



Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Fourth Session

Standing Committee
on
Alberta's Economic Future

Bill 201, Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave)
Amendment Act, 2018

Thursday, October 11, 2018
9 a.m.

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Fourth Session**

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (NDP), Chair
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (UCP), Deputy Chair

Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (NDP)
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (NDP)
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (NDP)
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (NDP)
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (NDP)
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (UCP)
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (NDP)
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (NDP)
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (NDP)*
McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (AP)
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (NDP)
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (UCP)
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (UCP)

* substitution for Craig Coolahan

Bill 201 Sponsor

Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (UCP)

Support Staff

Shannon Dean	Law Clerk, Director of House Services, and Acting Clerk, Procedure
Stephanie LeBlanc	Senior Parliamentary Counsel
Trafton Koenig	Parliamentary Counsel
Philip Massolin	Manager of Research and Committee Services
Sarah Amato	Research Officer
Nancy Robert	Research Officer
Corinne Dacyshyn	Committee Clerk
Jody Rempel	Committee Clerk
Aaron Roth	Committee Clerk
Karen Sawchuk	Committee Clerk
Rhonda Sorensen	Manager of Corporate Communications
Jeanette Dotimas	Communications Consultant
Tracey Sales	Communications Consultant
Janet Schwegel	Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

9 a.m.

Thursday, October 11, 2018

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

The Chair: Good morning, everyone. I'd like to call the meeting to order. I'd like to welcome all members, staff, and guests to the meeting of the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future. I'd like to acknowledge that this meeting is taking place on the traditional territory of Treaty 6 as well as acknowledge the Métis people who have a close connection with this land.

My name is Graham Sucha. I'm the MLA for Calgary-Shaw and the chair of this committee. I'd ask that members and those joining the committee at the table introduce themselves for the record, and then we'll hear from those on the phone. I'll start with the member to my right.

Mr. van Dijken: Yeah. Good morning. MLA Glenn van Dijken, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. Taylor: Good morning. Wes Taylor, MLA for Battle River-Wainwright.

Mr. Schneider: Dave Schneider, MLA, Little Bow.

Mrs. Littlewood: Jessica Littlewood, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Mr. Horne: Good morning. Trevor Horne, MLA for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

Mr. Dach: Lorne Dach, MLA for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Piquette: Good morning. Colin Piquette, MLA for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Good morning. Maria Fitzpatrick, MLA, Lethbridge-East.

Loyola: Good morning, everyone. Rod Loyola, Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Mr. Carson: Good morning. Jon Carson, Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Connolly: Michael Connolly, MLA for Calgary-Hawkwood.

Dr. Amato: Good morning. Sarah Amato, research officer.

Mr. Koenig: Good morning. I'm Trafton Koenig with the Parliamentary Counsel office.

Dr. Massolin: Good morning. Philip Massolin, manager of research and committee services.

Mr. Roth: Good morning. Aaron Roth, committee clerk.

The Chair: Those on the phone?

Ms McPherson: Good morning. Karen McPherson, MLA for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Mr. Gotfried: Good morning. Richard Gotfried, MLA, Calgary-Fish Creek.

The Chair: For the record I'd also like to note the following substitution: Member Loyola for Mr. Coolahan.

Before we turn to the business at hand, a few operational items. Please note that the microphones are operated by *Hansard* and the committee proceedings are being live streamed on the Internet and

broadcast on Alberta Assembly TV. Please set your cellphones and other devices to silent for the duration of the meeting.

Moving on to the next item, we've circulated the agenda for this meeting. Would a member like to move the agenda?

Mr. Schneider: Would this be an appropriate time just to make an addition to the agenda?

The Chair: Yeah.

Mr. Schneider: Certainly. Under other business, Mr. Chairman, I'd just like to take this opportunity to add a couple of items. Basically, nothing by name, but it'll be explained further when we get there. It's basically to talk about economic development in Alberta, if possible.

The Chair: Mr. Horne.

Mr. Horne: Yeah. Thank you, Chair. I suspect it'll be on similar grounds, but I do have a point I would like to bring up. I suspect that it would be most prudent to discuss Member Schneider's items at the same time as mine.

The Chair: I will make a note of that, and we'll address that in other business. Thank you, members.

Would a member like to move the agenda for the October 11 meeting? All right. Moved by Mr. Taylor that the October 11, 2018, meeting agenda of the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future be adopted as circulated. All those in favour, please say aye. All those opposed, please say no. I would like to note that this is a vote on the revised agenda. My apologies. I'll do the vote again here. All those in favour, please say aye. All those opposed, please say no. Those members on the phone? Excellent. Thank you, members. That is carried.

Dr. Starke, if you'd like an opportunity to introduce yourself for the record as well.

Dr. Starke: Thank you, Chair. Good morning. Richard Starke, MLA for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

The Chair: Excellent. We'll move on to the next item of the agenda. We have the minutes from our last meeting on September 6, 2018. Are there any errors or omissions to note?

Seeing and hearing none, would a member like to move the adoption of the minutes? Moved by MLA Fitzpatrick that the minutes of the September 6, 2018, meeting of the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future be adopted as circulated. All those in favour, please say aye. All those opposed, please say no. Members on the phone? Excellent. That motion is carried.

All right. We'll move on to the next item on the agenda, the review of Bill 201, Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018. Hon. members, we have arrived at the time in our process when the committee discusses the findings of the review and deliberates on the recommendations for Bill 201. Just to refresh our memories, on March 19, 2018, the Legislative Assembly referred Bill 201, Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018, to the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future in accordance with Standing Order 74.2. Standing Order 74.2(1) states:

When a Bill is referred to a standing or special committee after first reading, the committee may conduct public hearings on the subject matter of the Bill and report its observations, opinions and recommendations with respect to the Bill to the Assembly.

Subsection (2) further states that

Upon the concurrence of a committee report that a Bill be proceeded with, the Bill shall be placed on the Order Paper for second reading.

Before I open up the floor for discussion, I'd ask that Mr. Koenig give a quick reminder of the status of this bill and what it means for the scope of our review. Mr. Koenig, if you'd like to proceed.

Mr. Koenig: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think you have provided a pretty good overview of the standing order and sort of the framework that it sets out for this review. I'll just remind committee members that Bill 201 received first reading on March 14 of this year, and on March 19 it was referred to the standing committee before receiving second reading.

Under Standing Order 74.2 the committee essentially has two options with respect to the bill. It can recommend that it proceed, meaning that it would go back on the Order Paper where it left off if that was concurred with by the Assembly, or it can recommend that the bill not proceed, in which case it would drop off the Order Paper if that report was concurred with by the Assembly. As the chair noted, the committee can also make other observations and opinions and recommendations with respect to Bill 201. Because the bill has not yet received second reading, these observations would be general in nature as opposed to specific changes to the language that is included in the bill.

That is basically the framework for the committee in terms of its report on this bill. If there are any questions, I'm happy to answer them.

The Chair: Excellent. Are there any questions for Mr. Koenig?

All right. Seeing and hearing none, I'll open up the floor for deliberations. MLA Dach.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Chair. Good morning, all. I appreciate the opportunity to get back and dig into work after some summer festivities. Before I begin my remarks this morning, I just wanted to thank the LAO staff who've really worked hard as part of this bill review process, as they always do, but particularly something I wanted to express this morning. So thank you once again for your efforts and your work.

First, I want it to be really clear that I know my colleague from Highwood had nothing but the best of intentions with the introduction of this bill. However, it has become clear over the course of this committee's work in reviewing the bill that the passage of the bill would result in some serious unintended consequences.

I've appreciated the opportunity to hear from the 40 Albertans who wrote to the committee on this topic. The opportunity to hear in person from the four expert guests who presented at the last meeting gave us a great deal to consider. I'm sure I speak for all of my colleagues when I say that the opportunity to ask questions of the presenters and hear their concerns proved valuable. I want to take a moment to recognize the presenters who took time out of their very busy schedules to provide feedback to us: Peter Krich, president of the Alberta Fire Chiefs Association; Al Kemmere, president of the Rural Municipalities association; Drayton Bussiere, fire chief of Lacombe County Fire Service; and Henry Thomson, deputy chief of the St. Paul Fire Department.

We heard a great deal from our expert presenters. The presenters put forward that communication and collaborative relationships are essential to a healthy employer-employee relationship and that forced compliance would be damaging to relationships. Mr. Krich further explained that "in order to build a fire service . . . you have to have good working relationships with people in your community, that being, number one, your employers."

Now, we heard that the AFCA has a program in place, Answer the Call, that educates and engages employers on the importance of

providing a leave to their employees who are also firefighters. Mr. Krich shared the successes of the program and how it has provided the foundation for a collegial approach between employers and local firefighters, as he called it. The presenters shared that Answer the Call is now being recognized as a national program and that it has a huge impact.

9:10

We heard from Mr. Kemmere that one size will not fit all for employers and that mandating unpaid leave and forced compliance is "creating some concerns . . . when it comes to the employer's perspective on this." Mr. Kemmere correctly pointed out that without the employer's support you cannot really create a partnership and you can never force a partnership.

With that being said, with all due respect to the mover of this motion, MLA Anderson, I would propose a motion. I move that the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future recommend that Bill 201, Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018, not proceed.

The Chair: On the screen, MLA Dach, does that meet with what you intend?

Mr. Dach: Correct.

The Chair: Excellent. Mr. Roth, if you could just reread it on the record for those on the phone.

Mr. Roth: Certainly, Mr. Chair. Moved by Mr. Dach that the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future recommend that Bill 201, Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018, not proceed.

The Chair: We have a motion on the floor, so I'll open that up for discussion. Dr. Starke.

Dr. Starke: Well, thank you, Chair. I'd like to thank the Member for Edmonton-McClung for the motion, and I, too, would like to acknowledge the work that was done by the Member for Highwood on this private member's bill. I will tell you that on initial presentation I was inclined to support the bill because to me it seemed, you know, like a common-sense thing and also that the idea of protecting our volunteers is certainly something that is laudable and would be hard to argue against.

Like other committee members, I listened very carefully to the presentations by the four representatives of the fire service that we heard from at the last committee meeting. In addition, there was one thing that kind of was always at the back of my mind with this motion because I'm very familiar with volunteer fire services, you know, living in a community that is served by a volunteer fire department, having served on city council of a fairly large urban municipality that still has a predominantly volunteer fire service, the city of Lloydminster, and recognizing that the one voice in all of this that is an important voice and is also an important volunteer in this mix is the employers of the volunteer firefighters. They, too, are volunteering. Not in the same way as the firefighters themselves, but certainly they are volunteering the services of employees. That poses certain challenges, and those were, I think, outlined to us very accurately by the presenters last meeting.

You know, I go back to the exchange that I had with Mr. Krich at the last meeting and specifically asking him about whether this bill helps or hinders the volunteer fire services that we have in our province that are having challenges recruiting and retaining members. It's safe to say – and within my constituency we certainly have a variety of services in terms of who is on those volunteer fire services in terms of the average age and the years of service. Some

of those services are having a tremendous challenge recruiting new members. I asked Mr. Krich very specifically and point blank: the services that are struggling, does Bill 201 help or hinder them? He absolutely without hesitation stated that it hinders them.

To me that was a critical response. That told me that, you know, from the point of view of the people that know, that are the closest to the situation, that best understand the situation, I would say, and certainly the four representatives we had here the last time, including Mr. Kemmere from the Rural Municipalities of Alberta, I think it is clear that this bill would have the potential – and it is unintended – of upsetting the balance that is created between fire service, volunteer, and the employer of those volunteers.

So I do want to say that my mind has actually been changed on this bill. I was prepared to support it in the House on second reading, and I was prepared to support it going forward, but I think it's also an illustration of the usefulness of referring bills to committee.

