-old isn't able to go to school without the support of her EA. She says, "The UCP keeps passing the buck down to school divisions but we all know that their funding comes straight from the top, straight from you."

Mr. Dach: I rise today to table five copies of four different letters from constituents in Alberta who are very much against what the transportation minister is doing with the green line. One of them starts: we really want to cut the chaos and get serious about . . . [interjections]

Thank you.

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

1:50

Oral Question Period

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

Unused Health Services Products

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, the corrupt care scandal has already cost Albertans hundreds of millions of dollars, and the costs are growing. In her statement of claim the fired CEO of AHS says that Alberta bought \$614 million in products and services from MHCare and the UCP's close friend Sam Mraiche. These products included infamous Turkish Tylenol but also countless shipments of personal protective equipment. To the Premier: how much has the government spent on storing in warehouses all of the Turkish Tylenol and expired PPE at the heart of the corrupt care scandal?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Premier and myself have stated already, we have very safe and effective medications that are available here in Alberta while the children in war-torn countries suffer from fevers without access to necessary treatments. The bottom line is that if we can't use those medications right here in Alberta, we need to make sure that they get to those children and to those places where they can be best used. While there is medication here in Alberta that is not being used, we are going to make sure it gets to where it can be used in those countries.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, leaked documents and videos reveal the cost of the corrupt care scandal has skyrocketed. The government

has wasted over \$5 million of Albertans' money just to store Turkish Tylenol and expired and unused PPE, much of which has been deemed completely unusable for Albertans' needs. They bought it all from Sam Mraiche, but they haven't used it and they can't use it. Instead they have been wasting Albertans' money, letting it collect dust in warehouses instead of spending it on Albertan priorities. How much is this costing Albertans?

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, the members opposite can fearmonger all they want. When there was medication required for Alberta children, we were out there making sure that we got it. Now that medication is no longer required in our province. We're going to make sure it gets to where it's needed most, in war-torn countries that don't have access to medication. [interjections]

Mr. Schow: Point of order.

Member LaGrange: We're going to make sure that that happens as quickly as possible. We're going to continue to do that, Mr. Speaker, because there are children out there that are suffering and could use it.

The Speaker: A point of order is noted at 1:53.

Ms Gray: Mr. Speaker, we know the government is paying over \$110,000 a month to store 5,000 pallets of expired PPE and even more for the pallets of Turkish Tylenol. It all adds up to over \$5 million and maybe more of wasted money on storage fees. The government knew their PPE was no good. Health care workers called it shoddy; we can assume Sam Mraiche and MHCare called it a jackpot. Now it all rots away, expired and unused, in an expensive-to-rent warehouse. How much waste and kickbacks has this government been party to?

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, the fearmongering from the other side continues. In fact, all the products that we received, including . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Whoa. Whoa. Whoa. Order.

The hon. Minister of Health is the only one with the call.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Maybe the members opposite would at this point listen to the fact that this medication is indeed safe. It was brought in. It was approved by Health Canada. It was allowed for sale in Alberta by Health Canada. We know that we have children in other parts of the world that could use this medication while we are not able to use it. The supplier of this product actually supplies all of Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar will come to order.

The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has question 2.

Ms Pancholi: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hope the Minister of Health will listen to the question before she begins to answer. The costs of the unused PPE don't stop at \$5 million. The government also signed a contract for another \$450,000 to get rid of it all. After buying PPE at a premium from Sam Mraiche, the government couldn't use it, so they have to throw it all away. The contract to get rid of 5,615 pallets of unused PPE went to an out-of-province company for \$450,000. Why did the government spend half a million dollars to throw away unused PPE they never should have bought in the first place?

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, I believe the members opposite forgot we were in a pandemic and needed PPE. We will continue to make sure that Albertans have the products they need, whether in a pandemic or not. We're going to continue to make sure that these products, these medications that are perfectly safe, regardless of what the other members are saying, that they will get sent to a place where they can be used before they expire. Again, Atabay, the primary manufacturer of acetaminophen, is the primary manufacturer for European Union, Middle East, and North Africa. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Ms Pancholi: Albertans deserve quality PPE, not the crap that they got.

The government's own briefing materials show they entered into an agreement . . .

Mr. Schow: Point of order.

Ms Pancholi: . . . signed in 2023 to get rid of all this unused, useless PPE . . .

Mr. Nixon: She's so angry.

Ms Gray: Point of order.

Ms Pancholi: . . . 5,615 pallets of unused PPE, Mr. Speaker, and it's still not even clear how much they got rid of because tons and tons of the stuff is still sitting in a warehouse in northwest Edmonton just collecting dust. This could be costing Albertans hundreds of thousands of dollars every month just to keep storing this garbage. How much of the unused PPE was disposed of through this contract, and how much is going to the dump?

The Speaker: A point of order is noted at 1:57 and 1:56.

The hon. the Minister of Health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite continues to fearmonger and make slanderous remarks about PPE and other products, including the acetaminophen which we have in stock. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

I might just note that I notice the Minister of Health listening to the question. I think she deserves the same respect.

The hon. the Minister of Health.

Mr. Schmidt: I disagree.

