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The Honourable Kenneth R. Kowalski, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 27th Legislature
 Fourth Session

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, April 26, 2011

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Mr. Cao in the chair]

The Chair: The chair shall now call the Committee of the Whole to order. We'll resume on Bill 4, where we left off at 6 o'clock.

Bill 4 Securities Amendment Act, 2011

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

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. It's a pleasure to get an opportunity to say a few words on Bill 4, Securities Amendment Act, 2011. As has already been discussed, these amendments are made to harmonize the passport system that originated six years ago in a memorandum of understanding between the federal and the provincial governments. I think I'm correct in pointing out that the province of Ontario was excluded from that memorandum of understanding. Certainly, it is our view on this side of the House that these amendments support Canada's conversion to the international financial reporting standards. There's also, as I understand it, in Bill 4 a framework for regulating credit rating organizations. We are also allowing the Alberta Securities Commission to impose or place sanctions for late filing of disclosure, and we are adopting more of the British Columbia model on this. The last amendments ensure that Alberta's registration regime is harmonized with the other provinces.

Certainly, there has been a lot of talk about how we need to have a single regulator in this country. There has been a lot of debate on that. But there are many things that are different in this province than in other provinces. One thing, Mr. Chairman, I would like to point out is our electricity markets and our natural gas exchange in Calgary. The electricity exchange and the natural gas exchange in Calgary are certainly unique. I don't necessarily agree with their creation, but that's the reality. Some people are puzzled why we wouldn't want a single national regulator. My response is: well, we have set this system up; would you like to have our electricity market as it is regulated or our natural gas exchange somewhere other than Alberta? People stop, and they pause, and they think about that. That's one point in this that I think we need to consider whenever we have further discussions on this idea of having a single regulator.

Now, certainly, as I understand it, these amendments will allow for the harmonization or mutual recognition of securities regulators in Canada through the passport system. These ideas go back, I think, six years. In this province securities are regulated through legislation, which is administered by the Alberta Securities Commission. I'm sure all members have had a look at the details and the financial statements of the Alberta Securities Commission in the minister of finance's annual report. There's some interesting information for members of this House in this report.

The Securities Commission regulates individuals and entities in Alberta that advise in securities, trade in securities, or raise money through issuing securities. The basic element of a securities regulator is, of course, to protect investors. Investors have to have confidence in what they are purchasing or buying or supporting.

Now, the Securities Commission's power is with the registrants, the individuals or firms, of course, who deal with the securities.

The Securities Commission will look at the policies of the dealers, their training, will put firms on notice that they need to self-police if the Securities Commission finds any infringements, will call the firms to stand in front of the Securities Commission if they continue to infringe on policies or established best practices, and will periodically audit dealers, spot checks that are announced or in some cases unannounced to the dealer.

According to the Department of Finance officials Canada's securities regulation officers are very good at credential regulation, and Canada has a good record on this front. Each province and territory has a similar commission, each with their own securities regulator.

They seem to be getting along very well down in that corner, Mr. Chairman, a lot better than they got along last Thursday at the hall in Eckville. Could you get them to take a seat, please?

The Chair: Hon. member, please take your seat or have the conversation outside the Chamber. Thank you.

Hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar, please continue on.

Mr. MacDonald: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate that.

Now, when you look at Canada's Department of Finance website, the two main products traded in the securities industry in this country are fixed income securities and equities. Fixed income products, which include bonds, asset-backed securities, and money market instruments, are traded, of course, in dealer markets. Equity products, which include common and preferred shares, are mostly traded on stock exchanges.

There are two ways of approaching securities regulation. One is a principles-based regulation, which is traditionally favoured in Canada and in the United Kingdom, and the other is based on prescriptive rules.

In 2004, as I said earlier, a memorandum of understanding was signed between the federal government and all of the provinces except Ontario to establish a passport system to provide market participants with a single window of access to Canada's capital markets. It was understood through this memorandum of understanding that securities regulation is provincial jurisdiction while also addressing the need to harmonize the individual systems in order to stay competitive and evolve with global capital markets.

In 2004 the first amendments were made to the Securities Act to begin implementing the passport system. There would be two phases to implement this system. In 2005, when the Securities Act was amended as Bill 19 – and I'm sure the Minister of Sustainable Resource Development remembers this well – more amendments were needed, and they were relating to prospectus and continuance disclosure. Again in 2006 and 2007 amendments were made to the Securities Act to enable a second phase of implementation for Alberta, which is being brought forward through this act. These amendments dealt again with prospectuses, takeover bids, and registration requirements.

The second phase for national implementation of the passport system was planned to be fully implemented almost two years ago. The Canadian securities commission has been working on this, as have officials here, and we need to proceed. Bill 4 certainly allows the process to continue.

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, I would like to say that this bill, the Securities Amendment Act, 2011, does not address the idea of a national securities regulator. I think we need to put that on the record. That will come at another time, the debate and discussion on that.

Certainly, with those comments, Mr. Chairman, I would like to cede the floor to another hon. colleague. I would like to thank the

hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill for his work on this bill and other matters relating to this subject.

Thank you very much.

7:40

The Chair: Any other hon. member wishing to speak on this bill? Seeing none, the chair shall now call the question on the bill.

[The clauses of Bill 4 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Bill 1 Asia Advisory Council Act

The Chair: Any comments or amendments on this bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview.

Dr. Taft: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thought one of the other members was going to speak on it, but he was just standing to tuck in his shirt, so I'll leap into the fray here to debate Bill 1, Asia Advisory Council Act. A lot has been already said on this relatively brief piece of legislation, and while it's got some things to commend it, the comment has been made often that it seems a bit pale, a bit sparse for the flagship bill of this government. But, you know, I guess that's a matter of opinion.

The comments I'd like to make, I think, reflect, shall I say, the yin and the yang of this particular issue. Clearly, Asia is the rising superpower at the moment economically. I think we need to watch in the middle- and long-term other forces, culturally and militarily. I think we need as Canadians and as Albertans to recognize that and to understand that this is a huge opportunity and position ourselves to take full advantage of that opportunity, which this bill does or at least will contribute to.

But I do also want to speak a little bit about some cautions I have, Mr. Chairman, and I'm going to start on the potential rise of Asian military might. I don't know if that has come up yet in the debate, but it's something that we, I think, need to think about in the context of an Asia advisory council, which this act will establish.

A little bit of history here. We're all watching the news these days about the battle in Libya and how NATO has intervened and how Canada, the U.K., France, Italy, and the United States, among others, are engaged in military action in Libya. Of particular note is the role of the Americans, I think, for the comment I'm about to make. America is stretched very tight globally when it comes to military force, but it is the one real global military superpower. I will come back to Libya in a moment because that's the key to my point.

I was interested watching when the tsunami and nuclear incident and earthquake happened in Japan. Within a day the American Pacific fleet was there dropping off supplies and helicoptering people in and out and so on. They're doing that at the same time they're engaged in a very active war in Afghanistan, they still have a massive commitment in Iraq, and then the world, at least parts of the world, are asking them to be involved in Libya. There's no question that at the moment and for the past decade and probably for the next decade the United States is the only nation, the only society on the planet capable of that sort of military muscle: simultaneously supporting Japan, engaged in an

active war in Afghanistan, engaged in a massive way in Iraq, and still capable of sending Predator drone aircraft and launching cruise missiles and submarines and everything else into Libya.

Why I started with Libya, Mr. Chairman, is to give this some historical context. For those of us who might know a few lines of the hymn of the American marines – I won't try to sing it here because I'd probably get chased out of the Assembly – the lines go, "From the Halls of Montezuma to the shores of Tripoli." Now, that Tripoli is the same Tripoli that's in the news today, but it's referring not to anything in the last year or two. It's referring to what was quite possibly the first American international military excursion, which was to . . .

Mr. MacDonald: After Niagara.

Dr. Taft: I think it was before Niagara. I need some clarification. If anybody can check the dates for me, I'd appreciate that.

The history lesson here that I want to reflect on, Mr. Chairman, is that very early in the 1800s – and I think it was before the war of 1812 – an American trading vessel in the Mediterranean or perhaps two of them were seized by pirates along the Barbary coast, which today we call Libya. While those pirates had an understanding with the British Royal Navy and the French that they wouldn't hassle each other, there was no understanding with the Americans. America at the time was a tiny little colony, but what did they do under President Thomas Jefferson? They sent off a military force, the marines, to the north coast of Africa, to Tripoli. They invaded Tripoli. They defeated the pirates. They freed their hostages and their ships and embarked on what became a two-century-long rise to where they are today, where they are the one global superpower.

Why do I say this, Mr. Chairman, in this context? Because I think a lot less than two centuries from now the global military superpowers will be from Asia, and I thought it was telling that the first real global expedition of the Chinese navy, at least in many, many, many centuries, was to where? The coast of Africa, not Libya but Somalia. There are Chinese naval vessels patrolling the Somali coast today. Now, that's the first modern excursion of the Chinese navy into being a global player. It's so tiny that most of us don't notice it, but I think it should be seen in the same context of that American excursion.

I have received the dates with the wonderful assistance of the members for Calgary-Nose Hill and Edmonton-Gold Bar. The Americans were involved in Libya initially from 1801 to 1805. If we look at how the Americans have risen from one little expedition to Libya 200 years ago to global dominance today, I think we will see the Chinese do the same thing from their one expedition to the coast of Somalia today to global dominance militarily, but it's not going to take two centuries. I suspect India won't be far behind.

In fact, just a few weeks ago I was in Lethbridge, Mr. Chairman. Every time I go to Lethbridge, I am absolutely astonished at what a sophisticated city that is. I went on a tour of a startlingly sophisticated satellite earth-monitoring program run out of Lethbridge. We got a very good tour, wonderfully extensive computing capacity. They sell their images all over North America, particularly into the oil patch in Calgary. The fellow giving me the tour there said: watch out for the Indian space program. He said: the Indians have multiplied their spending on space exploration, space launches, and space satellites way beyond anything we're doing in Canada and quickly way beyond what most other countries in the world are doing. So it's a different example of a rising power. We all know that that kind of technology is easily applied to military matters.

7:50

Mr. Chairman, I wanted to raise that in the context of Bill 1, the Asia Advisory Council Act, because this is not just about trade. This is about the potential of global domination.

I've mentioned military force. I would like briefly to mention cultural force. I think it's fair to say that the United States, along with its economic and military rise, has spent a better part of a century as a cultural powerhouse to the globe as well, whether it's arts or cinema or music or all kinds of other forms of culture. I shouldn't just say arts but, in fact, culture in the broader sense of the things that we value, the way we organize ourselves, the things that we want.

America has been predominant, and many of us don't realize that the modern Christmas, you know, where we have the Christmas tree with all the gifts and Santa Claus coming down with a sack of presents, is essentially an American tradition or at least an American invention patched together from many other cultures. You can go to Japan now, and in December they're celebrating Christmas. You can go to a Hindu country like India, and in parts of India they celebrate Christmas. That's the kind of cultural muscle that the west in general and the United States in particular has flexed, and we're so awash in it that we hardly even notice it.

Again, I'm going to raise the consideration here, Mr. Chairman, that the time will come when that tide is reversed, and we are celebrating holidays that originated in China or India, and we will be wearing clothes styled in Shanghai or Mumbai or goodness knows where else. When you turn on the news and you watch a meeting of politicians from anywhere in the world, they don't dress locally. They dress like they're from Fleet Street or something. They all wear a shirt and a tie and a suit. It doesn't matter if you're a Karzai in Afghanistan or whoever the current president is of China. They all dress like westerners. Well, it's quite possible that a century from now we'll all be dressing like Asians just because they will have flexed their global cultural muscle and reversed the tide. I would like this debate to occur in that kind of context.

There's one other concern I want to raise here for consideration. It might be more than one. We as Canadians are often like Boy Scouts when we go out and do business globally. We trust that everybody is going to be honourable and obey the law and have the greater good in mind and so on. We think everybody on this planet is a Canadian, and we're so darned innocent that we are easily taken advantage of. The fact of the matter is that Asian business and Asian governments and Asian military, which all work extremely closely together within their own countries, are far more strategic and are working on a different ethical basis, a different understanding of corruption and law.

There was an incident, I believe last year, when there was widespread concern, based on pretty solid evidence, that the Chinese government and Chinese businesses were secretly stealing technology, trade secrets and so on, from Canadian companies, and there was a minor scandal. I think we need to be alert to that kind of thing. We cannot go into these countries assuming that it's like, you know, going to Saskatchewan or Nova Scotia or something. It's a different set of rules. What's said to your face and what's done behind your back can be quite different. I may get flak for making that kind of statement, but I will say that, and I will stick to it, Mr. Chairman.

I hope this advisory council is giving us advice on that sort of deal as well. This is not new for me to put on the record, but I am concerned about the investment in our oil sands resource by Chinese and other national oil companies whose agendas are not the same as ours and who do not play by the same rules or the same time frames or the same laws as, say, Canadian-based oil compa-

nies. We are turning over a massive amount of a resource to companies who simply do not have our national interests in mind. It doesn't mean we don't deal with those companies and their governments and their militaries, but it means that we have to be shrewd. As Canadians, by and large, we're not terribly shrewd. We like to give people the benefit of the doubt, and I think that makes us vulnerable.

Mr. Chairman, those are some of my cautionary comments about Asia. I wanted this enthusiasm for partnerships with Asia to be in that context. I've travelled repeatedly to China. I've been repeatedly to Japan. Just a couple of years ago I was in Indonesia and Malaysia. I've been to Turkey. Someday I'd love to go to India. These are wonderful places to be, but we need to have our eyes open when we're doing business with these countries.

I think, Mr. Chairman, that with those comments my time will be soon coming to an end, so I'll see if I stirred up any debate. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-*Buffalo*.

Mr. Hehr: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is an honour and a privilege again to rise and speak, as it is every time in this honourable House, to add my comments to Bill 1, the Asia Advisory Council Act, at this time. I will admit that since the time when this act came out – it seems to be a long time ago – my thoughts on this act have changed. I've gone to thinking a little more angrily, having those thoughts of saying: "Is this all that this government can come up with? Bill 1? Really, is this all you can do? A 40-year government has brought us back to discuss an Asia Advisory Council Act? That's what's really on the minds of the people of Calgary-*Buffalo* and the people in Fort Saskatchewan or even the people of Fort McMurray? An Asia Advisory Council Act?" I think not.

It's the sense of timing of that act. Other things have come on the plate that, I guess, have engaged my interest. I hear that the Education minister is going to put on the table the Education Act. I am very happy about that. I'm sad that it's probably going to die on the Order Paper and that he may be a judge by the time any of that hard work and effort he has done comes actually into force, but I am still pleased it hit the Order Paper.

I guess what I'm saying is that if I had talked about this Asia Advisory Council Act sooner, I would have had a little more animosity. I would have talked with a little more vim and vigour. I would have talked a little more about the lack of direction coming from this 40-year government. Like all things that feeling passes, and I've moved on to more important, or what seem to be more important, issues. I'll leave that on the record.

When this Asia Advisory Council Act did come out, I for one was rather disappointed. I was hoping for a little bit more coming back into this session. Now that I'm here, let's talk about this. I was quite interested in the speech made by the hon. former Leader of the Opposition, from Edmonton-*Riverview*. It was with interest as he brought up, I guess, a song done by the American military on their travels through the world. In 1801 they endeavoured for some time on the shores of Tripoli, their first venture off the coast. Now, I know that. If the hon. member was hearing that story I was bringing up, I was giving him full credit for it. I was working that into my synopsis of the Asia bill because your thoughts and ideas were very good and were something for me to build upon.

I do note that two songwriters of my generation, a gentleman named Tom Cochrane, who was the lead singer before that of a band called Red Rider, had explicitly on the shores of Tripoli in one of their songs. It came out in 1980. I assume it was a reference to the song identified by the Member for Edmonton-*Centre*.