You know, I will say and be on the record as saying that I find it unfortunate that so far this government has chosen to refer so few bills to committee. The bills that it has referred to committee, specifically to this committee – the daylight saving time bill and now the firefighter leave bill – in both cases resulted in additional information that would not have been brought forward by the 87 members sitting within the Legislative Assembly. It brought forward points of view and stakeholder interests that would not have otherwise been heard, and I would dare say that in many cases it changed people's minds as far as whether they would support or oppose a piece of legislation.

Not wanting to minimize the importance of the issue of daylight saving time or the issue of firefighter leave, which are important issues, I find it somewhat ironic that those are issues that this government and this government caucus would be prepared to study further at committee, yet we have seen issues that are of greater complexity, of much greater impact to a large number of Albertans that this government has seen fit to not refer to committee. I think that's a mistake, and I think that's a mistake that this government must wear.

So, Mr. Chair, I'm certainly prepared to support the Member for Edmonton-McClung's motion. I think it is appropriate after the deliberation that we've had. I think it's been a very thorough deliberation, and I appreciate everyone who contributed to it, but I think that it's clear, based on the submissions that we had at the last committee meeting, that Bill 201 would create some unintended difficulties for our fire services and not something we want. I do have a motion that I intend to bring forward, when this motion is completed, that deals specifically with the recommendations of the fire chiefs, but for now and for this motion I will be in favour.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Starke.

Any other speakers to the motion? MLA Piquette.

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd also like to reiterate my gratitude to the LAO for the excellent work they've done to support this committee through these consultations and especially to the presenters for coming out, some from quite far away and at their own expense, in order to make sure that we get the best result. I mean, if we don't have people standing up in that way, we just can't make democracy work. It's as simple as that. I suppose the same public-spiritedness that motivated them to join the volunteer fire departments and work there, you know, motivated them to come out here, and we're all the richer for it.

I want to reiterate also the points that my esteemed colleagues have made on Bill 201. I'd also like to speak against us going forward with this and in favour of my colleague's resolution. You know, it was an opportunity to hear some pretty concrete examples

of some of the real-life implications of what this legislation would bring. Just as a few examples, we had Mr. Thomson, who shared his personal experience of working as a teacher and thus not being able to leave work to respond to a fire call for obvious reasons, and there are employers where nearly all of their employees are also volunteer firefighters. They'd have to literally shut down operations if something like this came to pass. We heard a fair deal from Mr. Krich. One of the things that he stated that really stood out for me was when he talked about: what comes first? As he put it – and this is a quote, as best as I can determine – “your family, then your job, and then the fire service.” This is the principle. Following this is: “That's how you build a fire service in your community.”

9:20

As alluded to, once again, I need to stress just how important it is that you keep these communication lines open with employers and have some flexibility and some understanding of, you know, situations where employers can't let their firefighters go. Not to do that would violate the pact that exists. That would obviously, then, have a negative impact on recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters. We don't want to have a situation where employers simply don't hire someone that they know is on the volunteer fire department. If we make it too onerous a burden on employers, it'll damage the potential for recruiting and retaining volunteers, like Mr. Krich had also mentioned.

You know, another presenter that made a strong point on that that stuck with me was Mr. Bussiere, who said:

I don't believe that employers are not allowing their employees to leave for fire calls for any other reason than that it could be detrimental to the operation of their business . . . At the end of the day the volunteer firefighters and their employers need to make money to support their families, and I don't think that we can ask them to put that at risk.

These are the types of concerns that I found consonance on when I spoke to volunteer firefighters in my own riding. I had the chance to talk to members from Grassland, from Boyle, the chief from Athabasca, and they all said the same: you know, we appreciated the thought, but this approach might have less than the intended effect.

So it's for those reasons that I would like to support the motion by MLA Dach.

The Chair: We'll move on to Mr. Taylor and then give an opportunity for those on the phone.

Mr. Taylor: Okay. Well, thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd like to thank all the people, the stakeholders, that provided feedback on this bill. It was an important bill. Mr. Anderson brought forward a bill that, again, was really important. When I talked to the fire chiefs locally – and I talked to firefighters because that's the world that I lived in; I was in the fire department – they thought that this was a very important bill and that what it contained was important. However, with this fulsome process, this discussion, it brought up other ideas that were perhaps concerns that could come up as a result of this bill.

I've enjoyed the process to get to the point that we are at now; that is, to thank the firefighters. That's something that we need to do, to thank the firefighters that keep us safe throughout the year each and every year, these men and women who make up what I consider the greatest volunteers anywhere. I mean, let's face it: who else is willing to risk their lives as a volunteer? So the firefighters need to be commended for their acts. They risk their lives, their health. Both mentally and physically they risk these things so that we can be safe.

I know, on a personal level, being a firefighter, that the radio tones can go off any time, day or night, and whenever you can, you

go out to the call. Most firefighters are on the road to the call and often in the hall before they know what's going on. What is the incident? What is the call-out for? Perhaps it's an accident. Perhaps it's a structural fire or a grass fire, a medical lift assist. The list goes on, and you never know what's going to happen, yet these brave men and women go nonetheless.

This bill looked at several things such as flexibility and job security in an attempt to allow members to respond during the day or night and not have to look over their shoulders to see if they are going to lose their job the next day; in short, security without fear of reprisal when they have to leave to answer the call.

Usually during the day there are fewer firefighters, and I've seen calls where we've had two, three people on a truck. Really, you're not supposed to roll without four people on a truck – that's what the SOGs call for; they say that you need to have a complement of four – but you roll regardless. If that's all that's come to the hall, you roll because people's lives could be in danger. So you're running.

But we want to make sure that they're able to answer the call despite employment commitments. That's what this bill was addressing, employment commitments and that they want to be able to answer the call. Some, frankly, cannot make it to the call because they're out of town with their jobs.

Some are teachers. In one case I had a friend who taught shop. He taught industrial arts, so he's got the band saws, he's got the table saws, and he's got everything else going. He cannot leave his teaching job. He can't pull another teacher and say: can you cover for me? They're not familiar with what goes on in shop. They'd have to shut it down. In that case he has to stay. He had to turn off his radio.

Others worked on the military base, and bless these guys. They worked in the fire department on the military base, and then they volunteer when they're not on the base fighting fires for the military. So these guys are truly committed individuals. Others are in health care, in the hospital.

Whatever the case, many cannot come out to a call, and that's why we ended up sometimes in the daytime with just a few people. Consequently, we have found, especially in daytime working hours, that we had trouble getting as many to go out to a call, though usually enough. But often some people that are there during the daytime hours are the same ones that come back each and every time. That does put a strain on employment, the employer-employee relationship, and consequently I think that this is what Mr. Anderson was trying to achieve with what he had in this bill. I thought that he was doing a bang-up job with that.

Questions and concerns arose around if employers would feel forced to comply with the legislation, creating a situation where recruitment of new volunteer firefighters may be reduced because employers may be hesitant to hire volunteer firefighters. Personally, I don't think that would be the case. I really think that they're overthinking what the situation was. I don't think that this bill would have prevented people from hiring firefighters as a result of the bill going through. That's just my opinion.

The other one was a loss of productivity. That was brought up, and that was a really good point. There is a loss of productivity. If you have two, three people on your staff and you've lost one of them, well, that does affect that business with just a handful of employees. Nonetheless, we owe and will continue to owe our volunteer firefighters the utmost respect and gratitude for what they do day in and day out.

I'd like to also say that Dr. Starke, when he brought up taking more bills to the committee – that's of utmost importance. I'm glad this one came. You know, at least it came to the committee and was not just shot down. But I think there were other bills, frankly, that have social or economic impacts that could arise as a result of it, and we're seeing some of the impacts as we go through some of the

bills that have gone through. We asked for them to go to committee, and they did not go to committee, and I think it was somewhat irresponsible for us not to look at and have an economic impact study done prior to the bill being implemented.

With that, thank you.

The Chair: Thank you very much.

We'll go to members on the phone. I have Mr. Gotfried in the queue.

Mr. Gotfried: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you to the committee for all the hard work. First, I wanted to thank MLA Anderson. I think that the initiative here was meant to protect our communities, which I think is key to all that we're doing here, the safety of not only some of the smaller municipalities but our rural residents of Alberta, who rely very much on the volunteer firefighters' duties and responsibilities. I think it's a responsibility that they take very seriously in protecting not only their communities but their families, their friends, their neighbours. I think that was the intent of this bill, and I think we need to appreciate that. It is obviously tough times in Alberta, and the livelihoods of these volunteer people are something that is of great concern to everyone. We need to ensure that they are protected, but also, as was noted by some of the previous speakers, we have to take into account some of the employers' concerns, and I think we heard those during committee deliberations.

I also wanted to thank our staff and the committee staff for all the hard work to ensure that we have a very clear picture of this. Again, I concur with the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster that, in fact, the committee process can work well in these circumstances. I think that we need to be cognizant of that as we move forward with other opportunities to bring these issues to committee. Again, I think that, to me, the key here is community safety, but there are also concerns that I have about economic viability.

9:30

We've also heard that many of these municipalities, if they were forced to go on regular, full staffing of their fire departments, could not afford to do so under the current circumstances, and that concerns me. I think that the economic viability that is afforded by the volunteer firefighters is reason for us to take heed and to be concerned about the ability for that to continue given the high percentage of firefighters in this province who operate within volunteer fire departments and contribute their time, their valuable time, albeit with some concerns as we've raised.

I just wanted to thank all involved with this, the committee here as well, all members of the committee, for very thoughtful and sober deliberations on this and, as importantly, to thank MLA Anderson for taking this issue and bringing it forward to our attention and allowing us the opportunity to deliberate this to get to a point where we actually realize that there is further work to be done and that we need to consider this in all its implications as we move forward.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members on the phone wishing to speak?

Seeing and hearing none, any other members on the floor wishing to speak?

Seeing and hearing none, Mr. Roth, if you can read it into the record one more time.

Mr. Roth: Certainly, Mr. Chair. Moved by Mr. Dach that the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future recommend that Bill 201, Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018, not proceed.

The Chair: With that said, I'll call the question. All those in favour, please say aye. All those opposed, please say no. Members on the phone?

That motion is carried.

Dr. Starke, you said you had another item to bring up as well.

Dr. Starke: Yes, please, Chair. You know, listening to the presentations that we heard at the last committee meeting, it became clear that one of the challenges of our fire services in Alberta is that there is no overriding act or overriding piece of legislation that governs their activities. I'm quoting here from page 1212 of *Hansard* from the last committee meeting where Mr. Krich is speaking. He says:

In the last meeting I had with government, again, it was that point that everybody has an act. The police have an act. Alberta Health Services has an act. Emergency management has an act. They all have acts to follow and guides to follow. The fire service is a blank piece of paper. We don't have one. There's nothing there for us. We have to make it up. We have to pretend.

Given that, it is incredible that the fire service does as great a job as they do in this province. I would dare say that for a group of people that says that what they're doing is pretending and making it up, they're doing a pretty good job of making it up as they go along. But it's very clear, after determining that we're one of two provinces that don't have an overriding fire services or fire protection act like eight of the Canadian provinces, that this is something that I think this committee, after having gone through this process, could at least lend some weight behind to encourage government to move forward on. I think it was very clear when we listened to the testimony of others, you know, that this is something that we really should be looking at.

Mr. Chair, at this time I would like to move that the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future recommend that the Minister of Municipal Affairs consult with stakeholders to investigate the feasibility of developing comprehensive fire protection and prevention legislation in Alberta that is similar to other Canadian jurisdictions.

If you need me to read that into the record a second time, I'm happy to do that.

Speaking in support of this motion, Mr. Chair . . .

The Chair: One second, Dr. Starke. Can you repeat after . . .

Dr. Starke: After "feasibility"?

. . . of developing comprehensive fire protection and prevention legislation in Alberta that is similar to other Canadian jurisdictions.