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar may find himself humorous. The Speaker does not, particularly when he's heckling the Speaker. You can choose to be rude, but you will not be rude to the seat or the office of the Speaker. You can even be rude to me, but you will not be rude to the office of the Speaker.

The hon. the Minister of Health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've said before, the medication was received from a reputable company called Atabay that is the primary manufacturer of acetaminophen in the European Union, the Middle East, and North Africa. It is slanderous to imply that these products are unsafe or cause illness.

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

Ms Pancholi: All right. So let's recap. The UCP overpaid Sam Mraiche for PPE that was not only unused but was actually useless. Then they paid more to store this useless garbage and then paid more again to have it thrown away. But, of course, the UCP did not actually pay for this; Albertans did. Then the UCP in their eternal wisdom entered into more contracts with Sam Mraiche and his multiple businesses for Turkish Tylenol and then private surgical centres, and we all know how that's going. This is a clown show of incompetence and graft. Why should Albertans expect anything other than corruption and failure from this government when it's all they can deliver?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd remind the members opposite that it wasn't the government but AHS that entered into all of the agreements, and we will . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll remind the members opposite that it was Alberta Health Services that has entered into all of these agreements, and we are going to find out and get to the bottom of what transpired through the independent, third-party review as well as the Auditor General review, and for the members opposite to wait for those reviews to take place. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

2:00

Ms Renaud: Let's review the facts. The government had over 5,000 pallets of useless PPE, and who knows what's actually been thrown out yet. They still have thousands and thousands of bottles of Turkish Tylenol that no one used. The former CEO of AHS alleges in her statement of claim that is in front of the courts that bloated contracts and kickbacks are at the heart of the corrupt care scandal. It continues to grow tentacles. To the Minister of Health: how many millions in total did the government spend on buying PPE and Turkish Tylenol and letting it rot in a warehouse?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again I will inform the members opposite that Alberta Health Services bought PPE. Alberta Health Services, in fact, bought the acetaminophen. For the members opposite to question the quality of either is unacceptable. Again, I will reiterate that the product came from Atabay, which is the primary manufacturer of acetaminophen in the European Union, Middle East, and North Africa, which was also looked over by Health Canada. It was allowed in by Health Canada, as was the remainder of products.

Ms Renaud: We're absolutely questioning this garbage that they call 'Tylenol.' Seventy million dollars to own the Libs? Come on.

It's probably been entirely written off, and now it appears that \$5 million has been spent storing it, \$450,000 spent trying to take it to the dump, and the costs keep mounting. How much has this government lost on this unused PPE and this garbage Turkish Tylenol, including storage fees and disposal costs? And if they don't know, why not just say so instead of trying to cover it up? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, while I have answered that question numerous times, I'm happy to answer it again. Alberta Health Services purchased the products. We are going to make sure that those acetaminophen products that we still have in stock, before they expire, are able to get to war-torn countries, where children are in need of them. You know, it is actually quality product. In fact, it's quality medication that Health Canada as well as ourselves have been able to use.

Ms Renaud: Albertans are disgusted by this waste of money, but it seems that's all this UCP government is good for. The scandal is about millions in wasted products, millions spent on Turkish Tylenol that the government could not use, but it's grown bigger with shady land deals, expensive warehousing of unused products, and even disposal contracts that the government didn't seem to execute. The only answer, Mr. Speaker, is a fully independent, judicial-led public – public – inquiry. Will you do it today? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, once again and for about the 15th time in this session, this government does take all of these allegations very seriously. That's exactly why an independent . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Mr. Amery: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That is exactly why an independent former judge of the provincial court of Manitoba is leading an independent investigation. That is why the Auditor General, an independent office of this Assembly, is leading an investigation. That's why the RCMP, an independent police detachment, is leading an investigation. There are multiple independent investigations.

Health Services Procurement Process

Ms Ganley: When a judge summons you to court, you go. You go because otherwise you can end up in jail. A judge in a courtroom has that power. The judge can compel people to show up, to answer, to produce documents. That's how they find the truth. A public inquiry has those powers, too. The judge in the UCP's supposed investigation? Well, they didn't give him those powers. Any lawyer, let alone the Minister of Justice, would know that. My question to the Minister of Justice is: why is he trying to pass off his 'sham investigation' as a public inquiry when he knows that it isn't?

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, we have an incredible amount of faith in former Chief Justice Wyant to conduct an independent investigation. We know that he is capable of doing so. This government has committed to providing everything necessary for that investigation to take place. We've committed to working with the independent office of the Auditor General. We've committed to working with the RCMP and co-operating with their investigation as well. The hon. member's question has no substance. We have committed to working with every single independent investigation as required.

Ms Ganley: The allegations in the corrupt care scandal are against the UCP cabinet. They are allegations of corruption, political kickbacks, favours traded for bloated contracts. It is the UCP government, their ethics, their competence, that is called into question. You don't need a law degree to know that the same cabinet deciding which questions a judge can ask isn't an investigation, so will the Minister of Justice finally admit that the

UCP deciding what evidence the investigation can see really just is them investigating themselves?