Again, it goes back to how this member, this Canadian lead singer of a rock band, was now touring the world, going to various places, including Tripoli, and that was Tom Cochrane and Red Rider.

8:00

I think, building upon the comments by the Member for Edmonton-Centre, that shows that Canadians have been embarking on this world-wide journey as well as the Americans. Our travels to other places are becoming more immediate, more every day. The average person in Calgary and the average person in Edmonton and the average person in the constituency of Little Bow are touched by the activities that are happening over in Asia, whereas in 1980, when Tom Cochrane was going over to Tripoli with Red Rider, well, that wasn't happening for people like me. But it's happening now on a more global basis by more and more people here in Alberta.

I guess on that note I think that it's wise – maybe not wise. Let's face it; there was more important government business to do. At the same time, setting up an Asia Advisory Council Act maybe wasn't the stupidest thing I've ever heard of, okay? It probably has some merit that actually goes to us becoming better purveyors of trade. Hopefully, when a pipeline is built over there, when we have our resources going over there, we can have negotiations in a manner that would be respectful to environmental regulations of both countries and look out for the best interests not only of Alberta but Canada and also the citizens of China as well as the rest of the world.

We're going to have a role to play in that given that we have 25 per cent of the world's petroleum resources, and given the rise of China and given the rise of India, more and more people, despite what we hear about wind energy and solar energy and the like, are going to continue to utilize a large amount of petroleum resources going into the future, in fact, even more than we do now despite our best efforts. Having a relationship with Asia is going to be very important to this province, very important to us going forward.

That said, the hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview is correct. We are entering into negotiations with a government that is non-democratic, that can do things very quickly and very much one sided, that can move vast amounts of people, vast amounts of policies in a blink of an eye without democratic discussion or debate. Having that knowledge as we go into these negotiations is important.

I think it's important that we have, possibly, an advisory council over there, but it's also wise to take care of our own backyard. We see that right here. I, too, share the worry of the Member for Edmonton-Riverview in our oil sands development. Right now we have the Chinese government wishing to take large stakes in our oil sands, and the Norwegian government has taken large stakes in our oil sands. For some reason they find it economically viable and an opportunity for them to do so and make money on behalf of their citizens and secure oil.

I was having the discussion with the hon. Minister of Energy on how at one time we had the Alberta Energy Company here in this country, and we sold it for a song. Remember when oil and gas was at \$12 a barrel? We decided to sell off the world's greatest collection of global assets under mankind for a song, at \$12 oil, to get rid of a mythical debt that was really bothering no one, that could have been paid off in a slow and steady timeframe. That said, we sold it all off, and I wonder, looking back, whether that was the wisest of decisions. But that decision was made.

We're also building a pipeline over to Asia. I guess our Asia advisory council is going to take part in the negotiations. But before that pipeline is sent over, I'd like us to develop as many

industries here as we can, do as much of that bitumen upgrading here in Alberta as we can. That may take this government incenting the market, doing things with some force and resolve to get things going on that front so that we're not just shipping raw bitumen to Asia. Those are some of the issues that we have to grapple with while at the same time looking at our markets over in Asia. We have to make sure that we're doing the best we can here in Alberta for our citizens not only for the short term but for the long term.

I appreciated that trip down the past. I will remember that now, going forward into my history, that the Americans' first foray, I guess, into world conquest was in 1801 on the shores of Tripoli, and I will go back and find out what song Tom Cochrane and Red Rider were singing when they were playing on the shores of Tripoli. Or at least I think it was that.

Nevertheless, I close. It was nice to come back to this topic, and let's hope that this advisory council holds us in good stead and leads to greater prosperity for the Alberta people.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary Fish-Creek.

Mrs. Forsyth: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm pleased to stand up on Bill 1, the Asia Advisory Council Act. Actually, I've been listening to the debate from the Member for Calgary-Buffalo, and I guess I was feeling about the same way as he was on this particular piece of legislation, that when it was tabled, the government probably had a hundred and one other things that they could make as Bill 1 before they brought forward the Asia Advisory Council Act.

I want to put on the record that I support the intent of the bill. There's no question that when you read the preamble, it's important to talk about the competitiveness. It's talking about the international strategies.

We've been trying to do some research in regard to how many councils are out there within the government, and we found quite a few, actually. Then we started doing a little bit more research to find out how many of those councils needed legislation to establish the council. When you start looking at that, the numbers coming back are very, very interesting. You know, you honestly scratch your head about why we need to have legislation to establish an advisory council when the things that are in the preamble of the legislation, quite frankly, the government should be doing right now. You wonder if they have to put in legislation something that they should already be doing, quite frankly. That's bothersome and troublesome, to my mind, because we've got, I think – what? – 10 international offices out there already. I'm not exactly sure. I don't recall in my tenure here having legislation to establish any of those councils or any of those international offices, to be quite frank.

When you look at the table of contents, it's a very small bill. It's all of four pages. The first page and a half contain the table of contents and then the preamble. When you start looking at the preamble, all of the things that they're whereasing as far as the government's plans are all things that they should be doing not only in Asia but, quite frankly, all over the world if we want to establish, you know, our mark across this world.

8:10

They talk about competitiveness: "competitiveness is core to the Government of Alberta's plan to position Alberta for long-term prosperity." Well, if you go back a year, I think Bill 1 was the Alberta Competitiveness Act, if I remember, another piece of legislation that I think: why in heck are we bringing forward legis-

lation that in government we should be doing on behalf of Albertans already? Yet now we're having to set this in legislation that's saying: "Okay. This is the law. This is what you should be doing. You have to make Alberta competitive. We have to have some long-term prosperity."

We talk about: "Alberta's international strategy sets the overall course for the Government's engagement internationally with the goal of making Alberta more globally competitive." Well, what the heck have we been doing for the last 40 years that this government has been in power? All of a sudden the light goes on, and we're bright, and we're articulate, and we're bringing all these whereas forward in regard to legislation. I think: gosh, I've been here since '93, and I thought we were doing all of this. Yet under the Premier's mandate he's decided that this is going to be one of his legacies. I'm thinking: well, geez, I thought Premier Lougheed did a pretty good job of establishing Alberta in the oil and gas market, and now we have a Premier that thinks he's going to establish us internationally, in the global market, when it's something that we probably, I'm sure and I'm hoping, have been doing all along.

It talks about key markets such as China, Japan, Korea, and India, that they're the second-largest export market, following North America. Well, I sit on the Alberta heritage act committee. I remember talking to AIMCo in regard to where they were investing money. I will have to go back to read *Hansard*. When I was talking to Dr. de Bever, he was quite hesitant about investing in some of these markets because of the political instability and investing in stable markets. You know, sometimes to me the right hand isn't sure what the left hand is doing.

It talks about: "The Government of Alberta is committed to pursuing global advocacy, advancing Alberta's international relations." For goodness sake, Mr. Chairman, we have a Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations. I guess that means that that ministry is all of a sudden redundant or that that particular ministry really hasn't been doing a very good job on what they're doing, or this bill is sending a clear message to the ministry that they haven't been doing a very, very good job.

It goes on to talk about our strong financial position, educated workforce. All of that, you know, is stuff that should be and has been and should have been done previously.

I notice the Member for Highwood listening very intently. It's interesting because he is the former minister of agriculture, and I know about all the time he spent on building the Asian market. I can tell you that that Member for Highwood didn't need a piece of legislation to realize that it was important for him to go to Asia, talk about our agriculture, encourage the Asian market to become involved in what Alberta produces. He did that all on his own. He didn't need to be directed by a bill. He had the brains and the smarts to realize that there was some Asian market in regard to the cattle industry that needed some expansion. I guess, member, now you have some clear direction on what you should or shouldn't have been doing when you were over in Asia expanding the global market in regard to the wonderful farmers and the horrific hit they took in our cattle industry.

It goes on to specifically talk about the 10 members appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council for a term not to exceed three years and that you have to designate a chair and a vice-chair. Honest to goodness, Mr. Chairman, does government honestly think that Albertans are stupid and that they need to have legislation to establish a council, saying that there are only 10 members and you have to have a chair and a vice-chair, establish even their terms? No remuneration. They've put that in the legislation. We know that these council members are not going to get paid except for their expenses. They're going to make bylaws for the conduct

of its business and affairs. Well, anyone knows that we follow *Robert's Rules of Order* when you're establishing.

It talks about: "the Chair of the Council shall submit to the Minister an annual report consisting of a general summary of its activities during the previous fiscal year." Well, it'll be interesting to see if that Asian council starts following some of the ministers as they travel abroad. I know our Premier and some of his colleagues have been to India. They've been, you know, all over the world, and at no time before they started their travelling did they need a piece of legislation to be able to tell them that this is what they were going to do when they were looking at the global markets and where they could travel, where they couldn't travel, what they had to do, what they didn't have to do.

Mr. Chair, my comments are brief. I just want to say on behalf of the constituents of Calgary-Fish Creek that I can guarantee you that they would tell you that this is not a bill that should be the number one bill for the government for the spring Legislature. I have just done a survey in the constituency – it's the first time I've ever done that – because I wanted to make sure that I was on track with the constituents of Calgary-Fish Creek. Guess what? Health care was number one, and education was number two. Hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, we have an important piece of legislation that I understand is hitting this Legislature tomorrow, the Education Act. I think that's pretty darn important.

I'm certain that we as members of the opposition could probably come up with five, 10 pieces of legislation that I think would probably be a number one priority for Albertans, what they saw as a bill that they would want to see. I know that many of the people in the rural areas are upset with the land-use framework. We're going to be debating that a little later on I understand from the House leader, and I know that's going to be a bill that's going to cause a lot of debate in this Legislature.

I can tell you that as an urban MLA there are only probably three times that I can remember where we've taken a lot of calls from the rural areas on some of their priorities. Of course, one is the BSE. The second was the check-off, that was brought forward, I believe, by the Member for Highwood, and the minister from Drumheller-Stettler has changed that check-off procedure. Lastly, of course, on the land-use framework we're getting a lot of calls and e-mails in regard to that particular piece of legislation and, obviously, Bill 50, which is affecting a lot of rural Albertans, the residents in Sherwood Park, with the power lines, et cetera.

With those remarks, it's important that Asia understands that we as the Wildrose support anything in regard to improving international trade with not only Asia but India and any other country where we can establish ourselves globally in a market, where we can help them and they can help us. But, certainly, Mr. Chair, not as the number one bill in this Legislature.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo on the bill.

Mr. Boutilier: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Indeed, it's a pleasure to rise this evening to speak relative to Bill 1, the Asia Advisory Council Act. My colleague and esteemed representative from Calgary-Fish Creek I can say touched on some very important points relative to this bill. I certainly respect her view and opinion relative to this bill since she served in this Legislature dating back to 1993 and, in fact, her indicating that she had never witnessed such a Bill 1 as the Asia Advisory Council Act.

Perhaps I can start by indicating that I first want to apologize. I am sending the Minister of Education a globe. I made a commitment in this House relative to that.

8:20

Mr. Hancock: Don't worry about it. I've got lots of globes. You're off the hook.

Mr. Boutilier: I appreciate that the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has indicated he does not want a globe.

The reason I mention the globe is specifically because of the fact that I begin to wonder if the government knows where Asia is. I am somewhat surprised that we have universities from all over Alberta, Alberta businesses who are literally 15 years ahead of the government. They have been taking action. They have been taking a very strategic approach to Asia. We have a very powerful relationship with Asia on a variety of matters, and I really want to compliment Alberta businesses, businessmen and women, also Alberta universities because of the fact that they discovered Asia 15 to 20 years ago.

Here today we have Bill 1, the Asia Advisory Council Act, introduced by this Premier and this government as bill number one. It is almost bordering on, I can only say, ludicrous. I can only say ludicrous because, as was mentioned previously by many hon. members, here we are, a government with the number one bill ready to say that we're going to form a committee to study Asia. Well, Mr. Chairman, that is bordering on ridiculous. I can say that's why I intended to send the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud a globe, because it appears to me that the government really needs a globe. I'm not sure if there are globes in the Premier's office.

Bill 1, to call this an advisory council, to form a committee. Yet I look and examine the number of committees that have been formed by this government. Actually, when I see a committee that is formed, sometimes I begin to wonder if that's not code to say: let's just allow the committee to take the heat off the government and maybe allow it to do something. Basically, form another committee, and ultimately nothing will be done.

Consequently, Mr. Chairman, the Asia Advisory Council Act is beyond their comprehension of the importance of Asia. Putting it as bill number one to form a committee really speaks of the lackadaisical approach that this government takes towards Asia. I think it is very unfortunate because we have the utmost respect for Asians and for their contribution in this global marketplace that we have and operate. To form a committee, to have a bill that talks about a mandate, a mandate of the council – let me say this: “the mandate of the Council is to advise and make recommendations to the Minister on measures to expand existing economic, research, educational and cultural opportunities between Alberta and Asia.” Well, let's catch up with the times. You guys don't get out enough. I mean, it's 15 or 20 years later. Albertans all over are out there doing that.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Riverview, when he was a tenured professor at the University of Alberta, I know he had taken many missions to Asia. That was many years ago. Clearly, the hon. member and the university did not need a committee. They did not need a committee, nor do we now. Bill 1, really, defies logic.

We have the utmost respect for the Asian community and the important partnerships. A partnership is: what can we do for you that you can't do, and what can you do for us that we can't do? That's really what a partnership is all about.

“Without limitation . . . pursuing new market opportunities.” I would hope the minister is doing that as we speak. A bill that says, “Let's form another committee and make recommendations to the minister,” is at best weak.

“Promoting Alberta as an attractive destination for international investment.” Well, Mr. Chairman, we promote Alberta every day. We are all ambassadors. Albertans that are working in universities, that are working in research labs, that are working all over the globe clearly recognize that we do not need a committee. Again, I view the word “committee” as code for: let's just simply not do anything.

I believe that Bill 1, the Asia Advisory Council Act, really misses the mark. I should share with the government that it is the 21st century. In fact, we have just completed the first decade of the 21st century. Asia and the partnerships that have been formed by universities, by Alberta businessmen and -women, by research institutions are strong, and that will continue to grow stronger despite this Bill 1 to form a committee.

One has to ask the question: what is the minister doing now if he is waiting for a committee to make recommendations to him? One has to ask the question, go back and take a look at and revisit his mandate letter relative to what the responsibility is.

You know, I support global competition for access to existing and emerging markets and for investment capital. People and skills are ever increasing, and I support strong financial positions, an educated workforce, entrepreneurial spirit, and abundant natural resources. Certainly, in my home in the oil sands capital of the world, in Fort McMurray, we have an abundance of natural resources. Clearly, the investments that we have demonstrated that are taking place in my community, which is part of Alberta – I know sometimes the government forgets that the oil sands are part of Alberta, but Fort McMurray and the oil sands are part of Alberta. As much as we never get our fair contribution for the resources that are extracted from my community – and that's why I still wait for a long-term care centre – I can say clearly that I support strengthening collaborations among Albertans, businesses, industry, government, and research institutions.

Mr. Chairman, this has truly not only lacked imagination, but it's really lacked everything. In all my years in this Assembly I've never seen such a weak bill as this Bill 1 because it represents: go and form another committee. I have mentioned in the past that, you know, this is really a symbol of the fact that not only are the inmates running the asylum; you've turned over the keys and lost your address, and that's unfortunate.

It's unfortunate because we are very proud of Alberta. We're proud of the resources we have. I'm very proud, and I want to thank everyone who has taken the time to go to Asia, who knows where Asia is, to strengthen the relationships that have been built over the last two decades.

Here we are two decades later seeing Bill 1, an advisory committee to a minister, to advise the minister about Asia. Well, Mr. Chairman, at best this is laughable. I will only say that I'm lost for words. I'll take my seat.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere on the bill.