The Chair: I just wanted to make sure that matches what your intent was just because we circulate it to the members on the phones as well, Dr. Starke.

Dr. Starke: Yeah. That's fine.

The Chair: Excellent. Carry on.

Dr. Starke: Mr. Chair, speaking in favour of this motion, you know, I know that there have been discussions going on in the past, and I know that this is a topic that comes up from time to time. Our role as committee is to make recommendations after further study on issues to the Legislature as a whole as we are a creature and a creation of the Legislative Assembly. I personally think that our task here is incomplete if we don't have a motion that articulates this in some way, and if it's not this motion, then some other motion. But if we are simply limiting the scope of our activity to investigating Bill 201 and going no further than 201, I think we've only done half the job.

It has become clear to me after the submissions we've received, especially after the presentations by the four presenters at our last committee meeting, that there is a gap in Alberta's legislation. While some might say that legislation doesn't guarantee that things will work better – and I would tend to agree with that – I would also say that in the absence of legislation, having to rely on our fire services to make it up as they go along and resulting, I would also say, probably in a bit of a patchwork quilt of what goes on from service to service, I think does leave us in a position of potential vulnerability. I think what this does is that it creates a set of standards and a set of specific best practices that the fire services can follow.

I mean, it's very clear that the leadership of the fire services were asking for this, and they have been trying to work towards this. But I think that with the added weight of our committee's recommendation to the Legislative Assembly as a whole and specifically to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, we could see a situation where, you know, hopefully, with the momentum behind developing the overarching legislation that these representatives were asking for, it moves ahead. So in order to complete our task as a committee of reviewing the fire service and having had it identified to us that there is a gap and that there is a need for legislation, I would suggest that this motion would allow us to make a recommendation that was called for by the leaders of the fire service.

The Chair: With that, I'll open it up to the floor. Mr. Dach.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Dr. Starke, for your input and bringing forth the motion. I did want to get some clarification. I realize that this idea was brought up by some of the stakeholders during presentations that were made. I know that we're debating today, of course, whether or not to proceed with Bill 201 and that a decision has been made not to. I recognize, Dr. Starke, that you'd like to take forward some of the ideas that you've found interesting during the deliberations with stakeholders and make a recommendation to the Legislature further to our decision as a committee to not proceed, but I wanted to get some clarification from the chair or counsel if indeed this measure, this proposal, actually falls within the scope of the committee's deliberations today, given that we're looking at deliberations on going forward or not with Bill 201, which we decided not to do, and that now we're looking at an overarching recommendation, which is a much wider type of a proposal. Is it something that we should be considering at this meeting? Is it within scope?

The Chair: Dr. Massolin, if you wish to supplement.

Dr. Massolin: I'll defer to Mr. Koenig.

9:40

Mr. Koenig: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would suggest that, of course, it's always up to the chair to determine if something is in order or not. I would just refer you to Standing Order 74.2, which does allow the committee to make "observations, opinions and recommendations." Obviously, that is linked fairly closely with the bill. In this case the proposed motion was something that the committee heard, so I would suggest to the chair that this may be a situation where the committee needs to determine whether it's prepared to make this recommendation at this point or whether further investigation would be necessary before it'd be comfortable carrying this, as opposed to determining whether it was in order or out of order.

The Chair: Mr. Dach.

Mr. Dach: Thank you. I appreciate your input. I'm just wondering about the specific nature of the motion by Dr. Starke to aim it directly solely at Municipal Affairs. I'm wondering whether or not he'd consider it more useful to simply direct it to the government.

Dr. Starke: That actually was suggested as a possible amendment when we had it reviewed by legislative counsel. I don't have an issue with that. I mean, I specifically singled out the Minister of Municipal Affairs because that's the ministry responsible for fire services, but if that's something that members would feel more comfortable with, you know, expanding it to read "government of Alberta," I have no issue with that, and I would accept that as a friendly amendment if that's what the Member for Edmonton-McClung is suggesting.

The Chair: MLA Dach, are you wishing to move that amendment?

Mr. Dach: I'd make that recommendation and accept that friendly amendment to have the "Minister of Municipal Affairs" replaced with "government of Alberta."

The Chair: Mr. Roth, if you can read out the amendment and then read out the motion if it were to pass.

Mr. Roth: Certainly, Mr. Chair. As I have it: moved by Mr. Dach that the motion be amended by striking out "Minister of Municipal Affairs" and substituting "government of Alberta."

If the amendment were to be adopted, the motion would read: moved by Dr. Starke that the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future recommend that the government of Alberta consult with stakeholders to investigate the feasibility of developing comprehensive fire protection and prevention legislation in Alberta that is similar to other Canadian jurisdictions.

The Chair: Excellent. That meets your intent, Mr. Dach?

Mr. Dach: Yeah.

The Chair: Excellent. I'll open that up for discussion. I know I have Member McPherson on the phone. If you'd like to proceed.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I just wanted to speak briefly to the motion and to the amendment and especially the question of whether or not it's within our purview to do this. As private members we don't usually have the ability to pass bills. Occasionally our number comes up, as with this bill, but in committee that's where our power lies, and I don't think that it's incumbent upon us to decide whether or not we should put information forward. I think it's incumbent upon us to listen to the stakeholders that took the time and to make sure that we are their voice with the government and to bring those recommendations forward. I'm extremely grateful to the member from Lloydminster for this excellent motion. I think it's right up our alley. This is exactly what we need to be doing, and I am wholeheartedly in favour of it.

The Chair: Excellent. I'll open it up for other discussion. This is on the amendment as well.

Seeing and hearing none, I will call the question on the amendment moved by Mr. Dach. All those in favour, please say aye. All those opposed, please say no. And members on the phone?

That is carried.

We will now move back to the motion as amended. Are there any other members wishing to speak to the motion as amended? Mr. Horne.

Mr. Horne: Yeah. Thank you, Chair. I can certainly appreciate the spirit of the motion. I know that when I talk to my local fire departments, both volunteer and otherwise, they do report quite a bit on conversations with the minister and with the department, and I also know that – I suppose this is a little bit about the previous amendment on the main motion – there is also a lot of conversation with First Nations fire departments on-reserve. I know that those conversations are happening. I'm a little bit unsure whether or not a motion to consult with stakeholders is completely necessary given that those conversations already happen. I do know that there are some concerns out there. But I think that those conversations are already happening. So I suppose I'm on the fence, and I'm more than happy to listen to the opinions of my colleagues.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak?

Mr. van Dijken: Just a question on process. If this is coming forward as a recommendation within a final report on Bill 201 or if this comes as a separate recommendation: could that be clarified for me?

The Chair: We had an additional recommendation on daylight savings, but I'll allow Dr. Massolin to supplement, just to make sure that I don't misspeak on how it appears. Usually it follows the initial recommendation that we make about the bill not proceeding, if I'm correct, right?

Dr. Massolin: It's, I think, as you've mentioned, Mr. Chair, and as Mr. Koenig has mentioned. This would be within the category of an additional observation, opinion, or recommendation, so it would be included in the committee's final report, which would be presented in the Assembly and concurred in or not by the Assembly.

Mr. van Dijken: So with that information, then, I think it's prudent for us to actually include this as part of our observations in the work that we have done. As Member Horne has stated, the work is possibly already happening. I think what this helps to do is to encourage that work to continue and to give it a little bit of credence that it's important work and that it needs to continue to be reviewed and that discussions need to continue. So I speak in favour of the motion and that it becomes included in our final report.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the motion on the floor? Dr. Starke.

Dr. Starke: Thank you, Chair. Just ever so briefly, I acknowledge the comments made by the Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert. When I was looking at the wording of this, I honestly thought that, well, maybe this is almost too weak: to investigate the feasibility of developing. Good grief. Get to the point. And I'm absolutely certain that he's quite right that those discussions are happening already. You know, the fire chiefs as much as told us that at the last meeting. But I agree with the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock in saying that in order to provide some impetus to those discussions and to provide some acknowledgement by this committee of motion in the direction of developing that legislation – we agree that it's important. I think we need to have something in our committee report that says that we heard this and we believe that this is something important that we should have included in our report, and that's why I suggest that if we don't include it, the report and our work, indeed, as a committee are incomplete.

9:50

I'm going to quote again. This is from Mr. Bussiere in the last meeting. He said:

I think that if we are going in the direction of legislation that involves the fire service in Alberta, we really need to look at a provincial fire services act or a provincial fire prevention act or something of the sort. We are one of two provinces in the country of Canada that does not have a provincial fire service act right now, and I think that rather than legislating specific issues as they come up, we would be better served to have an overarching guidance legislation provincially.

Yes, those conversations are under way, and they're, you know, ongoing, but without sounding cynical or facetious, there are a lot of conversations that go on with government at any particular time, and some stakeholders would suggest that those conversations go nowhere and that they aren't viewed as being important by members of the Assembly. I would even challenge members of this committee as to how many members of this committee were aware up until the last meeting with the fire chiefs that we don't have overarching provincial fire protection legislation and that we are only one of two provinces that don't. I didn't know that. I would suggest that most of us didn't know that. I would suggest our remaining colleagues that sit in the Legislature don't know that.

At least, if we highlight this and we make it as an additional recommendation to our report, those that bother to take the time to read that report – and, hopefully, that's all 87 of us – will say: oh; the committee heard from the representations made by the fire chiefs that this is something we should move ahead on. Certainly, I would suggest that the very capable people in the various departments of government that deal with the fire services will say: well, they saw fit to recommend that we move in this direction and that we work on developing this legislation; therefore, they have assessed it as being a priority.

I'm concerned that if we decide for whatever reason to not pass this motion, we've decided that it's not important or that that will be the interpretation. I'm sure that's not the impression that anybody on this committee wants to leave. I'm sure that we want to make sure that those conversations continue. And they may not lead directly to legislation in a short time frame. That's fine. Take the time to do it right. But certainly I think that it's important that we have some sort of legislation with regard to fire protection given its absence when we have legislation governing all those other areas that I just enumerated in the address given by Mr. Krich. Given its absence, I think it's important that it be included, and I think it's important that this committee identify it.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Starke.

Any other members wishing to speak to the motion? Mr. Horne.

Mr. Horne: Yeah. Thank you. I certainly think that, you know, it's very important that our report reflect what we've heard. I suppose where I'm at right now is that I'm conflicted over whether or not this is an appropriate recommendation on Bill 201 or whether or not it's more of a here's what we heard statement. In my opinion, it's a little bit outside of the scope of Bill 201, but it is certainly something that we heard and that is important to be reflected. Where I'm at right now is that I'm conflicted over whether or not to consider including this as a recommendation in the report or whether or not this is something that should be reflected in the report as: here are some of the other concerns we heard as part of the discussions on Bill 201. My personal position right now is that I'm conflicted over whether or not it's a recommendation or an observation.

The Chair: Mr. van Dijken.

Mr. van Dijken: Yeah. Again, if we can get clarification from Parliamentary Counsel as to how it will be included in the report, that would be helpful in this discussion.

The Chair: Dr. Massolin.

Dr. Massolin: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would suggest that typically the draft report of a committee on a bill referral include among other things in the substantive portion motions that have been passed by the committee. I'll leave it at that.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak? Mr. Taylor.

Mr. Taylor: Yeah. I did have a brief conversation with the fire chiefs at the door as they were leaving, so this is not officially on the record. It was just with regard to making more legislation. I said: why do you need more legislation? Because it would provide clarity. So what clarity do you not have? What has gone wrong? What's been broken? Well, they didn't really have a good, solid answer as to what the problem was.

I continued to ask a lot of these questions, and I know that all municipalities have guidelines as to how they have to provide these services to their communities, which is pretty much a province-wide standard that they are going with. They're asking for legislation, which is another, I guess, consideration to it. With that being said, we need to consider what has gone wrong in this province. I know that all the firefighters are required to have 1001 certification. There are certain minimum certifications that they need to have for each community, depending on what they are expected to do; that is, in every community they outline it right in their meetings, and it's outlined if you have a fire service.