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, you don't need a law degree to understand that question, but that member does have a law degree and, unfortunately, did not get it right. The Premier has committed one hundred per cent unconditionally to supporting the investigations that are taking place. There are processes in this province for the type of investigations that are taking place. This government is fully co-operating with those investigations. In fact, we've been encouraging that they be expedited. We will get to the bottom of this, and this government will fully comply with everything required. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Ms Ganley: Again, what's at issue in the corrupt care scandal is the integrity of UCP cabinet ministers. Allegedly, we can't trust them not to allow kickbacks and bloated contracts, but we're supposed to trust them to turn over all the evidence of their own corruption? Without a public inquiry we have nothing but the UCP's own word that they didn't hide evidence. We might as well just ask them to tell us whether they're corrupt. The public deserves answers. Will the Minister of Justice do the right thing, stop the 'shamvestigation,' and appoint a judge to lead an actual public inquiry?

Mr. Amery: Mr. Speaker, all we have right now are a number of allegations, but what we do know is that we are fully supporting the investigations that are taking place right now. We have a highly respected former Chief Justice leading an investigation. We will co-operate with that. We have the RCMP working on their own investigation. While the members of the opposition want us to get involved and direct, we simply won't do that. What we will do is that we will co-operate with that investigation to its fullest possible extent.

Mr. Ellingson: Mr. Speaker, the former AHS CEO says that AHS employee Jitendra Prasad was this government's man on the inside. She alleges he helped secure hundreds of millions in contracts between the government and Sam Mraiche, but that's not the only person who knows about him. It is alleged that the Premier's chief of staff called him "his guy" and that he was at AHS to "get contracting right." To the Premier: other than handing hundreds of millions in contracts over to Sam Mraiche, what else did Prasad do to help this government and their wealthy friends?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Member LaGrange: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. These are all allegations made by a former employee of AHS who, in fact, is looking for a settlement, a large settlement. The government will be filing our statement of defence very shortly, and at that time we would encourage all the members opposite to read it and see our side of the story. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Ellingson: Yes. A former employee who has done her filing, but you have not.

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order. The hon. member will know that after question 4 the use of a preamble is not acceptable. I appreciate that you think it's funny, but you did it yesterday as well. It's not funny. It's about the rules. Either follow them, or we'll move on.

Mr. Ellingson: Given that according to the former AHS CEO a forensic audit raised major flags about Mr. Prasad's potential conflicts of interest and given that forensic audit revealed Mr. Prasad had an e-mail account with MHCare while he was also working for AHS and given that when the AHS board learned of this fact, they recommended going straight to the RCMP, why did the Premier fire the AHS board when they had these major concerns with this conflict of this government employee?

2:10

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, the government will be filing our statement of defence very soon, and we will be vigorously defending against all claims within that statement of claim. I'm committed to ensuring our health care system and our procurement processes are beyond reproach, as is everyone on this side of the House. I look forward to continuing the critical work that Premier Smith has tasked me with on refocusing the health care system, because we all deserve a great health care system. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. the Minister of Health will know that the use of a proper name under any circumstances is inappropriate.

Mr. Ellingson: Given that the AHS CEO was concerned with bloated contracts being negotiated by Mr. Prasad and the former CEO concluded the rates he set, quote, would lead to significant increased costs and potentially hundreds of millions in profits and given the former CEO told officials, including the Premier's own deputy minister, about these conflicts, why did the government fire the CEO when she was trying to alert the government to potential criminal activity and massively bloated contracts that could leave Albertans on the hook for hundreds of millions of dollars?

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, again, all of these allegations are just that, allegations that have not been tested yet. The government is filing our statement of defence very shortly, and I encourage all the members opposite to read it when it comes out. It will be of course made public at that point in time. Until that time I'm going to continue to work to make sure that we have an excellent health care system. In fact, we made a wonderful announcement yesterday on EMS, and I wish more members of the opposite would ask about that. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

Rural School Construction and Modernization

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Budget 2025, if passed, is meeting the challenges facing our province. Alberta's government is investing in various initiatives, including investments into our world-class education system. Last week the Minister of Education highlighted how many new school projects will be approved through Budget 2025 if passed. To the Minister of Education: can you please provide an update to Albertans and members of this Assembly on what communities outside the Calgary and Edmonton metro area will be receiving a new school project through Budget 2025?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In fact, Lesser Slave Lake received a new school in Budget 2024: the Red Earth Creek school.

In Budget 2025 nine school projects have been approved for communities outside of Calgary and Edmonton metropolitan

regions. I'm happy to talk a little bit more about those. More specifically, the communities of Lethbridge, Brooks, Grande Prairie, Cold Lake, Fairview, Muskiki Lake, and Fort McMurray will all be receiving school projects through Budget '25 if passed. I'm happy to provide more details about those individual projects.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that numerous communities across the province are receiving a new school project through Budget 2025, if passed, and given that there are already multiple projects under way in rural communities and smaller metro areas that will help address growing enrolment across the province and given that we have seen a generational investment into Alberta's education system by this United Conservative government to help ensure Alberta students continue to receive a world-class education, to the Minister of Education: can you please provide an update on the school projects already under way in Alberta outside the Edmonton . . .

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Education.