Mr. Anderson: On the bill, yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. That was a riveting speech by the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo. Indeed, we are in a situation where the inmates are running the asylum and they've lost the keys and they've forgotten their address. It is a serious problem here.

I'd like to stand on Bill 1 and say that again – and I've said this before – this really is a sham of a bill. There's no reason. If you go under all the different legislation, the cabinet is clearly empowered, the Premier is clearly empowered to set up basically any committee that they want to set up. So to waste this Assembly's time and, frankly, to insult the intelligence of the people in this Assembly as well as Albertans to say that we're going to use this

Assembly as a way to pass some meaningless bill that allows us to form a committee, you know, it's just beyond all reason.

Now, I've spent some time in Asia. I spent two years in Asia, actually, in the little island called Taiwan, and it is an incredible area of the world. Obviously, the population of Asia is massive, most of the world's population lives there, particularly in the two countries of India and China. In Taiwan there are about 35 million people in an area the size of, basically, the Edmonton-Calgary corridor, and most of that land is mountainous and uninhabitable, so it was an even smaller amount. It's very built up.

8:30

Asia is a very productive place. The Asian peoples – it doesn't matter if they're Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Malaysian, East Indian – are very hard-working peoples. They're very competitive, and they're very driven to succeed. Indeed, we do need to be competitive, and that's a good thing. By their people being that way and their countries and nations being that way, I think that it makes us stronger because we have to compete, and we have to become better ourselves. I think that it's a positive thing. Certainly, we don't want to get left behind.

There are some things that we can do right now. We don't need to wait for a committee to be formed by this law in order to become more competitive. Clearly, we need to be more competitive with regard to our regulatory framework. Our regulatory framework right now surrounding how we regulate business, industry, oil and gas, everything, frankly, has become very cumbersome. There's far too much red tape. These are things that we can do immediately to start increasing our competitiveness with Asia. That's one thing we can do.

With regard to establishing trade, we already know how important it is to diversify our economy, specifically our oil and gas exports, away from just the United States, which will always be an important customer that we need to develop and maintain a relationship with. We need to obviously have more customers, and Asia is a prime example of what's needed. But what have we done on that front? We're losing the debate on that front. I think this government is partially responsible for us losing ground in the debate on whether we should be able to export our resources to the west coast through oil tankers to China and India, et cetera, and to those hungry markets.

I think of, you know, our good friend Mr. Jack Layton of the federal New Democrats. I think of Mr. Ignatieff of the federal Liberals. You know, they have two very, I would say, anti Alberta energy sector strategies that would see a moratorium on oil tanker traffic going from the west coast, British Columbia, to overseas, and that's very troubling. Now, notice that I said: the federal parties. I'm not saying that that's the policy of the provincial counterparts here in Alberta. I'll let them speak to that. I don't think it is. But the point is that we're losing that debate on a national scale.

Even our own Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, has mused about a moratorium on oil tanker traffic. He's backed away from that, and that's good to hear. But if we can't even convince our friends in Ottawa and the federal Conservatives to understand our point of view on that matter, how are we ever going to protect ourselves from potentially – God help us all – a Jack Layton led coalition government, an NDP coalition government, which is actually not something to laugh at anymore because it's a possibility. I sure hope it doesn't come to pass, but it is a possibility.

We need to do much better on this file, and we have been asleep at the switch. In my head I'm wondering what the heck Gary Mar, one of the leadership candidates for the PC Party, has been doing in Washington for the last several years. I don't really know be-

cause we have gotten exactly nowhere with regard to our relationship with the Obama administration, with the United States, on the importance of our oil sands. In fact, the most recent comments from Mr. Obama, frankly, have shown a real lack of understanding of just how important the oil sands are to the future energy security of this country and indeed North America and indeed, by extension, because we are talking about the United States, the world.

We have not made progress on that file, so I would like to know what Mr. Mar has been doing to earn that large paycheque over in Washington. I, frankly, would like to see an accounting of what he has done for this province in that regard because I sure don't see many fruits of his labours in that regard. We've lost ground on that front, and I think that's ridiculous.

Now, bringing that back to the Asia experience, it's very important that we make sure that our oil and gas markets are open over there, but we do not need a committee. We certainly don't need legislation forming a committee to do that. We do that by developing relationships with the folks over in these Asian economies, which Alberta businesses have done. We continue to go over there. You'll never see me ever questioning folks like the former minister of agriculture going over to China, and there have been others that have gone over to China and India to promote Alberta. You will never hear me speak against that. The reason is because it is that important to build those relationships. There is no doubt about it.

You do not need a committee to build those relationships. You just go over, and you do it. You make sure that you have some tangible goals that you want to accomplish when you go over there. Paying a committee to come up with some kind of – I don't know – strategy: you just don't need that. Get together. The Premier can appoint his own advisory group on Asia, that would be very knowledgeable, and you go forward. Again, you know, there has been dilly-dallying in that regard.

We should clearly right now be putting a full-court press on opening up our multiple pipelines to the west coast and doing everything that we can to promote that, to get that oil tanker traffic moving to Asia, get it moving to India, not just energy exports but all sorts of exports, including agriculture. It's just critical that we get our agriculture exports to Asian markets in any way that we can.

We need to open up more partnerships between our universities, our postsecondary institutions. You know, it drives me crazy to watch skilled people coming over here from, in particular, India, frankly, with all kinds of degrees and learning, and then they have to sit and drive taxi for years instead of going straight into the professions they've been trained for, like being a doctor or being, you know, an engineer, just doing whatever it is. I understand there need to be standards and so forth, but we need to do a much better job of making sure that we're working with these universities over in Asia.

For example, why can't we set up a program that students in India and students in China can opt into and make sure that when they're done with that program, they can come over here immediately and their credentials are up to speed. They can be trained over there, and then when they come over here, they're ready to go. There's no five-year, 10-year wait while they, you know, drive taxi, lose their skills. Their skills kind of get a little dull if they're not working in their profession. We don't have to lose all that time, nor do we have to spend a ton of money training them over here or expecting them to be trained over here. They can be trained over there. They can make sure that everything transfers, that they have all the credentials they need, and then for the people that have that degree and that accreditation, we could expedite

their immigration to Canada because they'd be ready immediately to contribute to society and to contribute to our economy.

These are things that we could do if we were willing to put the time in. It's important that this government start taking some practical approaches, taking some practical steps to open up trade and open up investment back and forth with Asia. But passing a bill in the Legislature saying that we're going to form a committee on this is a joke. It's as much of a joke, frankly, as the committee on competitiveness, that was set up last time. One of the first things they've done since then is raise by 150 per cent the cost of registering a new business. Whoa, what a great step in the right direction that is for small-business owners.

There's such a disconnect between what this government says that it's going to do and then what it actually does, and this is an example of it. When this passes – and I'm sure it will – this will mark one of many bills, certainly the second in as many years, where the Premier's flagship bill has been, frankly, a very useless piece of legislation that does nothing.

8:40

It's a shame because I think, you know, that when you have the opportunity, as this Premier has, with the massive majority that he has had, he would have the ability to put forward really meaningful legislation in the area of health care, making sure that we have proper health care reform and that we're getting away from this 1960s-style health care system that we've created, where innovation is punished or slowed down, frankly, and where doctors are intimidated and nurses are intimidated and so forth. He could be the guy that's leading the charge on this with Bill 1, a health care act, whistle-blower legislation, or something that would protect the rights of front-line health care workers. But that takes leadership, and that's something this Premier has failed on so many occasions to provide.

He could have been in here talking about democratic reform: Bill 1, a fixed election date act, or Bill 1, a free-vote act, empowering MLAs to vote their conscience on every single bill, free from intimidation or penalty or the caucus whip.

Mrs. Forsyth: A whistle-blower act: that would be a good one.

Mr. Anderson: Yeah, whistle-blower protection. We were talking about that.

Or a property rights preservation act. He's had so many opportunities to do the right thing, to show leadership with his Bill 1, and each time it seems it's some kind of piece of feel-good, do-nothing legislation. It's been a huge disappointment to watch this Premier.

He has passed some tough legislation, but he's done it through cabinet ministers – some are sacrificial lambs, and they don't know it, and some know full well what they're doing – passing some of the most ridiculous legislation that this province has seen and certainly the most harmful with regard to the royalty framework legislation, property rights legislation, Bill 50, the way that health care has been handled, et cetera. You can go down the line. It's been very disappointing.

I hope that whoever follows suit – if it's Mr. Mar, hopefully he can explain what the heck he's been doing for the last three years or however long he's been in Washington so-called defending our interests.

Mrs. Forsyth: We didn't need a Washington act to put him in there.

Mr. Anderson: Maybe we should have put a Washington act in place, the United States trade committee act. That's right. We

should strike a council to figure out how to be, you know, better friends with the United States. Clearly, that's ridiculous. You just go down, and you do the job. You make sure that the people who are in place actually know what they're doing, unlike Mr. Mar, who has done very, very little to take the Alberta story to Washington, DC. It has fallen on deaf ears, and we are way back from where we were even just a few short years ago in that regard, which is just very demoralizing. It affects our economy, and it affects our oil and gas and our energy workers, and it affects a great deal of things.

With that and on behalf of the Wildrose, I'd like to make sure that we push the government to actually accelerate and to push even harder to make sure that folks like Jack Layton and folks like Michael Ignatieff know that a moratorium on oil tanker traffic is completely unacceptable, that we will oppose that in every way possible, through the courts, politically, in any way we can, because it's wrong, and it's an attack on our province. It's a unilateral attack on our province. We should be out there making sure that that's heard and making sure that if the rest of Canada, particularly the folks down east, wants to continue to have the fruits and the benefits of Alberta money in their coffers through the equalization program and other programs that we give them, then they need to respect our rights to export our products to markets like Asia.

I don't think that case has been made enough by this government. It's been made. I will give them credit. They have attempted to make the case, but it has fallen on deaf ears, and they have not pushed it hard enough. They need to start pushing harder and being louder, and that's just the way it is.

We need to start with our own friends in the Conservative Party and make sure that they continue to say what they've now come around to saying, which is that they will not support a permanent oil tanker traffic ban. What they will support is making sure that oil tanker traffic is properly regulated, that there are double-hulled ships, that there are two-pilot boats or multiple-pilot boats, however many are needed. No cost is too high to make sure that it's safe and we don't have a disaster. There are ways that people have learned throughout the years, after the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill, et cetera, of how to make sure those things do not happen.

We can make sure that we have the safest export market of oil and gas to Asia that can be possibly imagined, but we need to make sure that that is the case. I haven't heard anything about that, any plan, any suggestions from this government on how we make that oil tanker traffic ironclad and make it completely safe going forward. I'd like to hear that. I'd like to hear them make that case to the federal Conservatives and, obviously, to Jack Layton and Ignatieff, who haven't seemed to have gotten the memo about who is paying for so much in Confederation.

Mr. Boutillier: We're not going to Windsor to shut down the auto industry plants.

Mr. Anderson: That's right. It would be much like Mr. Layton going to Ontario and saying, "We're going to shut down the auto industry," or: "We're going to put a moratorium on automobile traffic because they produce emissions of CO₂ and that's going to kill the earth. That's just as dangerous as an oil spill, so we're going to ban the sale of cars to the United States for that reason." Of course, that's lunacy. So why is it any less lunacy to say that we're going to ban the main export of the province of Alberta, that pays for so many of the programs and the care and benefits that Albertans and Canadians coast-to-coast enjoy and use?

With that, I will not be supporting this useless bill, but I will be supporting the government in any action that it takes to open up

our borders to the Asian market, to make sure we get our exports diversified over there, and to make sure the hon. Minister of SRD has an opportunity to go over to China and understand a little bit better what property rights do and do not mean.

With that, I will sit down, and we will hopefully have a vote on this soon.

The Chair: Any other hon. member wishing to speak on the bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I would like to also join in some discussion on Bill 1, the Asia Council Advisory Act. Now, of course, Bill 1 is historically a flagship piece of legislation introduced by the government to signal its broad leadership within the province, and there have been many pieces of legislation introduced in Alberta as Bill 1 over the years.

Of course, the first bill introduced by the Lougheed government when this political dynasty first began was Bill 1, the Alberta Bill of Rights. It was a flagship piece of legislation, Mr. Chairman. It was a key piece of legislation that set very clearly the government's agenda, which at that time was a progressive agenda compared to what had existed under the previous Social Credit regime. The election of the PC government at that time under Peter Lougheed was a step forward for our province. It was a modernizing government, and it believed in human rights. It believed in the rights of the individual, and it put forward a piece of legislation that set that out very clearly for everyone to see that this was a government that believed in the rights of people, that believed in protecting people, and which was a progressive and modern government for its day.

We've seen other excellent pieces of legislation in the past, but one of the things that I've noticed, Mr. Chairman, is a steady decline in the vision that is evident in the bills that are introduced by this government as Bill 1. There's been a steady drop in the inspiration, I guess, evident in the selection of subjects for Bill 1.

I'm getting a really funny look from the Parliamentary Counsel, Mr. Chairman. Have I violated some legal norm? No? Okay. Well, then, I'll carry on.

8:50

It really seems to me that in this particular bill we've hit a new low in terms of vision from this government. If this is the best that they can come up with for a flagship piece of legislation, then this government and the province as a whole is in more serious trouble than I thought. The lack of inspiration, the lack of vision contained in a bill to set up a committee to improve our relationships, our trading relationships particularly, with Asia is not timely, Mr. Chairman. That's the main thing that I would say about this bill. If this bill was introduced 20 years ago, it would have been timely. It would have shown vision. It would have shown that the government actually got what was going on in the world.

If you look at the history of the development of Asia economically, you'll realize that, in fact, the opportunities to build these relationships properly took place a long time ago. Fortunately, there are a good deal of economic and cultural and other relationships between Alberta and Asian countries, but to now set up a committee to promote this strikes me as absolutely unnecessary and long past its due date.

Mr. Chairman, back in the period between 1405 and 1433 Admiral Zheng He of China set out on seven separate expeditions into the Indian Ocean. China, of course, had traded with Southeast Asia for a long time. They actually travelled on these large-scale expeditions by ship all the way to Africa. They sailed right through the Indian Ocean. They had contact with Arab countries,

with Persia, and visited the African continent and, indeed, brought back specimens of African wildlife like giraffes and so on. At that time China was very much looking outwards. That didn't last because the next emperor then banned those kinds of expeditions, and China became much more insular.

Similarly, Japan throughout the early 1800s was very closed to outside societies and didn't want to trade with anyone. Commodore Perry of the United States visited Japan in 1853 with a number of ships, and he essentially forced Japan to open its borders and to sign an agreement, a trade agreement with the United States. That's really when trade with Asia and North America had its start, Mr. Chairman, and it's gone up and down since then.

I wanted to just point out that the great growth in the Japanese economy began in the 1960s, and it boomed all through the '70s. I still can remember the Expo in Japan. I think it was the world's fair in Osaka which really marked the emergence of Japan as a leading industrial and trading partner. So from 1970 until 2011 is about 41 years since Japan began to emerge as a major international trading country and a major industrial power in the world and a financial power. That's 41 years.

Now, you turn to some of the other countries in Asia; for example, the original Asian tigers, which are Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea, and Taiwan. They developed very high growth rates and rapid industrialization in the early 1960s. Again, they continued as major growth areas in terms of economic development right through the '90s.

Mr. Chairman, a committee to improve relationships with Asia, and trading relationships in particular, back in the '60s or '70s would have been a progressive, forward-looking step, but that was decades ago. It was decades ago.