But that being said, I do think it's a good idea that we look at and investigate the feasibility of developing comprehensive fire protection and prevention legislation, that we look at it because we need to make sure that we're not letting anything fall apart. I think we should continue to look and find out what that should look like and if, in fact, we do need it, if something is truly broken or if it is not broken, and where we should go with it.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. Dach, did you have a question?

Mr. Dach: Yes. I'd like to express some level of discomfort that this committee may be making a wider issue out of what we really should be focusing on notwithstanding the fact that I've had an amendment accepted that we look at the government of Alberta rather than the one ministry being asked to undertake further investigation.

But I don't know if this committee is in a position to make recommendations regarding overarching fire services legislation, because that's not really the information, the research, or materials that this committee has been receiving and reviewing, so I'm not really comfortable with making even a general suggestion on the topic without a thorough review and research process. I'm wondering if we can accomplish the same thing that Dr. Starke might be wanting to do without asking for this overarching look at provincial legislation.

I'm wondering if I could propose an amendment that might get us to where we need to go as a committee and satisfy everybody's need for seriously accepting the information we heard and then making a proper recommendation.

I'm looking at making an amendment to Dr. Starke's motion after the words "government of Alberta" by adding "to continue to consult with stakeholders to investigate the best ways to support firefighters throughout the province."

The Chair: Sorry, Mr. Dach. You want to add "to continue to consult."

Mr. Dach: After the word “Alberta” add “to continue to consult with stakeholders . . .”

The Chair: So to add “to continue to.”

Mr. Dach: “To continue to consult with stakeholders to investigate the best ways to support firefighters throughout the province.”

10:00

The Chair: Yeah. If you can read your whole language again – sorry – Mr. Dach.

Mr. Dach: Yeah. One moment. To investigate the best ways to support firefighters . . .

The Chair: Sorry, Mr. Dach. Can you start from the beginning of your amendment?

Mr. Dach: Yeah. You bet.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Dach: After the word “Alberta” “to continue to consult with stakeholders to investigate the best ways to support firefighters throughout the province.” That would be the end of the motion, and we can debate everything else.

The Chair: Are you wanting to strike out everything after “government of Alberta”?

Mr. Dach: Am I wanting to strike out which?

The Chair: Is your intent to strike out everything after “government of Alberta”?

Mr. Dach: Yeah.

The Chair: Okay. That would change the intent of the motion, so that amendment would be out of order, like, just because it would change the entire wording of Dr. Starke’s motion. So subsequently it would be out of order because it would change the intent of the entire motion.

Mr. Dach: All right. Well, I’ll certainly seek any other input from colleagues with respect to wording that might maintain the motion, the amendment on the floor.

The Chair: Yeah. Like, if your goal is to add “continue to consult,” that would be in order, but striking out everything after “the government of Alberta” would change the entire intent of the motion.

Mr. Dach: Sorry. Repeat: if my goal is to . . .

The Chair: Like, are you wanting to strike out everything after “government of Alberta” on the original motion?

Mr. Dach: Pretty much, but I’m open to other wording suggestions that would maintain the integrity of the motion.

The Chair: Sorry. If you can supplement, Mr. Koenig.

Mr. Koenig: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This may not be the ideal solution for the member, but the best way forward, if he is looking to put a motion forward that deals more with general consultation, would be to deal with the motion that’s on the floor as proposed by Dr. Starke. And if that was defeated, then he could put forward a new motion asking for consultation with stakeholders in a more general sense. That may be a way forward to achieve his goal.

Mr. Dach: I think, basically, just call the question on the amendment.

The Chair: The amendment is out of order because it changes the entire scope . . .

Mr. Dach: Yeah. Well, I can simply withdraw the amendment.

The Chair: Yeah. It’s off the floor. Okay.

Mr. Dach: I’ll rework it. So if it pleases the committee, I’ll choose to withdraw the amendment.

The Chair: Okay.

Mr. Schneider: It just seems that the longer we sit, the longer we try and water down what I consider a pretty simple little recommendation to the government of Alberta that they may or may not accept from this committee. This committee’s job is to recommend to the government. Forget about Bill 201. We’ve already made that decision. This is now a different motion from a different member, and it’s pretty simple and straightforward. The more watered down it gets, the more crap that can happen to it once it gets to the legislation. So I cannot support changing this very much. The intent is clear, and I clearly support the motion as it stands.

Thank you.

The Chair: I’d remind members about parliamentary language. All that extends to the committee level as well.

Mr. Schneider: Is it written somewhere? Did I say something that I shouldn’t have?

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Schneider: Oh. Well, if you don’t mind sending me something so that I can refresh my memory on what parliamentary language is, I’d appreciate it. Thank you.

The Chair: Yeah. It’s all precedent from previous rulings.

Dr. Starke.

Dr. Starke: Thank you, Chair. I mean, not wanting to belabour or extend debate unnecessarily, but I sense that the reluctance on the part of some members is that we are somehow overstepping the specific assignment that we were given initially. That is perhaps an observation that is true. We were asked to look specifically at Bill 201.

We’ve looked at 201, and in the course of examining 201, very directly flowing out of that investigation, we heard from the chiefs of the fire service about a gap in our legislation and that one of the ways to avoid situations like what 201 is trying to address was to have some form of either fire prevention or fire protection legislation in the province. They acknowledged that those discussions are already ongoing. But again I want to come back to that they were very specific, and flowing directly out of the conversations on 201, that was what they were very clearly asking for. That was what they were wanting to see happen going forward. I’ve quoted a couple of times now from *Hansard* from the last meeting, and as I went away from that meeting, it just struck me as saying, you know: this is a gap, and this is something that the fire chiefs are asking for.

Now, this motion in no way mandates that the government of Alberta must enact legislation. That’s not what it says. This motion calls on the government of Alberta – you know, if we wanted to add “continue to consult” to be more correct with what’s going on, I suppose we could because those discussions are already ongoing.

But I think it makes it very clear that this committee feels that it is important that the government continue to consult with the stakeholders involved – that's with all stakeholders – at least to investigate the feasibility. Not to enact but to investigate the feasibility. If those discussions result in a consensus of opinion that legislation is not necessary or not desirable or that it won't fulfill the needs required or that it won't solve the problems that are there, then that's where it ends.

It's clear to me, after what we heard at the last meeting, that that is a gap in our legislation currently and that at least it results in situations where people have to make up policy as they go along. I think that, you know, at least eight out of 10 provinces and indeed the United States, with the National Fire Protection Act, have seen fit to at least have something written down that gives direction to the fire service overall.

So the intent of this motion is simply to acknowledge what we have heard as a committee and to include in the motions as a recommendation that the government of Alberta move to consult further with the stakeholders and look at the feasibility of developing the legislation that the fire chiefs are calling for. It doesn't mean that it's going to happen. It doesn't mean that we're demanding it. It doesn't mean that that is going to be the thing that comes about as a result of these discussions. It merely lends additional weight.

With due respect to including it as an observation, there are two motions that are going to come out of this committee. One is on Bill 201. If that motion passes, then this motion will be the other one. People may not read any further than those two motions. If it is buried somewhere in the observations, I mean, I would suggest that that's where things go to die. I don't think that we'll hear very much about it after that, and I don't think there'll be very much action. And, for that matter, there may not be very much action on this motion. It is a motion. It is a recommendation. It is not something that is binding upon the government of Alberta, but it is something where we as a committee can acknowledge that we heard and listened and that we acted upon what we were very clearly told at the last committee meeting.

With due respect to what the Member for Edmonton-McClung suggested, you know, in the motion that he had put forward, supporting firefighters across the province was what they're doing anyway. They've been doing that. When you talk about the different programs – we had a recognition ceremony here a few months ago that all MLAs were invited to. Three attended; all three of them are in this room. So that's the kind of support that can be provided by the provincial government. That's going on already.

10:10

But it was very clear. When asked of the chiefs of the fire service, "What are you lacking, and what is missing here?" they said, "Well, we don't have overarching legislation." This isn't my idea; this is their idea. And I think that out of respect to what they've identified as being the need, the least the committee can do is acknowledge that fact and move forward with a nonbinding motion that indicates our support of their ask.

The Chair: Member Connolly.

Connolly: Thanks, Chair. Unfortunately, I have to disagree with Dr. Starke in that observations are where things go to die. I think it's very important, and I think the ministry does – well, either way, they should be reading those observations and making recommendations to the minister and to the ministry, and if they're not, then they're not particularly doing their job. So I would suggest that we continue to push.

But my problem with the motion is that it's rather limiting, and I don't think it should be limiting because it might not be legislation that's ultimately needed. This would, unfortunately, just push it straight to looking at legislation as opposed to other options that could be on the table or that stakeholders might suggest. Honestly, that's why I don't think that this motion is needed. I don't think we need to be limiting the discussion that the ministry will have with its stakeholders trying to figure out a solution to this problem. Unfortunately, I believe that it's beyond the scope of what we were sent here to do, which is to look at Bill 201.

Yeah, it did come up in the consultations, which is why I think it should be in the observations. But the goal of this committee right now is to look at 201 and figure out whether or not this bill should pass, whether that be with amendments or not, and we decided that this bill should not move forward.

I have no problem with putting things in the observations that say that this is what we need; however, I don't think that this motion is in order. It obviously is not up to me. And I don't think that limiting the scope of the ministry's stakeholder consultations is a good idea.

The Chair: Mr. Horne.

Mr. Horne: Yeah. Thank you. I've been listening to a lot of the arguments intently. I'm still a little unsure about whether or not it's most appropriate as a recommendation or an observation, but that's beside the point. I suppose one thing, regardless of whether or not we decide this is most appropriate as a recommendation or an observation, might be a little bit of wordsmithing, and I would be happy to move an amendment simply to add "continue to" after "government of Alberta."

The Chair: Does that meet your intent?

Mr. Roth, if you can read out the amendment and then the motion if the amendment were to pass.

Mr. Roth: Certainly, Mr. Chair. If I have this right, Mr. Horne: moved by Mr. Horne that the motion be amended by adding "continue to" after "government of Alberta."

If the amendment were to carry, the motion as amended would read: moved by Dr. Starke that the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future recommend that the government of Alberta continue to consult with stakeholders to investigate the feasibility of developing comprehensive fire protection and prevention legislation in Alberta that is similar to other Canadian jurisdictions.

The Chair: I'll open that up for discussion. Mr. Horne.

Mr. Horne: Yeah. Thanks. I think that with that amendment it more accurately reflects what we heard. We did hear that there are already those conversations occurring, and as various members have stated, they do hear about conversations between the government and their fire services. I think it's a more accurate reflection of what we've heard.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? Members on the phone?

Seeing and hearing none, I will call the question on the amendment. All those in favour, please say aye. All those opposed, please say no. Members on the phone?

That motion is carried.

We are back on the main motion as amended. Any other questions or comments? Mr. Dach.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Chair. I just wanted to say that when we deliberate this motion and we talk about our volunteer firefighters, I think that all on this committee will be in agreement in saying that

we respect and we understand the great value that our firefighters bring to our province. I know, having recently done the fire ops 101 course, that I gained a much greater appreciation of the risk and danger that they put themselves in every day for ourselves. So there's certainly a high degree of acknowledgement and understanding on this committee of the value they bring to the table, and we want to make sure that that certainly is a message that our volunteer firefighters hear loud and clear.

Indeed, having said that, I would like to encourage all members to vote to accept the main motion.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the motion as amended?

Seeing and hearing none, I will call the question on the motion as amended.

Mr. Roth, if you can read it into the record one final time.