Mr. Nicolaides: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. An important question. Currently we have 132 school projects under way in various stages, including the 41 projects that have been approved in Budget '25, that we'll be providing more details about in the coming days. If passed, of course, a third of these projects will be in communities outside of Calgary and Edmonton metro communities, more specifically 47 projects. Twenty-seven of those projects are in the construction phase, six projects in design, 14 projects in planning, and one project in the preplanning stage.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Athabasca-Barrhead-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta will see new school projects through Budget 2025, if passed, in various communities across the province and given that there are already multiple school projects under way across the province to address growing enrolment in our fastest growing communities and further given that this government has made historic investments into Alberta's education system, to the same minister: can he please provide an update on the other important investments Budget 2025, if passed, will make to support student success in Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Nicolaides: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Some of the other investments that we're making include an additional investment of \$1.1 billion over the course of the next three years, which will help our school boards hire over 4,000 additional teachers and educational support staff. We're also investing \$1.6 billion to support the specialized learning needs of students. That includes a 20 per cent increase to the classroom complexity grant, which school divisions can use to hire psychologists, speech language pathologists, EAs, and other support staff, all of which will help ensure that every child receives a world-class education.

Premier's Travel to Florida

Ms Chapman: The Premier continues to spend more time south of the border than with the people of Alberta, her constituents, her own MLAs. It's clear this self-serving government would rather spend public tax dollars on lavish galas. This time it's a \$1,500 U.S. ticket for the PragerU gala in Florida. To be clear, the Premier is using Albertans' tax dollars to attend a high-priced fundraiser for a right-wing propaganda machine. Why does the Premier think it's okay to

use taxpayer dollars to help fund raise for PragerU with Ben Shapiro?

The Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To be clear, the Premier is doing exactly what she was elected to do, which is defend Albertans' best interests with their neighbours in the south. Mr. Shapiro has a large following on social media, and the Premier has made it clear that she will go where she needs to go to spread the message that Alberta is the best place to live, to work, to visit, and to make sure that . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

. . . the message that Alberta is open for business remains clear.

Mr. Speaker, while the chaos continues to ensue in Ottawa, you can count on the Premier to make sure that Alberta's best interests are represented.

Ms Chapman: Given that the Premier is happy to promote this event for PragerU using public tax dollars for travel expenses that could be well used to fund Alberta schools or address the ongoing education support staff strike and given that PragerU's so-called educational curriculum contributions include challenging the history of slavery, saying things like "cries of racism where there is none," is the Premier agreeing with PragerU's horrendous views on the history of slavery in North America, and is this going to be part of her plan for Alberta's curriculum? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Schow: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad the member opposite has decided to talk about education in the province of Alberta because the Premier has made a generational investment in education, investing \$8.6 billion to build and open 90 new schools in the province. That is what you call leadership. We are seeing record migration into the province. We need to address that issue by making sure we have the infrastructure, the schools, and the hospitals to meet the demands of the future of Alberta, and the Premier is leading the way. Unlike the leader opposite, who is somewhere maybe in this building or maybe not, our Premier is leading. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Collective yelling is not heckling. It is noise, and it's unacceptable.

Ms Chapman: Given that the Premier is spending Albertans' money for an all-expense-paid vacation to Florida in the middle of a trade war to hang out with her extreme buddy Ben Shapiro, given that other Premiers are cancelling their trips to the U.S. to show support for Canada while this Premier vacations in Florida, and given that Ben Shapiro falsely claimed that murdered black men like Trayvon Martin were responsible for their own deaths, why won't the Premier denounce these remarks, cancel the taxpayer-paid trip to Florida, and apologize for placating extremists yet again? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Schow: Well, Mr. Speaker, the person that the member opposite is referring to, Ben Shapiro, also opposes tariffs. While we're looking at an uncertain future with our neighbours to the south, the Premier will continue to do the job that she was elected to do, to defend our province against the uncertain future of tariffs.

I'm grateful that our Premier is here day in and day out doing her job defending our province. While the chaos ensues in Ottawa, real leadership is happening right here in this Chamber. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-North West is the only one with the call.

2:20 Unused Health Services Products
(continued)

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Few of us would want to cast our memories back to the pandemic, but it was hard not to be reminded of those dark days when I learned that defective PPE that the UCP government purchased from their friends is sitting in a warehouse in my constituency. I've seen the pictures. I have a simple question for the Minister of Health. Why is this government wasting millions of dollars, Alberta tax dollars, to store defective PPE that they should not have even purchased in the first place?

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, I've already answered that numerous times here. I'm happy to answer it again. Alberta Health Services purchased PPE during a pandemic. During a supply shortage of children's Tylenol AHS purchased acetaminophen from a reputable company that, in fact, provides acetaminophen to the European Union, Middle East, and North Africa. It is safe. It does not cause illness. I will just say that we are going to continue to make sure Albertans have what they need.

Mr. Eggen: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that this government has spent what appears to be in excess of \$5 million to warehouse faulty and useless PPE, the kind that the front-line workers once labelled as smelly, ill-fitting, and that it gave them skin rashes, and given that this carelessness has left the people in my riding feeling as though the UCP considers their neighbourhood just to be a place to dump and hide useless medical equipment, I ask the minister: will you at least do us the courtesy of outlining what the disposal plan is and how much more that is going to cost?