If you take a look at the development of China, which came a bit later under Deng Xiaoping, who was the leader in China in bringing in economic reform, it began in 1978. The rapid development under a market economy, or market socialism as they called it in China, began in the late '70s and built up steam all through the '80s and '90s. Mr. Chairman, again, this is 30 years ago – 30 years ago – that China began to emerge as a major industrial power and opened its doors to the west. If this government had brought forward Bill 1 to establish this committee 30 years ago, it would have been a forward-looking step. It would have indicated that the government really got it and was open and had lots of thought about advancing Alberta's interests.

Mr. Chairman, I could go into others. I could talk about Malaysia or Vietnam or the rapidly emerging economy in India, that's been building up steam for over 10 years, and the Philippines, but in many cases these economies have been modernized and became major sources of trade in the world decades ago. So for the government now to come forward with Bill 1 to strike this committee to look at diversifying Alberta's trading partners is really trying to close the barn door, you know, after all of the horses have long since gone. It really speaks to the bankruptcy of ideas of this government, Mr. Chairman. They are out of ideas. They are tired. They have no more imagination. They don't have any ideas left for the future of this province. They're a government that has exhausted itself.

It's not a government that has not made a contribution to this province. It has. This government in its day was a modernizing, progressive force. When this government was elected, Mr. Chairman, I was in grade 11, and that's a long time ago now. The hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo was two years old when this government was first elected. Some of the people from the Wildrose Alliance were not even born. So this government has been around for a long time, and one of the things that is apparent to me is that every government has a shelf life and that this government's shelf

life was exceeded many years ago. Somehow it's managed to convince people that these old cans on the shelf in the supermarket are the only products that they should buy.

I think that's changing as people realize that they really should look at the best-before date of this government before they purchase what it has to sell again. I think that we're going to see some significant changes at the next election in this province because a government for which the best it can do, the best it can come up with in terms of new, fresh ideas is a committee to improve diversifying trade with Asia is a government that is a spent force. You know, I think it's really an indictment of a government that has completely run out of ideas, has run out of its ability. Its capacity to make a positive contribution to our province has expired. Its ideas are deceased. They are no more, Mr. Chairman. They have ceased to be. Like the proverbial Monty Python parrot, you can bang this government against the counter, but it will not wake up and move. It will not squawk because it has expired in terms of its imagination. It has ceased to be. I think the skit with John Cleese and Monty Python is apt in describing this government's lack of imagination and lack of ability to move our province forward to the next level.

9:00

Mr. Chairman, I do think that there are some places in the world that are emerging – for example, Brazil, Latin America, and other parts of the world – where there is some future, and I think the government should look at this more broadly. It shouldn't pretend that some advisory committee is going to do the trick. It needs a comprehensive approach on a world-wide basis.

Asia continues to be a major area of investment and trade and finance, but there are other parts of the world as well that are now emerging. I think a more comprehensive approach would be appropriate. Simply appointing an advisory committee is no substitute for an economic development strategy that includes international trade as a key component. We need to get beyond this idea of setting up some committee which is symbolic in the government's mind, I think. I don't see how it is any sort of a solution for developing a sophisticated, modern, broadly based international trade strategy for this province. That's something that the government should be working on. This is not encapsulated in this piece of legislation.

This is just setting up a committee to look at trade with a certain part of the world, and it is completely inadequate to the tasks, I think, that face us. If we want to remain a competitive province in the world economy, we need to be finding trading partners and opportunities around the world, and we need a sophisticated and comprehensive strategy, not an advisory committee. It seems to me that not only is the government lacking vision, but it is also lacking any sense of how to accomplish a strategy. Setting up an advisory committee could be a tiny piece of the development of a more comprehensive foreign trade strategy with future orientation, but it is completely inadequate as a means to get there, Mr. Chairman.

I just want to close by suggesting that what the government is trying to sell Albertans in Bill 1, being a dead parrot, is not what is needed. We need, frankly, Mr. Chairman, a new government. That's what we need in this province, a new government, and I think that there's a good chance that we're going to have a very interesting Legislature after the next election in this province. I want to indicate that the Alberta New Democrats are going to be coming forward with strong, progressive proposals. We're prepared to work with other political parties in order to accomplish the goals of creating a new direction for this province to get away

from the stale, dead parrot that is now lying on the counter of the pet shop of Alberta.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other hon. members wish to join in? Hon. Member for Calgary-Buffalo, you want to be back on?

Mr. Hehr: Yeah. Well, I was listening intently to the Member for Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, and I couldn't help but overhear his comments on the Monty Python skit with the dead parrot and his relating it to this bill and the fact that it seems to be more representative of something that has passed on than something that is alive because, obviously, one of the neat things about being alive is that, hopefully, you're reacting to change or you have ideas about how to better the place you're living in and the things you're going to do.

I, like him, commented in my first address, but I'll comment that I, too, was rather disappointed with this being the lead bill from this government. In fact, when the first bill came down – and I think it was from the throne speech that we knew that this was going to be part of the thing – I just said, “Oh, my goodness, can we not do anything better?”

But the movie it reminded me of was not so much the John Cleese Monty Python skit although I'm well aware of that. In high school there was a movie called *Weekend at Bernie's*. Okay? When I was in high school Bernie had died, yet they took him to parties and said: “Oh, no, no. He has not died. He's partying. He's still having a good time.” They put sunglasses on him, and they dressed him up and carted him around for a while and said: “Oh, no, no. Bernie's having a great time.” He'd fall down. Bernie went water skiing when he was dead. Bernie did these things when he was dead and all that sort of stuff. So I really appreciated the analogy that the member from the third party used, but I liken it more to the *Weekend at Bernie's* metaphor as more of a symbol of a government who is dead, who has not recognized that it has stopped really being relevant to people's lives.

I will point to the time when the Hon. Peter Lougheed took over this province. He was really a visionary, moved the province forward in vast ways, started its own oil company, the Alberta Energy Company, started its own airline. He actually banked 30 per cent of our royalties and said: goodness, this is something we're going to need for future generations; this is something that sets us apart as a country. He recognized long before other jurisdictions, like Alaska and Norway, that this was our one-way ticket to prosperity and that once it was gone, it was gone for good.

What we've seen since that time is that somehow we've lost our way. We've spent now \$180 billion of nonrenewable fossil fuel wealth that has come into the coffers of this government, and we have virtually nothing to show for it except for, I guess, an Asia advisory committee, that is going to take us forward. Well, I hope that this next round of elections actually inspires some people to look into something and say: let's hope for something more than an Asia advisory committee when governments come in, something to move us into the 21st century, something that maybe we'll look at, as the hon. member said, like a broad-based trade strategy.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak. Don't worry about renting *Weekend at Bernie's*. It wasn't really a good movie, but it served its purpose here for these debates. From there I'd encourage any and all members to speak if they wish on the Asia Advisory Council Act. The Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo might have some more thoughts.

Anyway, thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak in Committee of the Whole on the bill?

I just want to remind hon. members that in Committee of the Whole we're talking about the clauses of the bill and the title of the bill, and at the end of it the chair will ask the question on approval.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore. Committee of the Whole.

9:10

Mr. Hinman: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's a privilege to stand in Committee of the Whole to talk about the title of the bill, Asia Advisory Council Act. I guess I'll start there, with the title. This bill isn't deserving of a title like this. It has been said by so many that it is nothing more than a council that could be put together. We have lots already that has gone on, that is continuing to go on in Asia.

To think that this is the vision of this government, that this is the important bill for this session is quite concerning for most Albertans that are faced with other problems, whether that's the huge deficit that we're running, whether it's the lack of the rule of law and respect for property rights, whether it's a shortage of teachers to help those in need in their schools. There's just such a long list. When you go out door-knocking and talking to constituents, this isn't the number one bill that they think: "Oh, the government is putting together an Asia advisory council. All of our woes, all of our problems will now be swept away, and life is going to be great."

There are so many areas, Mr. Chair, that could and should be addressed by this government, that should be the number one priority. Again, maybe I'll just throw out a few ideas if we were to switch over. The environment has been a big issue. Water has been a big issue. Perhaps Bill 1 should have been the water storage amendment act, about what we are going to do in order to capture and store the immense amount of water that we continue to lose every year through our waterways because we haven't looked forward enough.

There are a couple of good things about Bill 1, and I need to point that out. The most important one is the fact that this one does have a sunset clause for 2014. I have to appreciate that the government is aware of sunset clauses.

Mr. Anderson: They won't even have to repeal that one, Paul. They'll just let it expire.

Mr. Hinman: That is right. This one will just die on its own and go forward.

The other one is that there is no salary for those on the council. But, again, you have to ask the question: what are the costs to the Alberta taxpayer of these junkets? They are paid junkets that allow the council to travel and to visit and go forward. If we look at previous trade missions to Asia, we had the mission to Korea and Japan, November 4 to November 15, 2010, at a cost of \$16,000. We had the India junket from November 1 to November 7, 2010, with a tab of \$87,000. Then we had the mission to China and Japan, that totalled \$137,000. We had another one to India on January 2, 2009, for \$27,000 and a mission to Asia, June 13, 2008, for \$20,000.

One of the points, Mr. Chair, about bringing that up is that we already have government acting and working and developing these areas, so why do we need to have this, their flagship bill, to bring forward an advisory council? For me, the reason they've done this, Mr. Chair, is because they don't know what else to do, and this just seems to be the first idea that came up. "Oh, we've

got all this work going on in Asia. The tiger is awakening. We need to get more government over there. How are we going to respond to that? Oh, let's put together an advisory council that will do that."

You just have to ask yourself: wow, is this what this government has come down to, putting committees together to run around and try and promote Alberta business? In fact, if we were to be more competitive and continue to lower taxes, Alberta businesses would venture over there and find new trading counterparts, whether it's selling our beef – you know, BSE hit, and what did the government do? It's interesting. My understanding is that the Japanese contingent that came over here was sent home. We need to involve them more. There's no question about it. We've got sister cities and provinces over there. Work has been going on.

The bottom line is: what is this government doing, having the Asia Advisory Council Act as the number one bill when we have so many concerns here at home, whether they're environmental, whether they're educational, whether they're the deficit? I mean, just today we had the vote on the Appropriation Act, and the opposition were the only ones, and naturally so, to say that this government's budget isn't good enough, that it's not prioritized right. Again, this bill emphasizes their failure to prioritize properly and to address the concerns here at home in a proper and efficient way with the Alberta taxpayers. I just have to say that this act, this bill, is a no go for many of us. I'm one of those who thinks that where we are going to go is disappointing, that there's a lack of vision.

I just have to say that this is almost as astounding to me as to listen to the health minister get up day after day, with all of our problems and everything else, and say: "Well, the solution is simple. We have five years of sustainable funding now, and therefore it's going to be fixed." Again, is this the simple solution, that we now have an Asia advisory council, and therefore all of our economic woes and challenges will be effectively managed, and we can go forward? I would say that, no, it will not help. It's going to be more taxpayer money thrown into the wind with no way of measuring to know what the accomplishments are.

It's always interesting. They always talk about using other people's money. Government is notorious for using other people's money to go on these junkets to do these, you know, trade missions and say, "We're going to do wonderful things," when I think that it can all be done without Bill 1. This should go the way of the wind, and we should go back to worrying more about what's happening here in our own country. What are we going to do to ensure that we have a sustainable environment, that we have sustainable education, that we have a budget that – what would I say? – the taxpayers would be able to support and not have a burden of a mortgage?

I still vividly remember back in 1992, when the debate was all about the deficit. How are we going to get control of our \$25 billion deficit? I don't believe that Bill 1 is going to address that in a meaningful way. There's no question that the current spending this government has is not sustainable. It's going to consume our sustainability fund, and then what are we going to do? That's what we need to be addressing, Mr. Chair, not the Asia advisory committee but how we are actually going to ensure that Alberta will continue to be the place where we want to live, raise our children, start a business, and enjoy a great quality of life, knowing that we have a health care system that's second to none, that we can get into when we need it and not 18 months later if you survive till then. No, let's have a province and a health care system that people can actually use when they need it and not be told: "You know, you're going to be on a long wait list. Yes, we have the

infrastructure built, but, gosh, we don't have any operating money. We don't have any doctors, nurses, to run these facilities, but look at our wonderful infrastructure that we've built."

The planning was wrong, and Bill 1 is wrong in the same way. We haven't addressed the real needs of Albertans. This is just a band-aid or perhaps some smoke and mirrors to say: look at this wonderful work we're going to do, all in a pipe dream to Asia when, in fact, I think businesses can do that with the current legislation that we have. We can also look at, you know, the federal government when it comes to international trade agreements in those areas.

I have to speak against this bill, Mr. Chair, and I hope that others will continue to speak out, that we'll come to some common sense in realizing that this isn't the answer. It's not going to accomplish what this government seems to think it will, and there is a better way in order to promote the province and to ensure that we have a great business and trade relationship with those in Asia.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie on the bill.

Mr. Taylor: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the opportunity to get up and talk about Bill 1, the Asia Advisory Council Act, or the Hey, We Really Ought To Set Up a Committee Act, in Committee of the Whole. Look, I'm not going to take a great long period of time here because I don't know that I have really very much to add that hasn't already been said tonight, but I do want to get on the record as supporting the arguments that have been made by many of my colleagues so far this evening about Bill 1.

9:20

Bill 1 by tradition is supposed to be the government's flagship legislation of every new year's session. It just boggles my mind. I'm gobsmacked, Mr. Chair, to think that the best that they could come up with for Bill 1 is a bill, four pages in length, that seeks to set up a committee.

Now, I may not be any expert on parliamentary law or parliamentary procedure. In fact, there's very little that I'm an expert on. I know a tiny little bit about an awful lot of things. Usually that suffices as enough to allow me to ask one or two intelligent questions, and if I listen real hard for the answers, maybe it gets me somewhere. So maybe I'll ask a couple of questions here, and maybe someone on the government side will step up and give me some answers.

Like I said, I'm no expert on this, but I don't think you need a bill in the Legislature, and I certainly don't think that you need to make it Bill 1, to set up a committee, an expert panel of 10 people, to make recommendations to the government on what they should do about this big land mass called Asia. I believe it was the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere or it may have been one of my other colleagues in the House who made the comment, "Wow, the government has discovered Asia," or "They've discovered Asia exists." There are only – what? – 3 billion people living there, something like that. It may be a little shy of 3 billion. It kind of comes across that way, Mr. Chair, that the government has just woken up and discovered that there's this big, massive continent with all these potential customers, and, my gosh, how do we tap into them?

Well, that's what it looks like on the surface, but it seems as though the Premier and the cabinet have been working towards setting up trade with Asia for quite some time with elaborate trips to set up trade negotiations in Asia. Back in October the government announced that they were spending about \$90,000 to send a pair of ministers on separate trips to Asia. The Minister of Agri-

culture and Rural Development was to spend a week visiting Beijing, Shanghai, and Tokyo in an effort to boost trade and investment. He was going along with his counterpart from British Columbia in an attempt to drum up business for agriculture, seafood, and aquaculture products from the west. Also, at the time the then Minister of Advanced Education and Technology was supposed to be sent over to visit three cities in China as well as Hong Kong and Singapore to sign partnership agreements with a number of education and research institutes. Those two trips together were expected to cost about \$90,000.

The Premier was in China last year to boost our trade relations in Asia. That trip cost about \$40,000 for the Premier and a staffer who accompanied him plus \$78,000 for events and promotion.

They've been doing this sort of thing for a while. It kind of begs the question: if they're already doing this, why do they need 10 of their expert friends? Who knows? Maybe they're even picking adversaries to sit on the panel. It would be a first, but it could happen. Why do they need 10 experts to recommend to them what they should be doing unless they're failing miserably at what they're doing now, and I suppose that's a possibility? Why do we need this piece of legislation to set this up? I'd like an answer from the government about that. Why do we need a bill, especially Bill 1, the Asia Advisory Council Act, to set up this committee, to set up the Asia advisory council?