Mr. Roth: Certainly, Mr. Chair. Moved by Dr. Starke that the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future recommend that the government of Alberta continue to consult with stakeholders to investigate the feasibility of developing comprehensive fire protection and prevention legislation in Alberta that is similar to other Canadian jurisdictions.

The Chair: Excellent. Having heard the motion, all those in favour, please say aye. All those opposed, please say no. And on the phones?

That motion is carried.

All right. Are there any other motions or discussions in the process of deliberation?

Seeing and hearing none, we will move on to the direction for the report to the committee. Now that the committee has made its recommendations for Bill 201, we need to give research services instructions to draft a report for our consideration.

Dr. Massolin, would you like to give us an overview of the process?

Dr. Massolin: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd be pleased to do so. As the committee is familiar with this process, having gone through it with Bill 203, the Alberta Standard Time Act, I won't take too much of your time, but basically at this point, as you've indicated, Mr. Chair, the committee directs research services to come up with the draft report. For a bill review of this nature, prior to the bill having received second reading, what the report typically contains are a few sections: introduction, an order of reference, how the bill has been referred to the committee. It has a section on committee activities, whom the committee met with, submissions in the consultation phase, and then the main, substantive portion, as I alluded to previously, just recommendations or observations, and that will include the two motions that were passed by the committee.

Research services would be happy to prepare a draft report for the committee's review. Thank you.

10:20

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Massolin. Hon. members, as we've done many reports in this committee before, the common practice in similar bill reviews, both in committees and others, has been to instruct research services to draft a report for the committee, allow a period of time for the members to review it, and then to authorize the chair and the deputy chair to approve the report. Is there a sense amongst the committee members as to whether the committee would like to continue this practice regarding the drafting and approval of the committee's report with respect to Bill 201?

Hearing no opposition to it, I have a draft motion that would allow for that, with the report being finalized on or before October 26. Would someone like to move the draft motion? Moved by Mr. Taylor that

the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future direct research services to prepare a report regarding its review of Bill 201, Employment Standards (Firefighter Leave) Amendment Act, 2018, in accordance with the committee's recommendations and authorize the chair and the deputy chair to approve the committee's final report to the Legislative Assembly on or before October 26, 2018.

That meets your intent?

Mr. Taylor: Yes.

The Chair: Excellent. I'll open that motion up for discussion. Members on the phone?

Seeing and hearing none, I will call the question on the motion. All those in favour, please say aye. All those opposed, please say no. Members on the phone?

That motion is carried.

All right. We will be moving to other business. I know that MLA Horne and MLA Schneider had some additional information and feedback that they'd like to provide to the committee. Mr. Schneider.

Mr. Schneider: Yeah. Mr. Chair, thank you very much. Actually, I won't be speaking to it, but I believe my colleague Mr. Gotfried would like to start with just an idea regarding Alberta's economic development, economic future.

The Chair: Mr. Gotfried, if you'd like to proceed.

Mr. Gotfried: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to my colleague for deferring to me. I'd just like to bring up to the committee that there are obviously some opportunities for us in the namesake of our committee, the Economic Future Committee. We've had a great opportunity to deal with private members' bills and some other business that has come forward to us, but at the end of the day the title of our committee is Alberta's Economic Future, and I think it's incumbent on us to ensure that we're focusing on those priorities that I believe all of us are hearing from Albertans across this great province. We see it in the news. We hear it at the doors. We hear it from our colleagues. We hear it from businesses and experts in the economic development field as well as across industries. I think it's incumbent upon us to ensure that we know what the strategy is in terms of our ability to move our products to market.

I have some comments that I'd like to reserve for later, but I think I'll move forward in presenting my motion. I move that

the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future invite officials from the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, including officials from the economic development division, the industry development branch, and energy – oil and value chains unit, to appear before the committee to inform members of the government of Alberta's strategy to ensure the energy sector has access to new markets.

Mr. Chair and to the clerk, I've provided that in writing to you as well. I believe that this is an opportunity for us as a committee to do the work that Albertans expect us to do, which is to truly focus on the economic future of this province. I have some further comments, but I'll put that motion to the committee, looking for a seconder, and hopefully we can have some robust discussion on it.

Thank you.

The Chair: There's no need for a seconder, Mr. Gotfried.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Mr. Loyola.

Loyola: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Through you to all the members of the committee, I would just like to express that with the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship, there was a similar motion passed in that committee, and in fact on Tuesday, October 23, we will have the Ministry of Energy coming in to present to the committee as well as other presenters from Alberta's private sector when it comes to issues on resource stewardship, of course.

I just wanted to caution our committee on doubling the work perhaps, right? I can understand that this is an important issue for many people, but as chair of the Resource Stewardship Committee I just wanted to bring that to everybody's attention, that a very similar motion was brought forward in the Resource Stewardship Committee and that that standing committee is in fact following through with the requested motion on behalf of members of the opposition. So I find it interesting that members of the opposition are presenting that same motion in this committee, doubling the work. Perhaps we should consider that.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Chair, if I may comment.

The Chair: Just give me a quick second, Mr. Gotfried. I just have to review one thing with Parliamentary Counsel.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you.

The Chair: I've just been informed, in looking at the procedures within our standing orders – and I'll allow Mr. Koenig to fill this in – that until the report that we have in relation to Bill 201 has been tabled in the House, we've not finished our mandate on Bill 201, the referral that has been presented by the Legislative Assembly.

I'll allow Mr. Koenig to just kind of give a supplementary to that.

Mr. Koenig: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just to confirm for the committee, Standing Order 52.07(3) states that "an order of the Assembly that a Legislative Policy Committee undertake an inquiry . . . [takes] priority over any other inquiry." The point here is that the committee couldn't actually start to meet and schedule its work on any new business until the report on Bill 201 has been completed and concurred in by the Assembly. But, by all means, if the committee wishes to entertain these motions now, that wouldn't be out of order. I would suggest that it wouldn't be out of order. The committee members should just be aware that that work wouldn't actually happen until the report on Bill 201 had been presented in the Assembly.

The Chair: Thank you for the clarity.

So, yes, until that report is tabled in the House, we wouldn't be able to commence on any of the motions that have been presented. We can still discuss and propose these motions and vote on them, but we wouldn't be able to start any of the work on the motions until the report has been tabled in the House. Just some clarification in relation to that.

Mr. Gotfried, sorry; if you'd like to continue.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to the clerk for clarification. Of course, it's always subject to any processes and procedures we must follow.

Just as a point of clarification on the Resource Stewardship Committee, I understand that some of the presenters will be specifically from Trans Mountain and Eagle Spirit, where, in fact, we're actually talking in broader terms about access to new

markets, how we would do that. That could include many of the other factors involved – obviously, the economic development division, industry development, the oil and value chains unit – but also any of the outreach and initiatives that are being undertaken with respect to multiple alternatives to moving products to market from the energy sector, not limited to bitumen or specifically to LNG or others, not limited strictly to pipelines but other options which may be considered.

I think this is really taking it from an economic development perspective, a broader economic development perspective, which is: what are we doing as a province, as a government to ensure Alberta's economic future on an issue that, again, I would challenge any of the members here to tell me they are not hearing about from multiple different sources at the doors, within industry, within businesses, from Albertans?

10:30

Just a clarification: this perspective that we bring to this as another committee I don't think is duplicating. I think it is actually taking a look at this as a top, top priority, from what we're hearing from Albertans, from our perspective as a committee on Alberta's economic future.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the motion on the floor? Dr. Starke.

Dr. Starke: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Notwithstanding the comments from the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie about duplication, I as a member of this committee would love to hear these individuals present what they have to flesh out my knowledge base as far as what activities are being undertaken by the government of Alberta in these areas. If I might say, my one discomfort with the motion is in the very last line: "strategy to ensure the energy sector has access to new markets." To me, why are we limiting it to the energy sector? Agriculture needs access to new markets. Mining does. Forestry does. I mean, all of our economic development and our economic potential in this province is predicated on exports, and in order to have robust exports, you have to have reliable market access. That means the product has to get out of the province.

I just heard this morning that our energy is selling now at a \$50-per-barrel discount. The world price is just over \$72, but Alberta's product, western Canadian select, is selling at \$22. I mean, if that doesn't bring home the gravity of this issue, I think that nothing else will.

With all due respect to the suggestion that it's duplication, I don't know that we can look at this issue from enough different perspectives. You know, if there was a way to loop in Families and Communities, I'd say: let's have them take a look at it, too, because it has an impact on families and communities, maybe not specifically on some of the portfolios, but indeed it does have an impact. When you're selling one of your main exports at a \$50 discount, your ability to fund some of the essential social services that we provide in this province – and we attempt to provide them at high quality – is impacted by that economic reality.

You know, with my only criticism being that I don't think it should be limited to the energy sector, I would very much like to hear what alternatives are out there and at what stage of development they are. I mean, I know that I have been in fairly regular communication, as recently as yesterday evening, with proponents of one of the rail projects that is looking at going to Alaska. That is a project that I think has tremendous potential. Whenever I describe it to people, the word that comes up again and again is "intriguing." That is an intriguing proposal.

I have been concerned for some time – and I have expressed that concern publicly and in the House – that we are putting all of our eggs in the Trans Mountain expansion basket. We have found out in the last couple of months just how fragile that approach and that strategy are. Without other alternatives that are at the very least acknowledged and investigated by all arms of government, we are in an extremely vulnerable position. That vulnerability is being shown up economically.

I have no issue with this. I have no issue with the notion that this is duplication. I think that our committees can do very good work and that we can hear this information. I would personally as a committee member love to hear this information.

The Chair: Excellent. Any other members wishing to speak to the motion?

Loyola: I would like to ask Dr. Starke, through you, Mr. Chair, if he'd like to suggest an amendment, then, since he doesn't fully agree with the motion that has been presented by Mr. Gotfried.

Dr. Starke: Well, I'd certainly be willing to. I'm not sure that it would necessarily be in order because, clearly, the bulk of the motion is dealing with the energy sector, but if the mover – if it's ruled in order, I could suggest an amendment that the last line be amended to: members of the government of Alberta's strategy to ensure access of all economic sectors to new markets. So strike the words "the energy sector has," and insert the words "of all economic sectors" after the word "access."

The Chair: Does that meet your intent, Dr. Starke?

Dr. Starke: Yeah. That should probably include "substitute all" – well, it's not absolutely substituting right at that point in terms of just the grammar of it. The wordsmithing that I would suggest is: "strategy to ensure," cross out "the energy sector has," "to ensure access by all economic sectors" to be inserted after the word "access," and then to leave the words "to new markets." We could even quibble about that and say: "Well, what about existing markets? Should we expand access to existing markets?" Yes, absolutely. This, the way it reads right now, is to new markets. Well, you know, I think that intuitively we know we're not limiting it to new markets only. We're wanting to see this happen to an expansion to existing as well as new markets.

The Chair: Does that more meet your recommendations, Dr. Starke?

Dr. Starke: Sure.

The Chair: Mr. Roth, if you can read out the amendment for those on the phone and then the motion should the amendment be carried.

Mr. Roth: Certainly, Mr. Chair. Moved by Dr. Starke that the motion be amended by striking out "the energy sector has access to new markets" and substituting "to ensure access by all economic sectors to new markets."

If the motion were to be amended, it would read: moved by Mr. Gotfried that the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future invite officials from the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, including officials from the economic development division, the industry development branch, energy – oil and value chains unit, to appear before the committee to inform members of the government of Alberta's strategy to ensure access by all economic sectors to new markets.

The Chair: Excellent. I'll open up the amendment for discussion. Member Loyola.

Loyola: I'd just like to double-check with Parliamentary Counsel to see if this, in fact, is in order. As we saw with a previous motion that was recommended by Dr. Starke, I think it significantly changes the motion as it was presented by Mr. Gotfried, but I'd like to ask Parliamentary Counsel what they think.