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, once again, I will inform the members opposite that it was Alberta Health Services that actually purchased the product and continues to be responsible for it. We will make sure that the additional acetaminophen that we have available is able to be put to good use in war-torn countries. That is what we're working on. As soon as I have finalized information on that, I will make sure to get that out to the members opposite and to all of the House. We're going to continue to be responsible with the products we have.

Mr. Eggen: Well, given that this government has no real plan to solve this problem and it only really is getting their head around what the problem is here today, given that the festering PPE is only one example of several serious problems – Turkish Tylenol, corrupt care scandal come to mind, wasteful spending, and indeed outright corruption – I ask the minister: when will this government stop enriching their friends and themselves with their wealthy friends and start to work for everyday Albertans, like they're meant to be doing?

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, when are the members opposite going to stop fearmongering, and when is No-show Nenshi, their NDP leader, going to stop creating . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Member LaGrange: When is the NDP leader, No-show Nenshi, going to actually stop advising the public . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Member LaGrange: Mr. Speaker, their leader just yesterday advised the public not to call 911 but rather drive themselves to the hospital if they were experiencing an emergency. If that isn't fearmongering, I don't know what is. Shame on them. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

Transfer of Health Facilities' Ownership

Mr. Rowsell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not surprised to hear that the NDP have another smear campaign under way. With the passing of Budget 2025, I have seen increasing amounts of misinformation about hospital transfers from Alberta Health to Alberta Infrastructure. As Mark Twain said, "Get your facts first, [and] then you can distort them as you please," let's help the NDP get the facts they are already distorting. To the Minister of Infrastructure: on April 1, 2025, are you selling hospitals? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Mr. Long: I haven't even heard my answer yet, Mr. Speaker. I want to be crystal clear. No one is selling hospitals, and no one is privatizing health care. Full stop. It's disheartening that the opposition is not aware of the Canada Health Act in that regard. All Health-owned properties will be transferred over to Infrastructure on April 1 as part of the Real Property Governance Act that passed last year. This should not be surprising even to the opposition. We've been working for over a year to consolidate all government-owned property under one management. There's no secret agenda on this side of the House. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster-Wainwright.

Mr. Rowsell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that there are many care operators already working in health facilities across the province and given that these operators already purchased their own insurance, their own maintenance, and pay their own utilities and further given that Alberta care operators are critical to communities across the province, to the same minister: how much will these property transfers cost operators, and how will it impact quality of care?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Mr. Long: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. These properties will all be leased back to the applicable health entity or agency for no cost. As is the case already, the leasing organization is responsible for all costs under the lease, like insurance, property maintenance, and utilities. Put simply, while specific ownership will change, there is no impact of services in any of these facilities. The government of Alberta already plans, builds, and pays for hospitals and other public health care facilities. This change allows us to maintain ownership of our assets and efficiently use taxpayer funds.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rowsell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you to the minister: given that Alberta Infrastructure already manages most of

the government's property and given that the Real Property Governance Act that passed last spring gives the province the right of first refusal on assets such as health facilities when the buildings reach the end of their useful service life and further given that the changes passed under the RPG Act will make Alberta's government better stewards of taxpayer dollars, how will the property transfer on April 1, 2025, enhance government efficiency and save tax dollars?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Mr. Long: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Imagine hiring a contractor to build a house, paying the contractor to maintain it, and then after a few years, the contractor moves out and sells you that house you've been paying for the entire time. It's not logical. When these buildings reached their end of life, some health agencies are selling them and/or the land back to the government at market value. We are paying twice to own the same building and land. To reiterate, no one is selling hospitals. We will not pay twice to own the same facilities, and we are committed to effectively managing Albertans' money.

United States Tariffs on Canadian Products

Member Boparai: Mr. Speaker, Albertans are living in fear of the Trump tariffs, and they see no relief from the government. In Alberta small businesses in manufacturing, importing, and exporting aren't multimillion-dollar operations. They are small shops providing good jobs, but they are vulnerable to 25 per cent tariffs. To the minister: what is this government doing to help these businesses survive and keep employees on the payroll? Right now it doesn't look like much.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Jobs, Economy and Trade.

Mr. Jones: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has always built the conditions for all businesses to succeed. That's why we have the lowest taxes in Canada. That's why we're obsessed with eliminating business-slowing regulation. Right now, in response to this situation with the United States, we're engaging with industry, with our provincial and territorial and federal counterparts on how best to respond. Obviously, this is a fluid and dynamic situation. The worst thing to do would be to elect the NDP to start doing things without thinking about it.

Thank you. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Member Boparai: Given that this Premier's whirlwind of cocktail parties and far-right media appearances on the taxpayers' dime has delivered zero relief for Alberta farmers and given that billions in agriculture trade are now at risk due to these tariffs and given that rising costs this UCP government can control, like soaring insurance rates, electricity, and utility prices, are already flashing farmers' margins, to the minister: Alberta farmers deserve better. What is he doing to ensure no more farms go out of business under his watch?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation.

Mr. Sigurdson: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Listen, what I can say is this. Our ministry is working tirelessly with our farmers and ranchers every single day to make sure that they are represented at the federal level properly. This is a mess that the federal government made. It is their mess to clean up. Full stop. We are going to continue to advocate on the federal level to make sure that

they're supporting farmers and ranchers adequately and that if they do put retaliatory tariffs in place, that those retaliatory tariffs stay industry specific and get back to our farmers and ranchers at this time.