My gosh, how much time do we spend? It's not that we spend a lot of time relative to all the time available in a calendar year debating anything in this House. But of the limited time that we have here, how much time do we spend debating and criticizing and back-and-forthing about the government's predilection for bringing in legislation that is either amending acts to existing legislation, housekeeping bills, or bills that set vague and very broad, mile-wide and inch-deep directions, and then leave it to cabinet and the bureaucrats to make all the regulations? Keep all that annoying little detail out of the hands of these pesky legislators who might actually want to get in here, you know, because they think they represent their constituents and debate this stuff and vote on it and maybe change the government's grand design. Heck, we'd be happy just to see the government's grand design.

It looks here like the government's grand design has run absolutely out of steam, and I think the parrot has expired. I think the macaw has met its maker. I think that the budgie has failed to budge for quite some time. I think this Bill 1 is evidence of that. My goodness. Please, somebody explain to me why it is that a government so bent on doing so many things behind closed doors in cabinet, on setting up so many important things that should stand the light of day of scrutiny and questioning in this House brought to this House this bill.

Mr. Chairman, you know, as I talk about this, as I think about this, I'm going beyond gobsmacked. I'm offended. I'm insulted. I think this bill wastes the House's time. I think this bill wastes the time of the people of Alberta, who sent us here to debate relevant, meaningful stuff that has something to do with their lives.

I'm not suggesting for a moment, Mr. Chairman, that setting up and establishing better trade relations with Asia – with Japan, with China, with India, with anybody else we want to trade with, that we think we could trade with, that we think we could sell stuff to – that getting the Northern Gateway pipeline built and getting our bitumen through that pipeline onto tankers to take it across, either in relatively unprocessed or upgraded form, to China and India and Taiwan and Singapore and anywhere else that needs it wouldn't be an advisable and an excellent thing for us to do. I mean, Economics 101 tells you that if you've got a product to sell, it's real stupid to restrict yourself to one customer, because then

the customer gets to set the price. If you've got two people competing for your product or three customers or multiple customers, you're going to do a heck of a lot better on the price side and a heck of a lot better in terms of calling the shots.

Mr. Chairman, I see no reason why this province, with its expertise in oil and gas, with its expertise in energy, whether it's oil and gas, whether it's oil sands, whether it's wind power, whether it's solar, whether it's building wind turbines, or whether it's developing the technology, developing the expertise – we have the knowledge base here already. The province of Alberta should be the world's energy superpower, and the decisions about energy should not be made in Houston or Dallas or Abu Dhabi; they should be made in Calgary and Edmonton.

But this bill doesn't get us there. This bill says, "We're nowhere near where we should be." This bill says, "We've been just messing around when we could have been getting down to business and establishing trade," or "We're already getting down to business and establishing trade," as I refer back to the various junkets that have been taken at taxpayers' expense, "and we just don't have any better ideas as a government about what we could make Bill 1." You know, we could have made Bill 10 Bill 1. That seems to be a much more pressing issue to the people of Alberta than Bill 1 is. So I don't know. Maybe someone on the government side can explain to me and to my constituents why they shouldn't be insulted that this is all that this government could come up with for a Bill 1 in 2011.

Hey, life is good in this province. There is no place else that I would rather live. But I don't think it's that close to perfection that this should be the flagship legislation of any legislative calendar year. I really don't. I think there are things. As wonderful a place to live, as wonderful a place to work, as wonderful a place to play, as wonderful a place to raise a family as this bloody awesome province is, we're not perfect. We've got things that we need to work on. The government has got a real credibility issue on their hands with Bill 36, Bill 19, Bill 50, and Bill 10, which I understand we'll get into debate on in Committee of the Whole a little later on this evening at least a bit, at least on the surface. We'll try and make a little bit of progress before closure kicks in tomorrow.

9:30

I think this government would be better advised to tackle issues around land use and regional planning as its flagship piece of legislation, given the amount of controversy and contentiousness that exists around that, than to be giving us this. This could be done by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. For all the times that I've gotten up in this House over the last six and a half years and said, "Why are you doing this and that and the other thing by regulation, determined by cabinet behind closed doors?" this is one time when I'm saying: "Why are you not doing this by regulation? Why are you not doing this by an order in council?" This, Mr. Chairman, is wasting this House's time.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other hon. members wish to speak in Committee of the Whole on the bill?

Seeing none, the chair shall now put the question.

[The clauses of Bill 1 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Bill 11 Livestock Industry Diversification Amendment Act, 2011

The Chair: Any hon. member wish to speak on Bill 11? You want to continue on?

Mr. Prins: Just very briefly, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Prins: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I just wanted to make a couple of more comments after I spoke the other night, just to maybe give a couple of examples of what amendments A and B refer to.

Amendment A talks about: "For the avoidance of any doubt, the Minister may not prescribe for the purposes of subsection (1) any activity to which section 18.01 relates." Really, it talks a little bit about hunting on elk ranches. The type of hunting that would be allowed would be if a person had an elk ranch and somebody wanted to hunt ducks or geese there. They could do that. There's not a total ban on hunting. It's just a ban on hunting of farmed animals. If you were hunting, say, upland game birds or ducks or geese, you could still do that on an elk ranch.

The other one, section B, talks about the condition that no consideration is receivable in respect of shooting a stray. Sometimes an animal would get out of an elk ranch. Rather than having it come back in, somebody could shoot that animal on the outside or even back in, and nobody could pay the rancher to shoot that animal. So if somebody would be contracted to destroy that animal to avoid or prevent any disease or unwanted activity there.

These are a couple of examples of why these amendments are put in. I spoke to the other examples the other night, but this is something that I left out. If anybody has any questions, I can answer questions about the amendments and about the bill.

Thank you.

The Chair: Hon. member, we have amendment A1, so we should continue on with that amendment.

The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere on amendment A1 to the bill.

Mr. Anderson: Thank you. Thank you for the kind offer to answer some questions. I do have some questions about that because I actually have received quite a few e-mails on this. People are concerned, the folks in my constituency.

I've got a lot of hunters in my constituency, tons of them. I got to talking with a couple of them the other day about this, and we just talked about whether they thought a hunt farm would be a good idea or not. They had some very interesting feelings on it. One of them was that when you're out in the wild, it's almost like this honour code thing. You know, you go out there. The animal does have, obviously, a chance of not being seen and a chance of getting away, et cetera, whereas if you're going to have a hunt farm, so to speak, if there's a guarantee that the animal is going to die, you want to make sure that it's done in the most humane way. Those are kind of the things that they were chatting about. They thought it was kind of a cop-out to have a hunt farm, all this sort of thing, and there were some other issues that they raised.

I wanted to ask the member opposite, Lacombe-Ponoka: with the amendments right now, is there anything under this bill, after this amendment comes into force, that allows for a hunt farm, where people can go and hunt? I'm not so much worried about birds and stuff like that but, specifically, large mammals, elk,

these types, deer, et cetera. Are hunt farms going to be allowed under this legislation?

The Chair: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka, please.

Mr. Prins: Thank you very much. The question is: will hunt farms be allowed under this legislation? The answer is no. That was specifically not part of the consultation with the elk ranchers. They were not asking for that. They wanted to take the whole business of the LIDA act, which is the Livestock Industry Diversification Act, out of SRD and ARD and put it strictly into ARD.

This is a mature industry. Elk farms have been around for probably 20 years. They know what they're doing. There are a number of administrative advantages to having it just strictly under one ministry and not both. The legislation under these – I don't have the paper in front of me now, but the amendments clearly indicate that there will be no hunting on elk farms or deer farms, on cervid production farms. The amendments clearly state that if in a case where the minister would allow certain hunting to happen, it would be hunting of predators or hunting of game like ducks or upland game birds, that are not related to elk ranches. They could be hunted in these areas. The other ones are for pest control and for strays. So there will be no actual hunting on elk ranches.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore on the amendment.

Mr. Hinman: Yeah. Again, just a few more questions of clarification for the hon. member, I guess. Is a cervid farm the total acreage that an individual might own, or is it just the actual enclosed areas? If you're raising cervid animals yet you have, you know, a woodland patch a mile away that there are wild deer or elk on, could you explain the parameters and if that's a problem? Is it inside the enclosed area, or is it all the area that one owns?

The Chair: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Prins: Yeah. Thank you very much. That's a good question as well. I think that certainly the licensed portion of the elk ranch would be the enclosed part. Years ago I had an elk ranch, and we had a section of land. On the first part there were a hundred acres fenced. That was the licensed part. Then if I added more fence, I would have to get the inspector out again to inspect the whole area to make sure that the fence was adequate, that it was properly enclosed, and that we had the proper facilities to handle animals so that we could actually capture animals and treat them or tag them or identify them. They could be audited that way as well.

The elk ranch itself was always just defined by the area that was fenced to hold the animals. If you had, like you said, several quarters of land, one of them might be licensed. The other quarters are not licensed. You couldn't go out there and hunt on those. It wouldn't be part of the licensed elk ranch.

9:40

Mr. Hinman: I appreciate that clarification.

There are a few other areas. Again, the hunt farm is definitely the centre of controversy in most all of this in the e-mails that I receive. A few more points of clarification on, again, allowing an industry that has had its challenges over the last 20 years – and I still see it faced with a lot of challenges going forward just in the fact of the size of the market and the marketing of their produce.

The question that I have for the hon. member is, you know, that we've got farmers' markets, and we have farm gate sales under the agricultural act. We've allowed a lot of that to come forward again. It's been a real challenge, especially for those in the organic

or natural products. They're trying to sell those items, yet there's a challenge. I personally find a challenge for those people in the cervid industry being able to have those farm gate sales. What process do they go through?

My understanding right now is that if you wanted to have some farm gate sales, whether it's broccoli or asparagus or beef that you're producing, if people come and ask, you can get that and harvest it. But if you want to try and develop a farm gate sale of cervid animals, which I think is the best market available, how are they supposed to process them or allow someone to come in and, again I want to say, harvest them in an ethical way? In shooting them, which seems like the most ethical way and the most humane way to bring them down and to harvest them, we're limited to five animals per year. That is my understanding. Do you have any thoughts? Is the market really restrained and not allowed to grow because of that? Any explanation you could give on that?

The Chair: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Prins: Well, thank you very much. That, again, is a very good question. It starts out with the amount of animals that you're allowed to kill on farm so that it's not really hunting. That is five animals per family per year. If you have a large family or if you like to eat a lot of elk meat, you can actually shoot an animal on your farm. You could take it probably to one of these mobile abattoirs or something and have it slaughtered, but you couldn't sell that meat. If you want to sell meat to the public or at a farmers' market or for farm gate sales, you would have to transport your animals to a licensed abattoir.

If it stays in Alberta, there are lots of provincially inspected abattoirs that can handle elk and, say, bison or deer or these odd or exotic or alternative animals. You would take it to one of these abattoirs, have it slaughtered and cut and wrapped in an inspected facility, and then you could take that meat to a farmers' market or sell it at your farm gate. So the public could actually access some elk or deer meat. A lot of people would like to eat elk, but they don't want to eat the whole elk. They just want part of an elk, 50 pounds or 100 pounds, so that's how you would do it.

If you want to export elk meat, you have to take it to a federally inspected plant. To my knowledge, there are at least two, but there might be more. There's one down in Fort Macleod at Bouvry packers, and then there's another one in Lacombe, called Canadian Premium Meats. Both of these plants are federally inspected and EU inspected so that the product that comes out of those plants could go to Europe or to some international markets, probably Japan, but mostly to Europe and maybe the U.S.

There is a very healthy market for elk meat right now. I know the industry has gone through some ups and downs, and it was partly because of CWD. Then there were some tariff issues with antler product going into Korea. But a lot of that has been overcome. The CWD problem is completely under control. With any animal that's slaughtered on farm or in a provincially inspected plant or a federally inspected plant, the heads are examined so that for every pound of meat that's sold commercially or even through on-farm slaughters, all animals that die that are over a year old have to be inspected. Any meat from these animals or any by-products have to stay on the premises till the results are back, and there has been no CWD found on an elk or deer ranch for many, many years now. The meat is very good. Every animal is inspected.

The markets are improving. In fact, the price of elk on the hoof right now is probably double what it was a year ago. I was at a sale just a few weeks ago, and the top bull went for \$6,000 or \$7,000, so there is a very lively market for breeding stock again. I

think the industry is back on its legs, so to speak, and has a very bright future. That's why this is a very good time to move forward with this legislation, to have a one-window approach to elk farming or deer farming, cervid farming in Alberta.

One of the other benefits of the legislation is that we now are going to a five-year licence for an elk ranch or a cervid ranch. It used to be one year, so every year you're back in there paying your hundred bucks to get your licence to operate your farm. That will be reduced to five years.

There are a number of these issues that'll be looked after under the legislation, and the farmers are very happy with this.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

Mr. Hinman: Yes. It's very much appreciated to have the hon. member's experience and knowledge in this area, and I'll continue to try and answer a few more questions from people that have sent e-mails to me and questions that I have been asked and I didn't have the answers.

Going back to farm gate sales, it's great that the breeding stock demand is coming up again, but that's going to be very limited to the actual market demand of the consumption of the meat of these animals.

Well, let's go back first to just the hunters that want to go out. When I was, you know, young and got my first hunting tag when I was 14 years old, I think it cost me a whopping \$50 to buy my gun, buy the ammunition, buy the tag, and go out and harvest the deer. I shot it, dressed it myself, brought it home, and that was very reasonable and cheap and wonderful meat. I think there are still many, many Albertans that look at hunting and approach it on an economic basis. It's the thrill of the hunt, the sport, yet the cost of it they try and control.

One of the, I guess, exciting things with domestic cervids is the opportunity for people to be able to go to a farm gate sale and purchase that. Again, in the organic market, you know, if people want organic beef or natural beef, they can go to a farm gate sale, and they can actually purchase that animal and harvest it themselves, much like a hunter.

This is the challenge that I see for the industry. Why would we not allow those same regulations, to allow someone to go to a cervid farmer and say: I would like to buy that animal and then be allowed to harvest it and take it home and not have to go through the expenses. When you have to go to these abattoirs, they're very expensive to process, and it becomes prohibitive for many who would like to eat that. Again, as you say, having to harvest the whole animal can be expensive whereas if they're hunters on their own, they know how to dress an animal properly and want to wrap it, freeze it, and take it to their home. It just seems to help the industry that we would allow these farm gate sales and allow the harvest to be taken.

You mention that they're allowed to shoot five a year, but there is no provision for myself or some other Albertan to go to one of these farms and buy that animal, then – is that what you're saying? – without taking it to an abattoir that's provincially or federally regulated. Is there any current way for someone to go to a cervid farm and buy and harvest that animal themselves, bypassing the expense of government and industry being a go-between, saying: "Well, you can't handle this properly yourself. You can go do it in the wild, but you can't do it here at a farm gate sale"? Any explanation on that?

The Chair: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Prins: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Yeah, that is a good question. I think if you were to go to a farmer to buy some

beef, and you said, "I just want to shoot that animal in your pasture" or "I just want you to put it down humanely, and I'm just going to take it home and cut and wrap it myself," that probably would not be legal. I'm sure it probably happens from time to time. Somebody might go out to a friend who's a farmer and acquire some meat that way. But I don't think it's legal for farmers to be selling cut and wrapped meat or half carcasses or whatever off the farm unless it's gone through a provincially inspected process.

This is exactly the same as the legislation in Bill 11. It will not allow for Joe Public to just go to an elk farm and pick out an animal and just shoot it down and say: let me take the carcass home and slaughter it or cut and wrap it myself. That will not be part of this process. There is other legislation that deals with the inspection of meat and products for sale, and I think that this will come under the exact same legislation as selling pork or chickens or beef or any other kind of animal that's being sold on the marketplace.