The Chair: Mr. Koenig.

10:40

Mr. Koenig: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would again just emphasize that, of course, this is a decision that's up to the chair to make, whether the amendment would be in order. Typically things that would make an amendment out of order is if it negated the original motion or it radically altered it in a way that the question was entirely different.

I would leave it up to the chair to make a decision on whether he feels this is in order or not. I'll leave it at that.

The Chair: Just to supplement to that discussion, the original amendment that we discussed before was going to strike out a substantive amount of the original motion. This one, my interpretation, would only add additional outcomes to Mr. Gotfried's original motion, so it would not negate anything that was being proposed there, and it still leaves the same expertise that is being presented.

Mr. van Dijken.

Mr. van Dijken: Yeah. I agree with the intent of the amendment, but I'm concerned. We're recognizing that the wheels of governance move very slowly in the fact that we have a motion before us that we would like to allow the committee to get to work on the next item on the agenda, but we are limited in our ability to move forward.

I also am concerned as it looks to me like the original motion was very focused on a specific division within the industry development branch of Economic Development and Trade, the energy – oil and value chains unit. I do believe that it's critical that a clear understanding of the information that this committee is requiring – that that be a clear message to this unit to inform this committee on. Moving in this direction, amending the original motion to ensure access by all economic sectors to new markets, possibly sends the message that we're expecting this unit to report. Don't get me wrong. Access for the energy sector will also allow access for other industries within our economy, clearly, by allowing more volume to go in different routes. I am concerned that wording it in this way, the way the amendment is suggesting, could add a little bit of confusion on the intent of what the committee needs, the information that the committee is hoping to glean from this report.

So I myself think that I would decline to vote in favour of the amendment and would try and keep the original motion very focused moving forward.

The Chair: Mr. Gotfried.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I truly appreciate the intent of the amendment, but I'm trying to focus on what I'm hearing from Albertans. I'm hearing about – and we're hearing it from many sectors – how the impact of the access of our energy sector products to markets is going to deeply affect our provincial finances and corporate and personal taxes and, of course, royalty revenues. In fact, the balancing of our budgets is predicated on access to those markets. It's predicated on getting world prices for those products that we are sending to market. So I think we need to focus here. This is Economic Future. We're talking about the most significant and impactful issue facing us as a province, not just economically

but in terms of our finances and ability to balance our budgets, and, I think, as was mentioned, to pay for many of those social services that would drift into perhaps another committee. It's very key to our job creation. It's very key to our investment attraction. Truly, I recognize the broader scope of this.

What I hear in my discussions with the Canadian Energy Pipeline Association and other industries, in fact some of the largest proponents of us being able to move our products to market in the safest and most efficient manner, i.e. on the pipelines, that we seem to have a challenge in getting – we'd like to hear a strategy for us to get our energy products to market.

But if we get our energy products to market in the safest and most efficient manner, we then free up capacity on the rails for those industries which were mentioned by the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster – agriculture, forestry, mining, fertilizers, to name a few – freeing up that additional capacity. Now, we may hear that the short-term goal and the short-term strategy are to put more of these products onto rail. That's what we need to know, because if that's the case, then there will be impact on the other industries, which will be in fact assisted if we can move particularly bitumen onto the safest and most efficient and cost-effective ways for us to get our products to market. We then thereby free up rail capacity. What did many of us hear over the past year? It's the constraints that are being faced by agriculture and other sectors in getting their products to market. Let's be honest here. It is probably because they're competing with a higher value product, albeit discounted, that's going on the rails, which should or could be certainly put into markets and brought to markets in more efficient ways. I would like to hear specifically that. It is the elephant in the room.

There are many other factors, many other industries we all are cognizant of, that we all support, that we all want to see succeed, but all those sectors will have a greater opportunity to succeed if we deal with the key issue which affects us, particularly in the Economic Future Committee, about the financial viability, the job-creation viability, the investment attraction viability of this province based on an industry which we still very much rely on as our core industry, our core income earner, our core job creator. So although I appreciate the intent of this amendment, I think there's an opportunity for us here to focus on the key issues at hand – the key issues that I'm hearing from Albertans, the key issues which I believe all members of this committee are hearing from Albertans – and take this as an opportunity for us to learn and for Albertans to share that learning with us.

Thank you.

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Chair, if we're talking about the elephant in the room, I know a little bit about elephants, and I also know a little bit about mice. By the way, the notion that elephants are afraid of mice is a myth. It's ridiculous. But what I will say is that if we pass this motion that's been presented by the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek unamended and I were to show it to the Albertans that I am hearing from and the Albertans that I talk to in rural Alberta, they would say: "Well, what about us? What about us?" And I can tell you that those same Albertans are more than a little upset with the number of railcars they see going right past their farm when they can't get grain cars loaded to go to the coast to fill ships that are supposed to be loaded with grain for export and are sitting there waiting, paying penalties because they can't get onto the rails.

Now, the member mentioned the congestion of the rails, but if we hear only from those that are enumerated in the original motion, we don't hear from the department of agriculture as to what impact the additional rail traffic hauling oil and gas products has on the ability of us to get our grain to market, we don't hear from the forestry sector, and we don't hear from the mining sector. And I think it's

important that we do hear because there's no such thing as doing things in isolation. You can't just be laser focused on one thing and just ignore everything else and the impacts it has on everything else. You know, to suggest that we should just be focused on this one area and that everything else will just fall into place if we can just solve this one problem I think is naive and short sighted.

There's no question whatsoever that the increased amount of rail traffic that is generated because of a lack of pipeline capacity and more production coming on stream has had and will continue to have an impact on our ability to get our other products to market by traditional means. And it's having a ripple effect not just there. You know, it's not just in terms of transportation by rail. In terms of transportation by truck there's increased transportation of various products because, again, these products have to get to market in order to achieve the value that we're looking for.

10:50

So, you know, I stand by the motion that I made to amend this original motion. If I showed this original motion, that only talks about the energy sector, to a lot of my constituents, they would say: "Well, what about us? When are we going to start talking about something other than oil and gas in this province?" And while I will never say anything that would discount the importance of oil and gas, one has to recognize that that elephant in the room has an effect on every other creature in the barnyard and that we have to recognize that the other creatures have to get along, too.

The Chair: Thank you, Dr. Starke.

Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? Mr. Taylor.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Chair. Yes, getting our energy out to tidewater is ultimately the most important thing that we can do for our province at this present time. In fact, I would say that it's for our country. We are the energy driver of this nation. But with that being said, when I look at what the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster has said, the importance that the agriculture sector, too, plays here in this province can't be understated. We should be recognizing these different sectors.

With that being said, I would be supporting what Dr. Starke has said, that we need to look at all the new markets.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing and hearing none, I'll call the question on the amendment. All those in favour, please say aye. All those opposed, please say no. On the phones?

That amendment is defeated.

We are back on the main motion. Are there any other discussions? Member Loyola.

Loyola: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair and to all the committee members. Again, I'd just like to stress that the Resource Stewardship Committee is already dealing with this specific matter in front of it on October 23. As all members here know, everyone is welcome to join the other committee meetings. Everyone has free access to those committee meetings. They're open to the public. So I want to highly recommend to all the members sitting around the table – I extend an invitation as chair of the Resource Stewardship Committee – to come and join us at our October 23 meeting, and I would suggest to all the members here in this committee that we vote this down.

Thank you.

The Chair: Mr. van Dijken.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Chair. It's my understanding that the Resource Stewardship Committee is bringing forward individuals from the Ministry of Energy to report on the Trans Mountain project, and as was alluded to earlier in this conversation by the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, it is incumbent upon our province and our country to recognize that putting all our eggs in one basket, the Trans Mountain pipeline, is very short sighted and can lead to hurdles that are going to have significant impact on the ability of our country to actually realize the best return on the products that we are producing.

I understand from the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie and the information that he is bringing forward that their Resource Stewardship Committee is taking a look at the government of Alberta's plan to ensure the Trans Mountain expansion project moves forward, but I also recognize that we need to have more than one plan and that the more cards you can have in your hand, the better you are at actually developing a destiny that is going to be successful. I believe that the motion here is a very different discussion than what is transpiring in the Resource Stewardship Committee in the coming weeks.

I think that this is more information that can be brought forward to enlighten not only this committee but to enlighten all Albertans and to allow all 87 members of our Legislative Assembly to get the information necessary to help bring forward a solution to the crisis that is before us with regard to accessing new markets.

Thank you.

The Chair: Member Loyola.

Loyola: Thank you. Within the minutes of the last meeting of the Resource Stewardship Committee were all the private interests that were encouraged to come and present, and I'd just like to report on exactly which ones because, like I say, I still believe that there's duplication here.

Eagle Spirit Energy Holdings has been invited as well as G Seven Generations Ltd. as well as the Alberta-Alaska Railway Development Corporation. So I think it firmly hits the nail right on the head, Mr. van Dijken, on everything that you had suggested within your comments, again making the argument that this would be merely duplicating the efforts of one committee over another. Again, I extend the invitation to all those sitting around the table to join us at the next meeting of the Resource Stewardship Committee.

Thank you.

The Chair: MLA Gotfried.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Chair. With respect, I understand that our opportunity here is, actually, to have a very different view. Again, I think that, in echoing what the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster said, on this issue maybe a little duplication is not bad. But it is not duplication, in fact. It is actually a different government ministry, who is responsible for economic development and trade. We are asking for information about the strategy. I believe Albertans want to know about that. I believe the members of this committee want to know about this.

What I'm hearing at the doors every day from Albertans is: "How are we dealing with this issue? How are we ensuring that we're not putting all of our eggs in one basket? How are we ensuring that the best interests of Albertans are being not only served but are being addressed here in a very comprehensive manner?"

In fact, I've had a strong working relationship with Calvin Helin from Eagle Spirit energy and am very aware of his proposal, very aware, obviously, of what's happening at Trans Mountain and with the rail options and the Alaska rail options coming forward.

But these are not the only options, and I would like to hear from the economic development committee what their strategy is for us to have those new market accesses. We cannot suffer this \$40 and \$50 discount to our primary resources, the third-largest oil reserves on this planet, where we have the ability to generate the wealth not only to benefit Albertans but to benefit Canadians, and I believe this is critical.

I think the term "crisis" was used. It is critical for us to understand how we are addressing this issue. I believe Albertans are demanding that information from us. This will help to inform us as members of this committee, to inform the public through the information that we can glean from that, and to inform all members of the Legislature.

I think that in deference to what has been mentioned by Member Loyola, yes, I intend to go to the Resource Stewardship Committee meeting, and I would invite all other members of the Legislature to join our committee meeting when we have economic development here. This is not duplication. This is actually clear focus. It's a clear addressing of a crisis that I'm hearing at the doors from Albertans, and I would again challenge all members of this committee to tell me that this is not what they're hearing from Albertans day in and day out as they go out and reach out to their constituents across this great province.

I think it would be a huge, huge error for this committee not to move forward with this opportunity to do our job. This is the Economic Future Committee, the economic future of Alberta. We need to ensure that we're being razor-sharp in our focus in doing what's best for Albertans.

Thank you.

The Chair: Excellent. Mr. Dach.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I think that, as all committee members, I as well welcome the opportunity in a proper forum to hear why conservative members of the opposition want us to rely on yet another American port to control export of Alberta oil.

11:00

However, I think there'll be ample opportunity to discuss that issue in Resource Stewardship, which is already charged with looking into that issue. I really think that as committee members we should be looking at making sure that we don't duplicate efforts and walk over each other and deal with topics that are clear duplications. I would hope the committee would see fit to defeat this motion and allow Resource Stewardship to explore amply the desire of the conservative opposition members to rely on American ports to control the export of Alberta oil.

Dr. Starke: Because they actually want it as opposed to the ones we're trying to get it through now. Maybe that's the difference.