2:30

Member Boparai: Given that Budget 2025 predicts over 15,000 job losses this year and ATB Financial economists warned that number could climb to 33,000 if these tariffs take effect and given that many of these jobs are in middle- and low-income sectors, hitting rural Alberta hardest on top of an affordability crisis caused by this UCP with skyrocketing utility bills and massive insurance premiums, to the minister: will this government provide any support for Albertans losing their livelihoods due to Trump's reckless tariffs, or will they be left to fend for themselves?

Mr. Jones: Mr. Speaker, I think it's a little irresponsible to speculate on job losses related to tariffs. We don't know exactly what tariffs are going to be on, how they're going to be implemented, for how long they're going to last. We certainly don't need to concern families around the tables until we know what the situation is. The last time there were tens of thousands of jobs lost in this province was under the NDP government. They were antibusiness and they were antienergy, which is one of the reasons the country is not as diversified and does not have the infrastructure in place to trade with alternative partners. We're doing everything we can to repair the damage they did.

Personal Income Tax Rates

Mr. Wiebe: Mr. Speaker, Alberta's government is committed to putting more money back into the pockets of hard-working Albertans through the introduction of an 8 per cent personal income tax bracket on income up to \$60,000. This will result in significant savings for individuals and families in the province while fulfilling a promise made in the most recent election. To the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance: how will this tax cut support Albertans amid volatile tariffs and an unpredictable economy?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the member for the question. We committed to this tax cut in the 2023 election, an election that we won, an election where you guys ran on raising taxes and lost. In this time of great uncertainty for our economy, with the tariff situation changing not just daily but sometimes hourly, it was important for us to give 2 million Albertans more financial stability. It will help individual Albertan families and provide more money for them to spend in their local economies, and I know everyone in this House wants it. If you go in *Hansard*, you barked at me, totally choreographed: where's my tax cut? It's here. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Wiebe: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta is currently facing a deficit and given that this may cause some to question whether now is the right time to introduce a tax cut and given that Alberta has continually demonstrated strong fiscal management while maintaining affordability for families, to the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance: how can the government responsibly implement this tax cut while ensuring essential services are protected and the province remains on a path to long-term fiscal sustainability? [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Horner: That's a good question. I think it's the best question I've heard today, to be honest, Mr. Speaker. Alberta will come out of this stronger than ever. I have full belief that we will weather this storm and come out better than ever. The country is talking about pipelines, it's talking about egress, it's talking about markets, it's talking about lowering interprovincial trade barriers: things this government has stood for since 2019. What we're doing here is ensuring that Albertans have a chance to weather this storm as well. This is an important stimulus for the economy in this very uncertain time, and we know that it'll be our way of helping everyone ride through this storm.

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

Mr. Wiebe: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and through you to the minister. Given that Alberta's economy is strengthened by hard-working individuals, innovation, and low taxes and given that reducing the tax burden on individuals and families will leave Albertans with more disposable income to spend and invest and contribute to our economy, again to the Minister of Finance: how will lowering the personal income tax benefit Albertans while supporting job creation and attracting new investment across this province?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Horner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the Premier said when she announced the tax cut, it's Albertans' money. By allowing Albertans to keep more of their wages and salaries, they're able to spend it on things like groceries and pay their bills. Having lower personal income taxes also means it's easier to attract talent from across the world, and coupled with the lowest corporate tax rate in Canada, it means that we are a prime destination for companies to invest and to bring in the workers that we need.

Chinese Tariffs on Canadian Products

Ms Sweet: Mr. Speaker, over the weekend China imposed 100 per cent tariffs on Canadian canola oil, meal, and peas and 25 per cent on pork. Canada is one of the world's largest producers of canola, and shipments of canola to China stood at about \$4.9 billion last year, canola meal at \$921 million and canola oil at \$21 million, yellow peas at \$306 million, and another \$467 million for pork exports to China. We are talking about massive impacts to our agriculture economy. To the minister: what does the UCP plan to do to combat these attacks on our agriculture industry?

The Speaker: The hon. the Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation.

Mr. Sigurdson: Well, thank you, Speaker. I find this really rich when the members opposite have been supporting Jagmeet Singh, propping up a Liberal government, a government that put tariffs on China that resulted in this situation, and are now asking us how we're going to fix the federal government's mistakes. I think it's important to understand that this lies directly at the feet of the federal government. They created this situation; it's time for them to fix their mistakes. Justin Trudeau needs to answer for his poor policy decisions. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order.

Ms Sweet: Given that these antidumping tariffs by China will cost \$1 million to organizations and the eight farmers – it is estimated that Canadians' canola industry could take a \$1 billion hit due to

these developments – and given that during negotiations with the United States dairy farmers had 3 per cent on domestic market trade to U.S. products and at that time a compensation model was developed to off-set those losses, I'm asking for two things: that the eight farmers and commodity groups be compensated for legal costs associated with the antidumping investigation and that a financial compensation model be developed to address the impact on commodity and export markets until this dispute between China and Canada is resolved. Minister, get on board.