9:50

Basically, if you want to buy part of an elk or part of a deer, you're going to have to go to a local abattoir and have the farmer bring his animal in or go to one of these mobile slaughtering operators and put the animal down on the farm humanely. They'll put it in a squeeze or something, and they'll kill the animal, slaughter it there, and a mobile operator can then cut half of it or a quarter of it or a part of it for you. You might want to say to him: "You know what? Give me the quarter of the animal. I'll take it home and cut and wrap it." But it has to go through a process. I think you could probably do that somehow, but you'd have to know the people and make it happen.

We are not going to do anything illegal here, and we're not going to cut any corners or make it easier for people to pretend that they're going to go out there and shoot an animal and turn it into a hunt ranch. This is not the intent of this bill.

Mr. Hinman: It just begs the question for me, hon. member: why the arbitrary number of five? Why not two? Why not 20? Why not 50? Why do we allow it for five, but we do not allow any more than that? Like I say, we allow an individual to buy a hunting licence and a tag and go in the wild and shoot and harvest an animal, yet they're not allowed to approach a domestic cervid operator and say, "I would like to purchase that animal" and then all of it.

I understand if we're going to just take a section of it and try and sell it. I have no problems understanding that. But if someone wants to come, try and save a dollar, get some very choice meat, healthy meat, they hit this expensive wall saying, "Oh, they cannot harvest their own" or "The farmer is not allowed to assist them."

They're allowed to do five. How did we come up with five and not 10 or 20? Why five?

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Prins: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You know what? The number five: I don't know where it comes from. They probably thought that an average family with a couple of relatives or brothers and sisters with families could consume five elk. Elk are big animals. I don't know if the number is the same for deer, but for elk the number is five. These are big animals, and that's lots for a family. I don't know if I have enough relatives that could eat five elk in one year. This is just an arbitrary number that has been picked.

It's the same as the licence lasting for five years. You could make it 10 years if you wanted, I guess. Maybe if there's enough

demand for 10 animals, who knows? I don't know if that's part of the legislation or the regulation, but I believe that's part of the regulation.

Mr. Hinman: That's the crux of the problem that I see, that, okay, if you've got connections and you're a family member, you have access and can go and get an elk, yet we're closing the market to the rest of Albertans. Unless you're a family and have this connection, you can't go there. Again I just have to ask: why would we say that family is okay but a friend isn't? Or do the rules have enough latitude that you don't really have to be a family member; you can just be a friend, and you can have kind of like the different communications program, MY5. You can pick your five and allow those to benefit from domestic elk or deer, but that's it. You're limited to that. How strict is the legislation?

Mr. Prins: You know, I can't answer that question. I think if people aren't messing around with the rules, there will be no problems. When you turn it into 25 or 50, that's when people are going to start asking questions. I think if people just use their heads and stay reasonable, I think everybody that wants to get a piece of elk meat can either buy it at the farmers' market or if they know somebody that has animals – there has to be a way to make this work. But I think the best thing to do is to go back to the market, buy the meat that's inspected, stay safe. That way, you'll also know that the animal has been tested. I would suggest sticking with the rules, and if you really like it, build your own farm.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere on amendment A1.

Mr. Anderson: My last question. Thank you, hon. member, for answering my first question with regard to the hunt farms. There will be no elk hunt farms under this legislation. I think that's clear.

The other issue that I've heard is that – and I read this in the bill. There seems to be a clause – I should have found it here a second ago. I thought I had it written down. Anyway, in one of the clauses it talks about the ministry having the power to unilaterally, essentially, change – you know what? That's a different clause in the bill, so I'm just going to sit down and I'll ask him when we get back to the bill.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore on amendment A1.

Mr. Hinman: Yes. I again would like to discuss a few more possibilities. I mean, what we want is the Alberta advantage. Last session that was the government's Bill 1, to restore the Alberta advantage, a little bit more admirable of a bill to say that, you know, we've got a problem here. We've undermined it.

It was interesting. Just on the weekend – and I wish I had brought the article with me; I meant to cut it out – there was a fine lady who has gone through two and a half, three years to get a mobile processing unit for chickens in British Columbia. I don't know if the hon. member saw that article. Two and a half years, and it was continually no, no, no, no, no. She just kept asking: well, what do we have to do? She charges \$3.50 an animal to process. Again, these mobile abattoirs are a great blessing for many small producers that couldn't justify any other way of existing than these mobile processing units.

Again, though, the regulations are amazing. The hon. member says: well, if you want more, build your own farm. I'd say: well, okay; buying one is probably easier than building one. If it hasn't been a successful business, it's kind of like buying a golf course that went under. I think the capital costs to build one are immense.

You can buy them at a pretty good discount compared to what they actually cost.

Again, the nagging question that I have is about these rules and regulations that government put in place, always declaring the safety of the people, which undermines many of our industries, and they leave and go offshore to other areas. This isn't an industry that's going to be driven offshore, yet it can be driven into a position where there's no longer an advantage, no Alberta advantage to raising elk or deer in Alberta because of the rules and regulations surrounding it.

You mentioned that, you know, this bull elk sold for \$6,000. Well, even if you're a small elk producer, if it's only one and you've got 25 because half of them are bull elks, what do you do with the other 24?

I remember when I was very young and they first brought over the exotic Simmental, Charolais, and the other ones, I mean, people were paying \$60,000 for a bred heifer, just exorbitant prices. That finally went bust. People who had paid those high prices at the end – finally, there was enough of a supply that there was no more real demand for the breeding stock – had to go back to what the business really is, selling beef by the pound. A \$60,000 bull or heifer: there's no justification for that.

Because deer and elk are, you know, domesticated wild animals, someone who wants to have access to them should be able to go to a farm and just say: I'd like to buy one. Just to clarify again. If I was a relative and I went there, it's okay to use a rifle and shoot them in the pen, up to five animals. Can you even sell them to a family member, or does this have to be a gift? Do they actually go through the harvesting practice of using a rifle, or is there some other method that they have to use to harvest these animals?

The Chair: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Prins: Thank you again, Mr. Chairman. You're asking some questions that are very difficult to answer, first of all, because I'm not out on those farms, and people have different ways of operating their own farms. My view on the question: how would you kill five animals? I would put them in the squeeze, and I would use either a captive bolt gun to shoot them so that you don't wound the animal or shoot a big hole through it, or you'd want to use a small calibre gun to kill an animal from a very close range so that you're not destroying a big part of the animal. Plus you don't want to destroy too much of the brain because the brain is what they examine to test for CWD. There is a way to do this. If I were selling an animal, I would never shoot it in the field because you're going to destroy meat. That's just not a good way of doing that.

10:00

I think that if you're going to shoot it on a farm, you need to have a mobile abattoir, and if you're going to sell meat, it must be inspected. So unless you're giving it to your family members, you'd have to make that arrangement yourself. I can't speak for other operators, but there's no way to sell meat without having it inspected. There's no way to kill an animal on a farm and have it slaughtered there without a mobile abattoir, and those abattoirs are inspected as well. So it's a very regulated business, and that's to protect the consumers. If you start cutting corners somewhere, somebody's going to get hurt. What I mean by hurt is that they're going to get an unsafe product that doesn't meet the standards. So we're just protecting the consumers.

On the other hand, you can say that it adds to the cost, and that's true. But the fact is that there's a good market for elk meat

internationally. We don't have enough elk meat. What's happened is that the price was down for so long, yet we were developing markets. Now the markets are developed, but we don't have enough animals. So we want to grow this business back up to supply the international market. There is a huge market for venison and elk and deer meat in other countries, so this is actually a prime time to get going.

We might be a little bit late on the numbers of animals because too many animals have been lost due to farmers quitting and selling off their breeding stock and maybe not breeding animals in the last couple of years because of the low prices. This is a cyclical thing that happens in all industries. It happens in the beef industry. It happens in the pork industry. It's just part of agriculture that you go through these cycles. People make decisions to get in or get out, and it's just business. It's a business decision that people will make, to stay in or get out or to supply the market or not to.

It's much the same in the bison market today. The bison market has probably doubled in value. The animals themselves have doubled in value in the last year because people have acquired a taste for this type of meat. It's healthy meat. They say it has ZIP: zinc, iron, and protein. It's very, very healthy, and this is what people want. Peoples' diets are changing, and they're going to this type of meat.

We want to have a strong industry that is regulated under Agriculture, and we want to protect consumers in the health of the product. We don't want to cut corners. We want this industry to survive and prosper.

Mr. Hinman: I appreciate those answers. Just to clarify, then, when you're allowing family to come in, you're not allowed to receive any money for that? And did you say that you'd bring them into a chute, and then you'd possibly shoot them through the lungs or the heart, or is it just an area that you don't have enough experience in so you won't comment on it? How do they process these five animals that we allow? Again, can we actually sell them to family, or do we have to give them to them under this legislation?

The Chair: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Prins: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I don't think the legislation addresses on-farm slaughter. I think that's probably regulated under a different act. How they do it is entirely up to the operator. If I were to kill five animals, I'd bring them into a squeeze, and I would humanely euthanize them and have them slaughtered. I think that every operator would have their own way of doing it. But if I didn't do it on a farm, I would bring them into a provincially inspected abattoir and have them kill them in the normal way that they would do cattle and pigs and any other animal.

The Chair: Any other hon. members wishing to speak on amendment A1?

Seeing none, the chair shall now call the question on amendment A1.

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

The Chair: The committee shall now get back on the bill as amended. The hon. Member for Airdrie-Chestermere on the bill as amended.

Mr. Anderson: Okay. The other questions I've been getting regarding Bill 11 surround section 10 of the bill. It says there in 10.1(1), "The Minister may issue a permit authorizing a prescribed activity." [interjections] Never mind. Question answered.

The Chair: On the bill as amended?

All right. Seeing no other hon. member wishing to speak on the bill as amended, the chair shall now call the question.

[The clauses of Bill 11 as amended agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

The Chair: Shall the bill be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Bill 10

Alberta Land Stewardship Amendment Act, 2011

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Sustainable Resource Development.

Mr. Knight: Thank you, Mr. Chair. It is a pleasure for me to stand here tonight and open debate in committee with respect to Bill 10, amendments to the Alberta Land Stewardship Act. The bill, of course, is entitled the Alberta Land Stewardship Amendment Act, 2011.

A little bit of background if I might. I think that everybody understands that the province of Alberta has had a period of time when there was a tremendous amount of growth in the province. In fact, if we look back in 2006, '07, and '08, that growth in certain areas of the province, particularly in Wood Buffalo, was at a point where many Albertans were indicating to the government that something needed to be done in order to be sure that we had the proper type of facilities in place and the proper infrastructure in place in order for us to continue to develop our resources in the province. And it wasn't just there. As a matter of fact, Mr. Chair, if you look at Fort McMurray, Grande Prairie, Red Deer, Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Edmonton, areas around Fort Saskatchewan, the city of Calgary, the growth was tremendous, and the pressure was also tremendous.

We have to realize that the economic engine of Alberta and Canada is the investment in the energy industry and particularly the energy industry in Alberta. There was \$172 billion invested, capital deployed in the province of Alberta in five years, from 2005 to 2010, and this is in conventional oil and gas plus the oil sands. That's a tremendous amount of capital for an area that has a population of about three and a half million people.

What happened along with this is that the economic engine also fuelled population growth. The population growth in the province of Alberta over the five-year period of time from '01 to '06 was about 315,000 new Albertans, and we're now attracting about 60,000 people to the province of Alberta per year. So you can see that I think in 13 or 14 years we've increased the population in Alberta by about a million people.

This is a busy place. It's a busy landscape. There was economic and human pressure on the land. There was a need to manage our land and multiple land uses. There was also a need to manage the combined impact of all of the work that was going on, whether it was development of resources, building homes, building highways: all of the kinds of combined impacts that we needed to have managed. We needed a new planning concept.

10:10

Mr. Chair, this new concept is the land-use framework. We started consultation with Albertans in 2008, working on the land-use framework. It came with a number of, I think, very good and solid potential planning tools. First of all, a need and a require-

ment to balance our economy, the environment, and social objectives that people in the province of Alberta need and desire, want, I think have been provided with respect to social requirements for living and working, raising their families in the province of Alberta. Social requirements like health care, education, social services programs, the opportunities for recreation, the opportunities for touring and tourism: the land-use framework was laid out to provide these types of things.

We also have there the development in the framework of seven regional planning areas, the seven regions based on major watersheds in the province. Each region had unique challenges and unique needs. So we divided this into seven areas and started the work on the lower Athabasca region first. Of course, as I said, the majority of the pressure that Albertans were feeling was because of a tremendous amount of activity, probably in the neighbourhood of \$40 billion to \$50 billion worth over a couple of years there, development that was taking place in the Wood Buffalo region.

We have regional land-use plans that were spawned from the land-use framework. Regional land-use plans, Mr. Chair. They're regional in their concept, regional in their development. They're regional in the strategies that were deployed to put them together, and they will be regional in their implementation. There's nothing centralized about this issue at all. The regional plans start with regional advisory councils, individuals from the areas that they represent, bringing forward an opportunity for them to give government their vision and their advice with respect to how a regional plan for their particular unique area should roll out and should look for the future of Alberta. These plans will be tailored to regional needs.

There was a requirement, when we started into this, for legislation to enable regional planning, and we needed legal support to implement regional plans, and we needed certainty of regulation. We have the Alberta Land Stewardship Act. The intent of the legislation – the intent of the legislation – is very clear. We intend to respect private property rights. We intend to respect statutory consent holders. We intend to respect existing compensation and the appeal mechanisms that people have toward compensation. We have respect for local governments and the work that they continue to do and are responsible for. Many rights are defined in other Alberta statutes. ALSA doesn't provide these rights, Mr. Chair, and ALSA does not take them away. They exist in other legislation.

But there was a need to clarify this intent. ALSA and this government and this Premier required clarity. I was asked by the Premier to go out and listen to Albertans. While we were doing the consultation around the first couple of regional plans that we were working on, particularly lower Athabasca, I heard a lot from Albertans. The Premier asked me to go back and listen, and if necessary, to make adjustments. The result of that listening and the adjustment is Bill 10.

Bill 10 clarifies the respect for existing rights that Albertans have, and it creates some new processes. There is a commitment in Bill 10, right in the front end of it, to property rights. There is a refined scope to the regional plans. There is a very solid and firm explanation that statutory consents exclude land title, and there are no changes to the right to compensation of any entity or person in the province of Alberta relative to something that may be put in place with a regional plan. All of the rights to compensation that existed previously are maintained and clearly spelled out in Bill 10.

Local decision-making by municipal governments and co-ordinated planning with municipal governments is another one of the things that Bill 10 very clearly spells out. We as a government

cannot make laws under municipal authority. Mr. Chairman, the municipalities are great partners for the province of Alberta and for the Alberta government. We respect them, and we have no intention of interfering with municipal authority. Municipal development permits, for instance, cannot be cancelled or changed once work has commenced on new projects. Bill 10 very clearly respects all existing rights.

Statutory consent holders: if there is any impact on statutory consent holders, they must be provided with notice of compensation, under what laws compensation applies to them, and how that compensation will be determined.

With respect to private landowners, Mr. Chairman, the regional plan cannot – cannot – remove a title. It can affect an interest in property – that's very true – but if it does, it would be very limited and in cases where you might have something like a conservation directive. In the case of a conservation directive it would be very likely that the landowner would agree. In most cases landowners already understand what special pieces of real estate they actually own. Conservation directives do not include your title and would not remove title from the land. All it would ask is to put a directive in place. By the way, compensation is paid if that directive has any negative effect on the value of the owner's real estate.