The Chair: Hon. members, through the chair, please.

I would caution members from making political shots at this opportunity in this discussion. We are focusing on the motion at hand, which does not speak specifically to any U.S. port's access.

Mr. van Dijken: It behooves me to speak with regard to this government's strategy to ensure the energy sector has access to new markets. I have witnessed in the last three years a complete incompetency, where this government is in catch-up mode trying to figure out: how are we ever going to get this Trans Mountain pipeline built? In the meantime they sit on the sidelines and watch other pipelines be scrapped, essentially. When we take a look at our Energy East pipeline, allowing the federal government to continue to move forward with the standards that this government failed to

challenge from day one, this government failed to actually make a move early on in the game to allow us to get to a point of ensuring that our energy sector has access to new markets.

Sure. It looks like they finally figured out after three years that we need access, and I would suggest that having this division, this energy – oil and value chains unit, come before the Economic Future Committee to report on their strategy on ensuring that we have access to new markets might give us a little bit of an eye-opener as to how best we can do that. In my opinion, the ball has been dropped three years ago, and this government is playing catch-up. It completely frustrates industry, not only the energy industry, but it frustrates all industry that is now relying on rail. As the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster had referred to, our agriculture industry is also watching as pipelines have less and less of a chance to actually get built in this country. So much of this product is going to go into an already strained railroad system.

For a member of this committee to figure that it's better to take \$50 less on a barrel of oil than to go and find a way to get a product to market that we can actually reap greater return on, to shoot that down as not a viable way to move forward in development of our industry here, I find that very short sighted, and it speaks loudly to the incompetency of the government that we have in this province to this day.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak about the motion?

Seeing and hearing none, I'll call the question. Mr. Roth, if you can read it in for the record, please.

Mr. Roth: Certainly, Mr. Chair. Moved by Mr. Gotfried that the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future invite officials from the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, including officials from the economic development division, industry development branch, energy – oil and value chains unit, to appear before the committee to inform members of the government of Alberta's strategy to ensure the energy sector has access to new markets.

The Chair: Having heard the motion, all those in favour, please say aye. All those opposed, please say no. Members on the phone? That motion is defeated.

Mr. van Dijken: Recorded vote, please.

The Chair: A recorded vote has been requested. I will start with the deputy chair to my right.

Mr. van Dijken: Yeah. In favour.

Mr. Taylor: In favour.

Mr. Schneider: In favour.

Dr. Starke: In favour.

Mrs. Littlewood: No.

Mr. Horne: No.

Mr. Dach: No.

Mr. Piquette: No.

Ms Fitzpatrick: No.

Loyola: No.

Mr. Carson: No.

Connolly: No.

The Chair: On the phones?

Mr. Gotfried: In favour of the motion.

Mr. Roth: Mr. Chair, total for the motion, five; total against, eight.

The Chair: Okay.

That motion is defeated.

Back to other business. I know MLA Horne had some other business that he would like to bring forward.

Mr. Horne: Yes. Thank you, Chair. I indicated at the beginning of today's meeting that I suspected it was related, and I was partially correct. I have been hearing a lot about another market access concern and one that I've been hearing from almost everybody I've talked to or almost every region I've talked to across the province, and I know that a lot of concern has been growing about it. I think it's prudent that we as a committee look at all Economic Future's concerns and especially ones that are emergent, so I have a quick motion.

Moved by myself that in the interest of strengthening and diversifying Alberta's economy, the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future undertake a study on the impact of the renegotiated North American free trade agreement, or NAFTA, now known as the United States-Mexico-Canada trade agreement – I still don't know how to properly pronounce that – USMCA, on Alberta agriculture, in particular the effect of increased market access of U.S.-originating dairy, poultry, and eggs on Alberta's supply-managed producers and their suppliers. I can read it again if you need.

The Chair: If you can repeat it and follow along so we can get that sent off to all members as well.

Mr. Horne: Of course. Where are we?

The Chair: "Undertake."

Mr. Horne: Undertake a study on the impact of the renegotiated North American free trade agreement on Alberta agriculture, in particular the effect of increased market access of U.S.-originating dairy, poultry, and eggs on Alberta's supply-managed producers and their suppliers.

Mr. Roth: And suppliers.

Mr. Horne: Yeah. Sorry. It's bit of a technicality, but I missed that NAFTA is now known as the United States-Mexico-Canada trade agreement. However that's included, I'm not one hundred per cent certain.

The Chair: Yeah. USMCA. Excellent. Mr. Horne, does this meet your intent?

Mr. Horne: It does. I note, of course, that we wouldn't be able to start such a study until after the Bill 201 review is tabled in the House, but I think it's prudent that we indicate where we're going with our next steps as this is, in fact, an emergent issue within the past couple of weeks.

The Chair: Excellent. All right.

Mr. Roth, if you can read it into the record for those on the phone.

Mr. Roth: Certainly, Mr. Chair. Moved by Mr. Horne that in the interest of strengthening and diversifying Alberta's economy, the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future undertake a study on the impact of the USMCA on Alberta agriculture, in particular the effect of increased market access of U.S.-originating dairy, poultry, and eggs on Alberta's supply-managed producers and their suppliers.

11:10

The Chair: All right. We have a motion on the floor. I'll open it up for discussion.

Mr. Dach: I think this is prudent for us to proceed with. We know that the USMCA has, according to the supply-managed producers in this province, caused some economic pain to them, and they've expressed some of that. I think we should be fully understanding of the scope and depth of that and wondering, after hearing from them, what actions potentially should be taken as a result of that. I think it's something we should fully understand and by hearing from these producers find out what they demand of the federal government in response to providing some mitigation for those harmful effects.

Mr. van Dijken: I guess I'm looking at this motion and trying to understand our role as a committee in undertaking this study. I believe that the ministry should be doing an in-depth study into these repercussions. The agriculture minister along with all agriculture ministers across this country as well as the federal government would be, in my opinion, tasked with the duty of understanding these effects. I would suggest that, as opposed to this committee undertaking that study, we recommend to the minister or the ministry of agriculture to make available the results of their study on the impact of the USMCA on Alberta agriculture.

You know, I'm trying to get an understanding as to what goal we would have as a committee in undertaking this study and what our results will be to aid in the understanding of these impacts that we could come up with more than what Alberta agriculture is coming up with, than what the minister of agriculture is coming up with, and what the ministries across this country are understanding with results of the USMCA. I guess I need to understand why the member feels that this committee is the right tool to use to get the information that we need.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak?

Mr. Schneider: Mr. Chair, we've talked about this seven or eight times this morning. We talk about Alberta's economy and Alberta agriculture. Certainly, I've made a living of working in Alberta agriculture. It seems to me that as we speak about this and what the motion reads, we have now narrowed our vision into one portion of agriculture in Alberta. Don't get me wrong; it's important just like every other portion of agriculture in Alberta. Is there any way that the mover has any way of broadening the intent of that motion so that people that produce cattle, people that produce grain, and all the other aspects, agribusiness, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, all get a chance to be part of this study? It's just a question to the mover. If not, then I guess I'll start again.

The Chair: Mr. Horne.

Mr. Horne: Sure. Just briefly, I recall that there was a rather large review of agribusiness in this province not that long ago. I think it was Resource Stewardship.

The Chair: No. It was this committee.

Mr. Horne: It was us? Okay. I wasn't on the committee at that time. I was on Families and Communities. But, you know, I'm reflecting on that, and I know that there was a lot of consultation there.

The reason why I went with these specific industries or subindustries, depending on how you want to categorize agriculture, I suppose, is that these are ones that I've heard some very specific concerns about with USMCA. As this is the far more pressing concern, I think it's more important that we maintain the focus on these issues. Certainly, all agriculture is very important to this province, and given the fact that we've already had a larger consultation with agribusiness, I think it's more important to keep the scope on the specific issue here.

Mr. Schneider: We've had, indeed, I agree – I'm part of this committee – a larger consultation with agribusiness. We had farmers selling grain across the line, exporting cattle across the line. All of those things happened before USMCA. Your very words state that you've been getting lots of comments about how Alberta agriculture, with regard to the things that are on the board there, is affected by USMCA. What about how I sell my grain or how I get my cattle across the line or how I sell them to somebody who has to move them across the line? I think we're missing a broader picture here on agriculture in general in Alberta.

I know that agriculture sometimes feels like the government sometimes isn't sure what we're doing out there although I still think we're number three as far as industries are concerned. I still think it's important that we broaden the scope of this if we're going to do it at all and make sure that everybody in agriculture is a part of this motion. I think people are listening, and they will hear about this motion and probably would be a lot more impressed with a committee that included all of those that are involved in agriculture in this province.

Thank you.

Mr. Dach: I simply wanted to say that I don't think we necessarily exclude, if you look at the wording of the motion itself, other subjects. Where we say that we "undertake a study on the impact of the USMCA on Alberta agriculture," that kind of covers it, "in particular the effect of . . . U.S.-originating dairy, poultry, and eggs on Alberta's supply-managed producers." It's already covered, so I think that we have that taken care of. We should just simply call the question.

Mr. Schneider: Well, I'm not prepared to call the question, but you're the chairman, and I guess you can make that decision. Mr. Chair, I would be prepared to make an amendment to this so that we can determine who sits where on this idea. I'd like to move to amend the motion by striking out "undertake a study" and replace it with or substitute "invite the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry to appear before the committee to provide a briefing to members" on the very things that I just finished talking about. How am I going to finish that to encompass all agriculture in Alberta? I don't know how to word that.

The Chair: Sorry, Mr. Schneider. That's out of order because the intent of the motion is to address these issues through a study. By inviting the ministry of agriculture, you'd be changing the intent of what Mr. Horne is trying to achieve.

Mr. Schneider: Fair enough. That's number two. I've got two strikes. Third one: am I out of here?

The Chair: Depends on what you do. Nevertheless, if this was something you're wanting to move, we'd have to defeat Mr. Horne's motion, and then you'd bring forth that one.

Mr. van Dijken.

Mr. van Dijken: Yes. Thank you, Chair. With regard to the motion at hand, I do believe that the motion at hand has narrowed the vision to be a study with regard to the increased market access of U.S.-originating dairy, poultry, and eggs on Alberta's supply-managed producers. That being said, it does not open up the avenue to allow us to have the study of the impact on Alberta agriculture with regard to all of the other sectors that are part of Alberta agriculture. I do believe that that's an important part to recognize. In these trade agreements that are federally administered, we have to recognize that there's been give-and-take in the discussions and in the agreements.

11:20

I think that we do ourselves a disservice if we only study the impact of increased market access of U.S.-originating dairy, poultry, and eggs and fail to broaden the scope of the study of the impact on all of Alberta agriculture. So I would like to see an amendment that would

strike out the last three lines there, "in particular the effect of increased market access of U.S.-originating dairy, poultry, and eggs on Alberta's supply-managed producers and their suppliers"

I think that would allow the study to recognize what could be considered the pros and the cons, the positive and the negative impacts on all of Alberta agriculture. As Mr. Dach has alluded to, he feels that it already does that, but I think that by striking out those words, we allow ourselves to have a robust study on Alberta agriculture, on the trade negotiations and the effect that they have on all of Alberta agriculture.

The Chair: I'm sorry, Mr. van Dijken. You're wanting to strike out everything after . . .

Mr. van Dijken: After "Alberta agriculture." Strike out everything after "Alberta agriculture."

The Chair: We have an amendment on the floor. I'll open that up for discussion.

Loyola: Mr. Chair, I would respectfully make the argument that this really changes the entire motion. I mean, I think that it's been argued by members on our side that we do want to look at all of Alberta agriculture but, in particular, the supply-managed producers and their suppliers. I think that's a particular focus that we do want to take, but it doesn't exclude other aspects, factors of Alberta agriculture. I believe that the amendment would drastically change the intent of the motion as moved by Mr. Horne. I would suggest that it is out of order, but it's your call, sir.