Mr. Sigurdson: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm already on board. I've met with the federal minister. Those are the exact asks that we put to him. But I want to be clear, and I think a person that said it best – I'm going to quote Rick White, Canadian Canola Growers Association president and CEO. He said:

Canadian canola farmers are facing an unprecedented situation of trade uncertainty from our two largest export markets only weeks before planting begins... The impact of the federal government's trade policy decisions is now playing out at the farmgate, making it imperative that [the federal] government respond with a plan for [full] financial compensation.

Ms Sweet: Given that the government has only budgeted an assumption of 15 per cent on all tariffs in this year's budget and given that we are now at 100 per cent tariffs on canola oil, canola meal, and peas and an additional 25 per cent on pork and given that the United States has planned 25 per cent tariffs on all agricultural commodities, which will significantly detriment both crop and livestock production and cause deep concerns among Alberta beef producers, will the minister admit that the 15 per cent tariff assumption in the budget is incorrect, and will he renegotiate stronger BRM supports at the next FPT to support the agriculture industry? Come on, Minister. The industry is... [interjections]

The Speaker: Order.

Mr. Horner: Mr. Speaker, I never said that we have a crystal ball or that the U.S. came to us and said: oh, no, disregard everything; it's actually 15 per cent. I made that pretty crystal clear during the budget Q and A. What we did was give our best guess at what a plausible course would be. Twenty-five per cent, down to zero, down to 15: we don't know. What we did do was take a significant chunk of the risk and put it in our baseline. That is not what we have seen other provinces do. That was real leadership, and the credit-rating agencies agree. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order. Order. Order.

Government Procurement Process

Ms Goehring: Albertans deserve transparency from their government, Mr. Speaker. Bill 35, the All-season Resorts Act, gave the Minister of Tourism and Sport the power to remove protected area designations, an unprecedented transfer of power that exempts all-season resort development from the normal environmental planning and review process. Many Albertans are questioning the contract procurement practices of this government. To the minister: is this yet another area in which we can expect to see contracts granted to pals of the UCP?

The Speaker: The hon. the minister of tourism.

Mr. Schow: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the hon. member recognizing the importance of tourism. This is actually the first time since becoming the minister that a member from the opposition has actually asked me a question about sports or about

tourism. It must be because we agree about a whole lot of things, including the importance of telling the Alberta story. One of them is our rich landscapes and beautiful vistas, something that we're going to share with the rest of the world by creating all-season resorts for visitors from around Alberta, around Canada, and around the rest of the world to come and visit.

2:40

Ms Goehring: Mr. Speaker, given that I recently spoke with a constituent and former AHS employee who said that she would not have even considered going for a coffee with an individual who sells medical devices or is otherwise involved in a procurement process, even for appearances' sake, given that the Premier recently stated that she and her cabinet are not involved in procurement, why is it that this government is so comfortable publicly meeting with and developing relationships with those who are?

Mr. Schow: Mr. Speaker, I'll start my answer by calling a point of order. Those questions are certainly not relevant.

What I would love to do is take another moment to talk about the importance of developing tourism in the province of Alberta, Mr. Speaker. Last year we released our long-term tourism strategy. The purpose of this was to outline a path forward of reaching \$25 billion of visitor spending by 2035, something that I believe and the stakeholders believe is very achievable but not, of course, without the help of all-season resorts. It's something our neighbours to the west have done very well, and we have a made-in-Alberta approach to making sure Albertans, Canadians, and international visitors explore our backyard.

The Speaker: A point of order is noted at 2:41.

Ms Goehring: Given that this government continues to erode public trust with its pattern of questionable decision-making, given that Bill 35 features an unprecedented power grab that reports of cozy relationships between government officials and those with a keen interest to make money from government procurement, given that Albertans are rightfully concerned about whose interests are truly being served, transparency and ethical governance should be the bare minimum. Will the minister commit to an independent investigation into the procurement practices of this government to ensure Albertans are not left footing the bill for another round of UCP cronyism?

The Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A string of poor decisions is what landed the NDP back in opposition after one term in government. I'll tell you: it's pretty rich hearing the members opposite talk about ethics when a member of their own caucus, Thomas Dang, had his door kicked in by the police and his house raided and was convicted. I tell you it is rich from the members opposite. On this side of the House we have a Premier who is leading this province in some very difficult times with our neighbours to the south, and we stand behind her.

The Speaker: Hon. members, this concludes the time allotted for Oral Question Period. We will not be continuing the daily Routine in 30 seconds or less because I believe the daily Routine is almost completed.

Hon. members that brings us to points of order. At 1:53 the hon. the Government House Leader rose on a point of order.

Point of Order

Allegations against a Member

Mr. Schow: Yes, Mr. Speaker. At the time noted, I rose in a point of order under 23(h), (i), and (j). At the time noted, the hon. Minister of Health was speaking with regard to acetaminophen being sent to

Ukraine. At the exact same time the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford could be heard saying: you're going to kill those kids. This language is disgraceful. It is unbecoming of a member of this Chamber to suggest that the hon. Minister of Health is intending, directly or indirectly, to kill children in a foreign country. I believe that this certainly rises to the place of a point of order, and I would ask that that member apologize and withdraw profusely. That is disgusting.