Where there is a right to compensation, compensation is paid. The legal term "compensable taking" was included in Bill 10 to make it very, very clear that the right that we're now giving titleholders in the province of Alberta goes well beyond the right in almost any other jurisdiction in North America. It is a very, very solid addition to the Alberta Land Stewardship Act. Landowners also for other reasons can apply for compensation, and they can appeal the compensation to the Land Compensation Board and, Mr. Chairman, also to the courts if that is their desire.

There are some new provisions in Bill 10 that would be added to ALSA as we move forward. Of course, these plans are region-wide. There is a tremendous amount of work that goes into this, but these plans on purpose, Mr. Chairman, have a five-year review and a 10-year renewal. You could not foresee every circumstance and every situation when you start developing a regional plan. There are cases where this could affect someone's existing use. What we've done with this is said: "Okay. This could be a case. This is possible. Let's give people an opportunity." So they can apply for a variance. They can apply for a variance to land-use designation in a regional plan. Titleholders and leaseholders can apply to avoid unreasonable hardship on themselves and still honour the intent of the regional plan. I think these are very, very solid movements forward with respect to planning in Alberta.

Also, you can apply for a review. Anyone directly and adversely affected can apply for a review to a regional plan. They would apply to an appointed panel. The results of such a review would be made completely public in a transparent process. These, I believe, are new checks and balances that add to the strength of land-use planning in Alberta.

10:20

We also have as checks and balances in the amendments a public consultation requirement. Previously that was not the case. I heard very strongly from Albertans that they wanted public consultation. There is now consultation required. The consultation report would go to cabinet, and the draft regional plans, also another check in the system, will be filed at the Legislature.

Mr. Chairman, I think that there's some very solid meat in the amendments that we're bringing forward in Bill 10, and I am going to encourage that, again, people take a good look at this. I hope that all Albertans take a look at what we're doing with respect to land-use planning for the future in Alberta. Again, it

respects, I think, the existing rights and all rights of Albertans, it respects existing compensation, and of course it respects our existing methods of appeal.

There are new provisions to review regional plans, new provisions that make it more transparent in a more transparent planning process. There is very strong support for regional planning across the province. I found almost no people that did not feel we needed to move forward with regional plans. I think it's very essential that we do this with respect to multiple land use that is going on and will continue in the province.

Mr. Chairman, I will end by saying: it's your land, it's your plan, and it's your future. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar on the bill.

Mr. MacDonald: Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. That was an interesting speech from the hon. minister, and I listened intently to it.

Certainly, it's only two years since we dealt with Bill 36 in the Assembly, and of course it was quite a comprehensive piece of legislation. It was viewed by many different people across the province with suspicion, and certainly I wasn't confident enough to support it at third reading. Here we are two years later, after the public is beginning to figure out this government and this government's habit of wanting to do so much without public consultation, behind closed doors. It's a cabinet decision. "The cabinet is benevolent. It knows what's best for the citizens. Don't worry. We will look after your interests." That theme is, unfortunately, quite popular with this government, Bill 36, and now we see the companion piece of legislation two years later, Bill 10, and we see the problems.

It's interesting to listen to the hon. minister talk about the need for land-use planning and a land-use framework, and the hon. minister would be right. But when this government was cheered on wildly by the Deep Six, a group of MLAs, one of whom is in the Premier's chair at the moment, whenever cuts were made and programs were dismantled, well, I would remind hon. members of this House that the regional planning commissions in the term between 1993 and 1997 were abolished: we didn't need any regional planning commissions; it was a waste of time; it was a bureaucratic exercise; let's get rid of them. Look what happened. Look what happened.

Now, I know the hon. Minister of Sustainable Resource Development is too young to remember all this, but when Steve West was here and cut and slash was the theme, the regional planning commissions went. They disappeared, and we have the same party now indicating that we need them.

I couldn't help but notice at the AAMD and C just how defensive the Premier was in his lunchtime remarks. He was talking about silk-suited lawyers running around the province spreading misinformation, causing trouble. I wondered: who is the gentleman talking about? [interjection] Well, I had the opportunity, hon. member, of attending the ag society and the Eckville Chamber of Commerce debate that they hosted between this very silk-suited lawyer, Keith Wilson, and two of your distinguished seatmates. There was a rumour circulating in that community hall before the meeting started that you, hon. minister, were going to arrive by plane. It was a large meeting. I didn't see you there, and I didn't hear the buzz of an airplane over the community, but that possibly could have happened.

The government is certainly very defensive about these issues around planning, land use, and they're very defensive now about Bill 19, Bill 36, and, of course, Bill 50. They're all related. They all have the same issues. This is a government that has a tendency

to want to make decisions behind closed doors: don't ask us any questions; we're doing what's in your interests. But the public knows, clearly, that it's not in their interests.

Now, Mr. Chairman, one of the things I would suggest we need to do in committee is . . .

Mr. Knight: If you're not going to make sense, I'm going home.

Mr. MacDonald: Well, before you go home, I would like you to consider giving Bill 10 some public consultation, a round of public consultation. We could send it to a policy field committee, the Resources and Environment Committee. The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka was at the meeting on Thursday night in Eckville. Let's let that committee have a series of public meetings and public hearings across the province in central Alberta, northern Alberta, southwestern Alberta.

Citizens have a lot of issues about the direction you're going in with Bill 10. If Bill 36 was so well drafted, we wouldn't have it here less than two years later, amending the thing, trying to make it sellable to the citizens. That's why I think we would be better off with the policy field committee going around and having a public hearing in a place like – oh, dear. I'll say: let's just stop in Red Deer. We could go to the Legion in Rimbey. There are a number of places we could go if we would not want to go to the ag society, where the meeting occurred on Thursday night. That's one thing we could do. We could ask the people. We could ask the citizens how they feel about regional planning and regional planning commissions and what role they should play. We could also ask the citizens, the property owners, if they're comfortable with the explanations that this government is providing regarding these companion pieces of legislation.

No one denies that we need a form of planning. We had a perfectly good one, but we decided: "Hey, we don't need it. What's that doing?" Then we realized that we've got problems, and we've got no one to blame but ourselves, and ourselves in this case is the Progressive Conservative caucus.

10:30

Now, also with Bill 10 there are a few other individuals that indicate – one is a citizen acting on his own, Mr. Sam Gunsch. He has a publication dated April 20, 2011, and he indicates that Albertans deserve a public hearing on the Bill 10 amendment act before the provincial government proclaims it into law. Well, let's give it to the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka and let him go across the province and hear directly from citizens.

Mr. Gunsch goes on to say:

Albertans deserve to have [a] public review in plain language of proposed Bill 10 Amendments Act before it becomes law so they can participate on an informed basis in the making of law in Alberta. Albertans have a democratic right to know whether this proposed Bill 10 law is an American-style law, a type of takings legislation which could insulate, by threat of lawsuits, the industrial corporations using Alberta's public lands and forests from enforcement of environmental regulations. Albertans deserve a hearing to determine whether Bill 10 is American-style takings legislation, before the Alberta government proclaims it as law. As citizens, our ability to have control of our democracy, to serve the common good and potentially millions of dollars in lawsuits and payouts to corporations are all at stake.

That's one gentleman. That's one gentleman's request.

I heard many requests in Eckville on Thursday night. The Minister of Education heard many requests there. What is the response of this government? What is their response? It's not to have a committee of this Legislative Assembly have public hear-

ings across the province. No. The response is an oral notice to have closure on this bill. Five hours. We're going to limit debate on this bill to five hours. That's the response of this government.

An Hon. Member: Make it count.

Mr. MacDonald: Tell that to the citizens. If you had been at the meeting the other night, hon. member, and said that, I don't think you would have left that community . . .

Mr. Hinman: He wouldn't have been able to walk out on his own power.

Mr. MacDonald: He might walk out on his own power, but I think he'd need some rugby players to assist him to his vehicle. Or maybe some rodeo hands could help him out. To the Minister of Education: what would have happened if you had stood up at the end of that meeting and said: "I'm going back to Edmonton, and I'm going to restrict and limit the debate on this bill. I'm going to invoke closure"? What would the citizens have thought?

Now, Mr. Chairman, we have a democratic deficit in this province. It's evident as a result of the behaviour of the hon. Government House Leader this afternoon with his oral motion that we're having . . . [interjection] Yes. That's a good point, hon. member. We do have a democratic deficit here, and this is another example of it. "We know what's best. We're this benevolent group. Don't worry. Trust us." Well, the citizens no longer trust this government.

In fact, Mr. Chairman, when you look at the Conservative leadership race – I wanted to check out their websites the other day, so I went on a couple. Pretty nice websites. Very well done, professionally done. I noticed one, the former Minister of Justice, one of the front-runners in that leadership race.

Mr. Hehr: Is she a legal scholar herself?

Mr. MacDonald: A legal scholar, of course. She wants to get rid of Bill 36, wants to go back to the drawing board on this, wants to have a second look at this. Not this Bill 10, not this excuse of public consultation; let's have a second look at this.

I can't imagine the discussion internally in the Progressive Conservative government caucus about this matter, but I'm sure there are other members of this Assembly who are in that leadership race who also have opinions one way or the other on whether this is good or bad legislation and whether we should proceed or whether we should go back and have some public consultations which are meaningful. But no. Here we are. We're going to have a limited time to debate this. I would like to go back to that ag society hall and hear what the citizens would think. Five days later this government restricts debate to five hours.

An Hon. Member: What would they say?

Mr. MacDonald: What would they say? I would say that they're going to start shopping around for a new government is what I would think. They're weren't impressed, and they're going to be unimpressed with this latest action.

Now, Mr. Chairman, when we look at this bill and we look at the government's view, we can say . . . [interjection] The hon. member is trying to heckle me.

The spin is that this allows for a wider consultation process both before our regional plan is developed and when plans are being amended. We heard that with the previous speaker. We're going to allow for compensation for those who were directly impacted, in this case the landowner or the property owner. It allows for

appeals regarding either a regional plan or an amendment to the regional plan.

Well, it was put to me the other night at a separate meeting in Stony Plain on this issue where a gentleman came up and said: the government wants nine acres of my family farm to widen the approach to highway 43, and they have offered me \$36,000 for the nine acres. He said to me: can you find me in the county of Parkland nine acres of land for \$36,000? If I had been quick, I would have said: you should see the Minister of Education; I'm sure he can find it for you. But I didn't think of that. He said: there is no place in this county where such a deal exists, yet this is what the government wants to provide me for relinquishing my land for this expanded right-of-way. He didn't think this was fair. He didn't think this government was listening to him. You know, Mr. Chairman, he's absolutely right to think that, because you're not listening, and you don't care what his view is.

You have this idea – you're almost like the English royalty – that you have a divine right to rule, but you don't. You don't. To hear, hon. members across the way, what you heard in Eckville on Thursday night and then to come back to this Assembly and five days later restrict and limit debate to five hours is, I think, very disrespectful of democracy in this province, and it's very disrespectful of the people who came and politely listened to both sides of the debate on this bill and on the whole approach that this government has taken on Bill 19, Bill 36, and Bill 50.

In fact, I don't know who put that billboard up on 104th Avenue, Mr. Chairman, but I drove by there slowly on Easter Sunday, and I saw on the right-hand side of that billboard "Edmonton Stickmen," whoever they are. Maybe they're just a group of people who own a lot of property in rural Alberta. I don't know. But they certainly have an opinion, and they're certainly willing to place their money with an advertising agency and express that opinion, and that's their right. That's their right. But we have to be very concerned in this province about this government's approach: they know better. In reality it was clear to me the other night that the citizens have caught on. The citizens certainly have caught on.

10:40

Mr. Chairman, in conclusion, with this bill I would really urge this Assembly to please consider giving the field policy Committee on Resources and the Environment some work to do over the summer, allow them to travel across the province, consult publicly with citizens who certainly have an opinion about this and other legislative issues that the government has implemented, and then come back to this House with a bill that is acceptable to property owners regardless of whether they live in urban areas or in rural areas.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Anderson: That was an excellent, excellent speech by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar. That's where I live when I'm in Edmonton, Edmonton-Gold Bar. That was a great speech.

I'm going to start tonight by getting something on the record immediately. I've talked about this previously, but since we're going to be in here together for the next couple of hours, a few hours, five hours, I guess, tomorrow, likely, I think there needs to be an understanding of where I'm coming from on this bill. My parents always taught me growing up that when someone makes a mistake, they need to fess up to it. They need to correct it. They need to admit to it, and they need to try to make up for it or make restitution for it as fast as they possibly can.

In 2009, when this bill was passed, I spoke in this Legislative Assembly in favour of Bill 36, no doubt about it. My good friends over there have put it on YouTube. It's there for the whole world

to see. I absolutely spoke in favour of it, and I did so of my own free will and choice. I could sit here in this Assembly and say: "You know what? I didn't have enough time." And there's truth in that. I didn't have enough time to look over the bill. I don't think any of us did over there. It was rammed through very quickly, very short time period, very thick bill, and I don't think we had anywhere near the time we needed to consult with our constituents, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. I could say that. That is an excuse. [A cellphone rang] That's not me, by the way.

I could also say that I trusted the opinion of the minister and the Justice minister at the time as well as the Premier. I thought that they had more thoroughly reviewed the bill and gotten expert legal opinion on it, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, and I trusted them. I could use that as an excuse, but I'm not going to use that as an excuse.

I could also say that when I was over on that side of the House, all votes were whipped. We all know that that's the case, especially for any kind of important legislation or any kind of government legislation.

An Hon. Member: No.

Mr. Anderson: Yeah, I know. It's hard to believe. It's hard to believe.

I could say that that's why I voted for the bill, but I'm not going to say that.

I voted for the bill because I made a mistake, and I want to apologize to the people of Alberta for standing up in this Assembly and speaking in favour of a bill that absolutely is a harmful bill, is not what Albertans want. I made a mistake. I fess up to it fully. No questions asked, no excuses.

Our former Premier, Ralph Klein, taught Albertans, I think, a lot of things. One of the things he taught us, one of his lasting legacies – and he'll have a lot as opposed to the current Premier – is that when he made a mistake, he acknowledged it. Whether it was a personal issue or whether it was a policy issue, he'd say, "I made a mistake," and he would back away. He would say "Sorry," correct it, and move on. That is what made that man so popular in this province. Even though no doubt everyone agrees that he made quite a few mistakes, by and large he stepped back when he made a mistake. He listened to the people of Alberta. He would step away, and he would say: "You know what? I made a mistake there." Obviously, you can't make up for all your mistakes, but he would sure try, and that made him popular and beloved by most people in this province. There is a lesson to be learned from that politically. There was a reason he was able to be so popular for so long, because when he made a mistake, he was willing to say sorry and make up for it and make restitution.

In contrast we have this government, which is absolutely unable to admit when they have stepped on a snake and made a mistake. They just physically cannot seem to be able to do it. It's like it's beyond their capacity. I don't know where that started, but for some reason it's the case. We saw that with the royalty framework. We saw that, clearly, it was an absolute disaster. It was a botched policy that cratered thousands of jobs in this province, sent billions of dollars fleeing to Saskatchewan and British Columbia and the United States. It did so at the beginning of a recession, when we needed all hands on deck and all the economic stimulus possible. They had every excuse in the book to say: "You know what? We made a mistake to jump on this too quickly. We're entering a recession. We need to stabilize things. We need to take another look." No. Full steam ahead, no questions asked, and Albertans suffered because of it.

I don't care what the bloody intentions of the government opposite were in that regard. Yeah, there were a few of us in that caucus that spoke out against that royalty framework, but every single time we did, we were shouted down, belittled, told to just relax, et cetera, et cetera, ignored, ignored, ignored. They went forward with that new royalty framework, and it was an absolute mistake. They started to back away from it slowly but surely, step by step, eight different changes, and they still wouldn't admit that they had made a mistake, and they still don't today. They blame it on the former finance minister, Dr. Oberg, or whatever. I mean, it's just incredible. Just admit that a mistake was made and move on. Make up for the mistake. So there was the royalty disaster.