The Chair: As discussed in earlier motions, this would just kind of expand the scope of what the study is looking to achieve by looking into the effects of the USMCA. This amendment would be in order because it still falls within the scope of doing a study within the USMCA.

Dr. Starke.

Dr. Starke: Thank you, Chair. You know, I think we're splitting hairs here a little bit. I would tend to agree with the interpretation of the Member for Edmonton-McClung that the motion as worded does not preclude us from looking at agriculture writ large but that it wants to make sure that we take a specific focus on the supply-managed sector, those five sectors that stand to – although we don't really know – have the greatest impact from the USMCA.

When I first heard this motion, I was once again saying: "Well, why are we just looking at agriculture? Why aren't we looking at other sectors?" But at some point you have to decide not to try to boil the ocean. You know, if we just say that, well, we're going to

look at the entire Alberta economy, I look around the room, and some of us will be dead by the time this study is done, without being too blunt, myself included, present company excepted, though. I think that to focus on agriculture is fine.

You know, we can wordsmith this thing. Clearly, some members are uncomfortable with removing all reference to the supply-managed sector, which, certainly from most of the reports that we've heard, stands to be the sector within agriculture that is most impacted. But we don't know that for sure. We don't know the impact that this is going to have on the hog sector, on the beef sector, for example, so I definitely think that it's important that we do that.

I mean, I could offer another bit of wordsmithing. If we want to make sure that we maintain reference to the supply-managed sector within the motion, we could simply change "in particular" to "including." They would still have everything else there, but it also makes it clear that it's a broader perspective.

I know that we have a motion on the floor. I'm not uncomfortable with the amendment on the floor, but clearly, you know, to remove all reference to the supply-managed sector is one that's not sitting well with some members of the panel. That's fine. So, you know, if that one goes down to defeat, then I would suggest that we could wordsmith it again just to make it crystal clear that we're not restricting the discussion to the supply-managed sector, that we're looking at all of agriculture but that we do want to focus somewhat on the supply-managed sector. And I can understand that.

I mean, clearly, one of the targets or one of the objectives of the American negotiating team was to ideally dismantle supply management in Canada entirely. Now, they didn't achieve that – I think that's a good thing – but there were changes made as a concession to the American negotiators that, you know, some people in the supply-managed sector are very concerned about. I think it behooves us to find out what those impacts are and which of the five supply-managed commodity groups are the most impacted in Alberta. We hear a lot about dairy, but there are other sectors that could be impacted as well, so we should hear from our chicken producers or turkey producers or our laying-hen producers and our egg producers as to what impacts it has on them as well. To be sure, that should not be the only focus of this study.

I'm not uncomfortable with the amendment as it stands, but if it is defeated, then I would suggest that we just, you know, maybe soften the wording of "in particular."

Ms Fitzpatrick: Actually, I wanted to move the previous question.

The Chair: Oh, okay.

I'll continue on the amendment.

Mr. van Dijken: Seeing that there is limited appetite for the amendment as moved, I would withdraw the amendment.

I think we can at this time entertain the amendment that has been suggested by the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster. I think that removing the words "in particular" can have the same effect, so I think we can move in that direction.

The Chair: Unanimous consent is needed for the withdrawal of an amendment, so I will ask: is there anyone opposed to withdrawing the amendment?

Mrs. Littlewood: Opposed.

The Chair: Okay. Unanimous consent is not granted. The amendment is still on the floor. Are there any members wishing to discuss the amendment?

Seeing and hearing none, I will call the question on the amendment as proposed by Mr. van Dijken. All those in favour, please say aye. All those opposed, please say no. And on the phones?

That amendment is defeated.

We're back on the main motion. Are there any members wishing to speak to the motion on the floor?

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Chair, I'll give it a shot.

The Chair: Go ahead, Dr. Starke.

Dr. Starke: I move that the main motion be amended by striking out the words "in particular" and replacing them with "including but not limited to."

I think I've already articulated the reasons why that might be a reasonable middle ground. I mean, we're not disagreeing on the intent here. The intent here is to make sure that all sectors of agriculture are examined, but I think the other part of the intent here is to recognize that supply management was a specific target of the American negotiating team and that there were changes made to sectors within the supply-managed commodity groups. They have those impacts to deal with, and we want to make sure that we understand and know what those impacts are. So let's make sure that we include that but not limit it to that.

11:30

The Chair: Excellent. We have an amendment on the floor. I'll open it up for discussion. Mr. Dach.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Chair. I really think it does change the intent of the motion that Mr. Horne made by widening this. The words "in particular" were in the main motion with intent so that there would be particular focus on supply management issues, and I wish that that be maintained. So I'm certainly going to vote against the amendment in favour of maybe standing pat with the original motion so that we can have particular focus on supply management issues.

The Chair: Excellent. Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? Mr. van Dijken.

Mr. van Dijken: Yeah. Sure. I don't believe it changes the intent at all. I believe it broadens the scope. It allows the study to actually have a focus but a limited focus, and I think it allows the study to actually investigate all aspects of how the USMCA impacts all of Alberta agriculture.

The Chair: Excellent. Any other members wishing to speak?

Mr. Taylor: I tend to think it doesn't make a huge change, but it does allow for us to be able to look at the unintended consequences that might affect something like the hog market or the agriculture markets. There are other markets that might be affected, so I think this change is probably a good change, what Dr. Starke from Vermilion-Lloydminster has put forward.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Mr. Schneider: I'll basically just reiterate, I think, what I said, and Dr. Starke is absolutely correct. Supply management was what the United States and particularly the President, it seemed, was after as far as a deal with Canada. But I can't stress enough that I agree that this amendment certainly doesn't change any intent. I think I would find that if I didn't speak on behalf of agriculture in my riding, being part of a study that this committee was going to undertake with regard to what may happen although we don't know what may

happen yet – Dr. Starke nailed that one, too. That's a real good reason why a study regarding all aspects of agriculture and this new deal is a great idea.

I'm not going to belabour the point, but those are my thoughts.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing and hearing none, I will call the question on the amendment. Mr. Roth, if you can read it in for those on the phone.

Mr. Roth: Certainly, Mr. Chair. Moved by Dr. Starke that the motion be amended by striking out "in particular" and substituting "including but not limited to."

The Chair: Having heard the amendment, all those in favour, please say aye. All those opposed, please say no. Members on the phone?

That amendment is defeated.

We are back on the main motion. Are there any other members wishing to speak to the motion? Mr. van Dijken.

Mr. van Dijken: Yeah. You know, I would reiterate that with this motion for this committee to undertake a study, possibly we're going down a road that's going to duplicate what's already going on within the ministry. I would encourage all members here to recognize that the importance of this is paramount, but duplication of studies may not be necessary. I think it would be prudent for our committee to get a report from the agricultural ministry to allow us to understand what they see as the impacts as opposed to undertaking a study. I'm not sure of the scope of what the member has intended here, if this is going to tie up the committee for an extended length of time doing work that's already being done by the ministry.

I caution everyone that we have limited ability to actually be able to do a lot of different work, so I think it's prudent for us to try and ensure that we do the work in the most efficient manner that we can.

The Chair: Excellent. Any other members wishing to speak to the motion on the floor?

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead, Mr. Gotfried.

Mr. Gotfried: I have to concur with what was said by MLA van Dijken. We have experts – and I've had the opportunity to meet with many of them in the agricultural ministry – who can undertake these studies, who are much better equipped to undertake these studies. Then we could call them in, as we suggested we do with economic development and as is being done by Resource Stewardship with Energy, to inform us of the expert opinions and expert research that they've done on an issue, that they are fully capable of doing, rather than tying up the time of our committee in doing so. I think that getting that information from the relative experts on this is the way for us to ensure that we have the appropriate information.

So I'll be voting against this motion.

The Chair: Excellent. Any other members wishing to speak to the motion?

Seeing and hearing none, I will call the question. Mr. Roth, if you can read it into the record.

Mr. Roth: Certainly, Mr. Chair. Moved by Mr. Horne that in the interest of strengthening and diversifying Alberta's economy, the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future undertake a study on the impact of the USMCA on Alberta

agriculture, in particular the effect of increased market access of U.S.-originating dairy, poultry, and eggs on Alberta supply-managed producers and their suppliers.

The Chair: Having heard the motion, all those in favour, please say aye. All those opposed, please say no. And on the phones? That motion is carried.

A recorded vote has been requested. I will start with my deputy chair to my right.

Mr. van Dijken: Opposed.

Mr. Taylor: Opposed.

Mr. Schneider: Opposed.

Dr. Starke: In favour.

Mrs. Littlewood: In favour.

Mr. Horne: In favour.

Mr. Dach: In favour.

Mr. Piquette: In favour.

Ms Fitzpatrick: In favour.

Loyola: In favour.

Mr. Carson: In favour.

Connolly: Yes.

The Chair: Members on the phone.

Mr. Gotfried: Opposed.

Mr. Roth: Mr. Chair, total for the motion, nine. Total against, four.

The Chair: Okay.

That motion is carried.

I think it'd be prudent just for a refresher and for those members who weren't here for the agrifood review if Dr. Massolin would just like to give a quick overview of what the review process would look like . . .

Dr. Massolin: Thank you.

The Chair: . . . or the study process. Sorry.

Dr. Massolin: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity. As you have alluded to, this committee has undertaken such a review. I refer the standing committee to the authority on this, and that is, if you don't have your Standing Orders handy, Standing Order 52.07. Particularly suborder (2) and suborder (4) are relevant here, so I'll read those out.

(2) A Legislative Policy Committee may on its own initiative, or at the request of a Minister, inquire into any matter concerned with the structure, organization, operation, efficiency or service delivery of any sector of public policy within its mandate.

(4) All inquiries must be concluded and a substantive report presented to the Assembly no later than 6 months after the commencement of the inquiry.

11:40

That one I want to elaborate on. The clock has now started ticking since you've passed that motion, but as Mr. Koenig and, Mr. Chair, you had mentioned yourself previously, we've got this other matter still outstanding, and that's concurrence in the report on Bill 201. So I would suggest kind of a practical approach, and that would be that the committee may wish to consider what to do at its next meeting, which would happen after that concurrence would take place. It's hard to predict when that would occur, but my sense would be that that might be brought up on the 29th, the first day that the Assembly returns to sit for the fall sitting. It may not happen that day, of course, so out of an abundance of prudence the meeting would follow that at some point later on.

As these reviews have happened in the past for policy committees, the reviews, or the inquiries if you want to call them that, have usually been kicked off with a briefing by the ministry. Also, I think the committees have typically undertaken sort of a consultation, a stakeholder process, as well and sometimes a public process, but usually that comes a little bit later on.

I would suggest that the committee consider at this point setting up that next meeting by inviting somebody from a government department to speak to the committee, giving background information and some technical expertise on this issue, and perhaps even tasking us in research services, Mr. Chair, to prepare a draft stakeholder list for further consideration at the next meeting so that the stakeholder feedback could be gathered by this committee.

Thank you.

The Chair: I'll open that up for discussion. Would we like to discuss this further? The other thing, too, I can propose is that we poll for a meeting, with the suggestion that this would get tabled on the 29th, and look at an opportunity for us to sit down and look at the potential draftings of these documents.

An Hon. Member: Do you need a motion?

The Chair: We don't need a motion for that.

Is there any other business that members wish to bring forth?

Okay. Seeing and hearing none, I will poll members for the next meeting.

With that, I need a motion to adjourn. Member Loyola moves that this meeting of the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future be adjourned. All those in favour, please say aye. All those opposed, please say no. On the phones? That is carried.

The meeting now stands adjourned.

[The committee adjourned at 11:43 a.m.]