The Speaker: The Deputy Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I didn't hear it, and I don't know if it was caught on *Hansard*, but if such words were used directed at the minister, they would be out of order.

But the quality of that medication: I guess it was in debate that it's not good.

The Speaker: Are there others?

I do have the benefit of the Blues, and I am prepared to rule. As members know, the Speaker cannot rule on what they didn't hear. I do have the benefit of the Blues although I don't have an accurate record or recording of such a comment made. I would say that if the hon. member said it, it certainly is a point of order, and she should apologize for it. But, with that said, I have no record of it. I consider the matter dealt with and concluded.

At 1:56 the Government House Leader rose on a point of order.

Point of Order

Parliamentary Language

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I did rise on a point of order at that time under 23(h), (i), and (j), specifically (j), "uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder." At the time noted, the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud was speaking, asking a question to the Minister of Health, and in the question it said, with my unofficial records, "Albertans deserve quality PPE, not the [expletive] that they got." This language has been ruled out of order on three occasions according to my records – August 10, '89; June 13, '91; and April 12 of 2000 – all of which were withdrawn and apologized for. Certainly, this language is unparliamentary. This is two days in a row of points of order from that member. I'm hoping that conduct improves in this Chamber.

Ms Pancholi: Yeah. I apologize and withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you for your apology.

I consider the matter dealt with and concluded.

I might note for all of our hon. colleagues how such an apology doesn't continue to create disorder. I say thank you to you for that.

Hon. members, that brings us to point of order 3. At 1:57 the Official Opposition House Leader rose on a point of order.

Point of Order

Language Creating Disorder

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At that point the Official Opposition House Leader rose pursuant to 23(h), (i), and (j). I haven't raised a point of order in a while, so that's why I forgot. The Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services was heard saying, directed at my colleague: she is so angry; she is so angry. I think that's the kind of language that was directed on an individual member. The minister should refrain from using that kind of language. Also, that's the kind of language, personal accusation, that will create disorder in the House, and the minister should apologize for that.

The Speaker: The hon. the Government House Leader.

Mr. Schow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I did hear that a bit differently. I heard it in the form of a question, which is: why is she angry? I don't know which member of the opposition that the hon. Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services was referring to. I don't think Sundre's favourite son would have any ill intent in this Chamber. I again don't have the benefit of the Blues. I heard what I heard, but I leave it in your very capable hands. I don't believe it's a point of order.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I do have the benefit of the Blues. I also didn't hear what the hon. Minister of Seniors, Community and Social Services said, nor do I have an accurate official record, so as we were in the first point of order, we find ourselves at the same here in the third. If he directed it directly at the member, it probably moves in the direction of a point of order. It's certainly not as egregious as I've seen others, but it's not to say that it's not a point of order. It looks like he's rising.

Mr. Nixon: Well, Mr. Speaker, I did wonder why the opposition was angry today, and if this has offended them, I'm happy to withdraw and apologize. Let's get on with the day.

The Speaker: I consider this matter dealt with and concluded.

That brings us to the final point of order, point of order 4. The hon. the Government House Leader rose during the final set of questions.

Point of Order Supplementary Questions

Mr. Schow: I did, Mr. Speaker. I think that it contravenes convention in this Chamber that the first and second supplemental of a question, especially after the first four, has to be related to the initial question. I don't know how all-season resorts is related to procurement, but apparently the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs found a very creative way to link the two, or maybe I should say less than creative. I think this is a point of order, but I'll leave that in your hands.

The Speaker: The Official Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's not a point of order. My colleague was asking questions about all-season resorts, and then she said, "Many Albertans are questioning the contract procurement

practices of this government" and then asked the minister about when people can see the contracts granted to pals of the UCP. That was the line of question.

In the second supplement she did talk about a constituent and former AHS employee who told the member something, that some person who is involved in these kinds of contracts went for coffee, and people who have some interest in procurement: government is associating with them. Essentially, this question was about government corruption, which is under all kinds of different investigations, so I think these questions were quite closely tied with government procurement, their ethics in that process.

2:50

The Speaker: Are there others?

I am prepared to rule, and I do have the benefit of the Blues, with a special thank you to the expedient nature of *Hansard*, it being the last question. In this case I do agree with the Official Opposition Deputy House Leader that the questions were directed, while loosely, about procurement and not necessarily about tourism. That could be a matter of debate, but in this case I believe that they were linked close enough to not constitute a point of order. I consider this matter dealt with and concluded.

Hon. members, pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(5)(b) the Assembly stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m. The Legislative Assembly policy committees will convene this afternoon, this evening, and tomorrow morning for consideration of the main estimates.

This afternoon the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship will consider the estimates for Indigenous Relations in the Grassland Room. The Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates for Technology and Innovation in the Rocky Mountain Room.

This evening the Standing Committee on Families and Communities will consider the estimates for Service Alberta and Red Tape Reduction in the Rocky Mountain Room.

Tomorrow morning the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future will consider the estimates for Jobs, Economy and Trade in the Grassland Room, and the Standing Committee on Families and Communities will consider the main estimates for the Ministry of Health in the Rocky Mountain Room.

Hon. members, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 1:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 2:52 p.m.]

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