There was the health care disaster. I mean, the centralization of health care delivery and the superboard has been a total train wreck, and everybody can see that. I mean, costs have escalated out of control, double-digit increases in less than two years. There have been virtually no efficiencies made in health care due to this superboard amalgamation. It hasn't worked, but has there been a mistake? Did Mr. Iron Hands over there, you know, Energy Minister Iron Hands make a mistake? No, he didn't make any mistakes. Absolutely not. Good grief. Of course he made a mistake. Government made a mistake. They should back away from that and realize that the centralization of health care did not work.

We see this with the public inquiry. Mistakes have been made. Mistakes have been made with regard to the public inquiry. Clearly, people have been bullied. They've been intimidated. Doctors, nurses, physicians, specialists, health care workers have been bullied time and time again, and there has been no admission of a mistake by this government. They're not even necessarily involved in it. We don't know. It would be nice to know. It would be nice to have a public inquiry on it. Then they could absolve their names. But no. Here we are. No mistakes. Full steam ahead. First it was: "No. We don't need the Health Quality Council." Then it was: "Okay. Yeah. We need the Health Quality Council but not a public inquiry." I mean, they just don't seem to understand what Albertans want, and then they don't react to it accordingly. They don't respect the will of the people in this regard.

And here we are with these property bills: Bill 50, a brutal bill. Absolutely no question that the Energy minister at the time, now the SRD minister, made a huge mistake with Bill 50. There's no doubt. I know the debate that went on in caucus there. That was one of the few bills that there actually was a debate on in caucus. It was blasted through, and every single person in this Legislative Assembly except for a few who abstained from the vote voted for it. You know it's a bad bill. You know we shouldn't have usurped the role of the Alberta Utilities Commission. Everyone here knows that. Everyone knows the mistake that was made. Everyone knows these lines are probably not needed. We all know that, yet we barrel ahead with it.

10:50

We had a chance to repeal the bill here with a motion just the other day, the motion that I brought forward to the House. No, we're not going to do anything. We had people here that I know voted against it in caucus standing up to vote for it here. What a joke. What an absolute joke that is, so dishonest with people's constituents that they would vote for it in the House and against it in caucus. It's worse than the people that are voting for it in caucus and in the House. Anyway, it's just unbelievable.

Bill 36 is the next example. That was a mistake. I was part of that mistake. I voted for it. I spoke to it. It was wrong. Everywhere we go in this province – take it to the bank, guys – you're going to lose dozens of seats in rural Alberta because of this bill. Take it to

the bank. I mean, we could start naming names. We won't, but I guarantee it's going to happen because you won't admit that a mistake has been made and that you need to correct course. Your constituents are not going to put up with it. You have a chance here to put this to a committee, do the right thing, and regain some of that lost support. Just do the right thing.

We were in Eckville the other night, as the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar put it. It was an incredible night, and 400 or 500 people showed up. It was a healthy, good debate. There was no doubt in my mind who won the crowd that night. Then all the comments I heard from the ministers after, from the Minister of Education and others: "The fact was that it was a Wildrose crowd. You know, they put a whole bunch of Wildrose people in." Come on. Good grief. You guys have been the government for 40 years, for Pete's sake. You can't fill a room? Holy smokes.

We didn't put out any call or anything. We knew about this about 10 days ago and decided that, well, we'd better go see that; that sounds interesting. So we went. And guess what? So did 400 to 500 Albertans. And guess what? Frankly, the former Minister of SRD was booted out of the room by 500 rural Albertans. You know what? I guarantee that of those 500 rural Albertans – guarantee – 90 per cent of them voted Progressive Conservative the last election. I guarantee you that 90 per cent of the people in that room will not be voting Progressive Conservative in the next election. Take that to the bank. And their families and their friends and their neighbours won't be either because this government won't listen.

So I would ask the government again to learn from that very noble man Premier Klein, who came before the current Premier. When you make a mistake, admit it, back away from it, and do what your constituents want. That's why we absolutely need to re-examine this bill, take it back to the drawing board and see how we want to proceed going forward.

One thing the Minister of SRD and the government is right on is this. Everybody wants good regional planning. No one is arguing against good regional planning, good conservation practices, making sure we take into account cumulative effects when we're approving new projects, making sure we have enough water in the South Saskatchewan basin: all that stuff. We all agree on that. But Bill 36 and Bill 10 as an amendment to Bill 36 do not do that.

It is a central planning document; it is not a regional planning document. I don't care. In the bill itself it specifically says that these regional commissions, that the government appoints, by the way, these RACs – what are they called? – regional advisory panels, commissions, whatever they are, are appointed by the government, so that's not democratic to start. Aside from all that – say that it was democratic and that these were locally elected officials – they don't have to take into account anything that these people talk about, anything that they advise, anything where they say: here's what we advise the government to do. They don't have to listen. The government doesn't have to listen to a word they say.

You know, it's great that they say, "Oh, we'll take it under advisement," and "We're doing consultation." No. That just means that the central planning government is going to talk to local people, a few people that they appoint, about what they think should be in the plan. That's not democracy. That's not regional planning and decentralized decision-making. That is socialistic central planning, and it's wrong. It's not what we should be doing. There's no doubt we should be giving these folks tools. One of the reasons I voted for the bill in the first place was, quite frankly, because I like the idea of transferable development credits and these types of things, but I like them as tools. They should be tools that municipalities and regional authorities have to use in order to

compensate landowners. It should be a tool in the tool box, et cetera, and those are good. Let's talk about giving the municipalities and giving these local authorities those tools in their tool box. That's a good part of the bill.

Where we went way wrong on this, where the big mistake was made, clearly, was by enshrining all power to plan land use in this province in the hands of cabinet ministers behind closed doors. We have 13 individuals that, essentially, have dictatorial power over every land-use planning decision in this province. They can do whatever. Shake your head, Minister of Education, but every single decision has to comply with the regional plan. Whatever you say from cabinet, you may allow them to do stuff, you know, by your good graces, allow the municipalities to have some autonomy and do some things, but it's completely at your discretion. If you want to come down with the hammer and plan, you can do it. You're allowed to do it, and they have to comply. That's just the way it is. Every landowner, every company, every individual, every municipality has to comply with what the government says the planning should be in that area.

Everyone should know that intentions don't matter in this case. Do you honestly think that I think or that any of us over here think that the master plan of the former Minister of SRD, the Member for Foothills-Rocky View, who's running for leader right now, is to take and expropriate people's land and not give them any compensation? Clearly, it's not. There's no way I believe that, and I won't ever believe it, but the problem is that he's not always going to be SRD minister – clearly, he's not right now – and neither is the current SRD minister.

When you give people power, politicians will abuse the power. When you create a position of power, it can be abused, and we have given the cabinet unfettered power to plan every piece of land in this province. It's ridiculous. There's no check or balance. They say that you can appeal these decisions of the cabinet. No, you can't if the cabinet will say what you can and what you can't appeal, and they appoint the committee that's going to hear your appeal. I mean, it's just asinine to say that the cabinet doesn't have total power in this case.

Anyway, it's very frustrating to watch. If Eckville taught us anything – and it's not just been Eckville. Look, 300 people came out to Crossfield, for crying out loud. I went to a meeting in Trochu. There were 250 people in Trochu. I went out to Beiseker as well for a different meeting that Joe Anglin, the former Green Party leader, put on. He put on something, and it was a little different. It was on the power lines, but this was in the middle of the day in Beiseker. There were over a hundred people there. It was incredible.

I mean, how can you deny those numbers? The people don't want these bills. They don't want them. Your intentions could be good and wonderful and all that, but they don't want them. They've looked at them. They've had time to look at them. They don't want them. This will be your Achilles heel for the next year until the next election. I guarantee it. But it doesn't have to be that way. All you have to do is stand up and say: "Look, you know what? We're going to do some more consulting with the people of Alberta. We're going to put this thing to a committee, and we're going to have all kinds of experts through to talk to the committee to thoroughly vet this bill, to thoroughly vet Bill 36, and see if it needs to be repealed or if it needs to be taken back to the drawing board or what have you."

The other thing that's amazing to me has been the arguments that I've heard from the SRD minister regarding the original Bill 36 and then its changes regarding section 11 of Bill 36. I'm just going to read the bill with regard to this. Section 11 says that "a regional plan may, by express reference to a statutory consent or

type or class of statutory consent, affect, amend or extinguish the statutory consent or the terms or conditions of the statutory consent.” Okay? It’s in Bill 36.

11:00

Now Bill 10 changes Bill 36, and instead of “extinguish” the statutory consent, it’s “rescind.” They changed the word to “rescind.” So now it reads: a regional plan may, by express reference to a statutory consent or type of class of statutory consent, affect, amend, or rescind the statutory consent or the terms or conditions of the statutory consent.

Okay. Now, what is a statutory consent? There’s this argument that I keep hearing from the SRD minister, who says: well, statutory consent doesn’t apply to a land title. It doesn’t apply to any kind of land title or interest in land in that regard. Well, that’s malarkey. Look at what statutory consent means. It’s in the definition of Bill 36.

I’ll come back to this point many times.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Currie.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. Some interesting comments by the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere.

An Hon. Member: Really?

Mr. Taylor: Yes, really, hon. member. There were some interesting comments there.

One of the most interesting comments, I think, touched on this whole notion that the government for whatever reason is refusing to acknowledge, refusing to listen, refusing to understand what’s going on out there in the hinterland. The Member for Airdrie-Chestermere was right. It does so at its peril. There’s something going on out there that is big, really big. You don’t get hundreds upon hundreds upon hundreds of people out to meeting after meeting after meeting and have nothing happening. You don’t get those numbers out to these sorts of meetings and be able to completely dismiss it as just: well, you know, that’s all the people who are interested in the subject. People talk to people, and as they talk to people, they’re going to be telling people how the government has treated them on these issues. The word is going to spread that you guys on the other side have done really a horrendous job of wrapping your heads around and understanding and comprehending the depth of the opposition to Bill 36, and that opposition continues with Bill 10, I’m afraid.

Alberta’s land-use framework was visionary, in my opinion. I think I can say that with some credibility, hoping now that I don’t have to go down the same road as Airdrie-Chestermere and apologize for a mistake that I made in the past. I did in 2007 bring forward a private member’s bill, Bill 211, the Planning for the Future of Communities Act. That was not my title. That was the title that Parliamentary Counsel gave the bill for whatever reason. We brought this forward, and it was, in fact, a first attempt at a land-use and regional planning bill for the province of Alberta. Of course, it was defeated because that’s what the government did at the time to Official Opposition private member’s bills. They defeat them, and then they look at them and go: but, you know, there were a lot of good ideas in there, so we better get on with doing something of our own.

Well, out of that came the land-use framework. As I said, Mr. Chair, it was a visionary document. It was full of ideals and principles and, more specifically than that, I think, real clear directions in terms of what we needed to do around land use and regional planning in the province of Alberta. Then the government took those visionary principles of the land-use framework, ran them

through a sausage machine, and turned them into Bill 36, a law that, in my opinion – but it’s an opinion shared by very many Albertans – is fundamentally undemocratic.

It gave too much power to cabinet: complete plan-making authority; the ability to override plans; the ability and the power to make decisions, to ignore a plan, to ignore a regional advisory council, to ignore the secretariat; no checks or balances; a lack of compensation for landowners; a lack of consultation requirements; no appeals to the court; the extinguishing of statutory consent in section 11, which the Member for Airdrie-Chestermere touched on a few moments ago; all kinds of things like that. I guess the government did hear the groundswell of opposition, primarily in rural Alberta but I think to a much lesser extent but to some extent in urban Alberta as well, to the extent that they went: “Oh my gosh. We have to amend Bill 36. Let’s bring in Bill 10.”

Well, can Bill 10 be repaired? I have my doubts, but I think we have a duty to try to the extent that the government is going to allow us to try by bringing in time allocation and limiting debate at committee on Bill 10. I think we have to try and amend this bill because I think Bill 10, as introduced by the government, is a flawed attempt to amend a seriously flawed act that was based on, in my opinion, quite a remarkable land-use framework.

In my opinion, where it all went off the rails and into the rhubarb where Bill 36 was concerned is in applying those principles in a way that gave cabinet virtually all the say in how this should be done. That certainly wasn’t my intention in Bill 211. My intention and the intention that I think existed in the land-use framework and that I would even go so far as to suggest or assume was probably the intention – and we all know the road to hell is paved with good intentions – of the former Minister of Sustainable Resource Development was to give local decision-makers the authority to make their regional plans.

If this had been done right, I would submit, Mr. Chair, the regional advisory councils would have been constructed and comprised in such a way and the contents of the growth plans of the regional plans would have been spelled out in such a way and the principles and process around consultation, real public consultation as opposed to sham public consultation, would have been spelled out in such a way that the regional advisory councils would have done a proper job of consulting with the public and would have designed the regional plans on that basis and, quite frankly, would have brought the regional plans forward to cabinet pretty much to be rubber-stamped.

If cabinet said, “Hey. We’ve got a problem with this. We’ve got a problem with this section and this section. We’re sending it back to you” then the regional advisory councils would have had the authority to say: “Well, okay, cabinet. We’ll go through the hearing process again. We’ll go through the submission process again. We’ll hear from the public again, and now that we’ve done that,” jumping forward 90 days or whatever the consultation period would be, “we’ve found out that the public really thinks that you should go pound salt. You’re sitting in Edmonton, sitting in judgment of what the regional plans should be in this area or that area. We actually live in that area. We have to live with this every day. Our plan respects the principles, and now you’re niggling over the details, so we’ve decided, based on putting this out to the public again, that you’re wrong and we’re right. We’re going to sing the ‘I was right’ song, so here’s the original plan back to you for ratification. This time ratify it.”

That’s how it should have been done. That would be true regional planning. The current Minister of Sustainable Resource Development, when he started debate tonight, made quite a speech where he tried to convince this House that this is not about centralized planning; this is all about regional planning. Well, the land-

use framework, Mr. Chair, was, I believe, all about good, responsible land-use principles and establishing a process or establishing a context within which good regional planning could be done. But by the time it went through the Bill 36 sausage machine, it came out the other end looking like something that the Kremlin could have come up with, not to put too much torque on the story. But it's like: really? We've got cabinet deciding what can go where?

11:10

Mr. Hehr: Not the Kremlin, the politburo.

Mr. Taylor: Okay. The politburo. The Member for Calgary-Buffalo says it was the politburo. I'm not up enough on my Soviet politics to know whether he's right or I'm right, but you get the basic message.

Bill 10 attempts to address the need for further public consultation on regional plans before those plans are approved by cabinet and to enhance the compensation scheme for land expropriation, but in my view those attempts fall well short of the mark. What are we going to do about it? Well, I don't know. Part of that depends on how long we go tonight, I suppose, because we know that tomorrow the government will use its majority to pass the time allocation motion, the notice of which the Government House Leader gave this Assembly this afternoon. He's required to provide 24 hours' notice of that motion, so in about 16 hours from now or a little bit less that time allocation motion will click in, and from that point on the meter is running, and we've got five more hours in committee to debate this bill.

That's significant, Mr. Chairman, because the committee stage is the stage at which we can propose amendments. We can't really do that except in terms of bringing forward amendments that would seek in one way or another to kill the bill altogether in third reading, nor could we have done it in second reading. What we really have to do if we want to amend the content of Bill 10 in whole or in part is to propose amendments and have a full and fair debate on those amendments in committee stage. You limit debate to five hours, it clearly limits the number of amendments that can be brought forward, and that does limit debate and democracy as concerns, well, certainly one of the most unpopular bills that this government has brought forward in recent years, certainly not the only one but one of the most unpopular bills. It limits not only our ability but the government's ability to try and improve a flawed bill.

I think what's going to happen, Mr. Chairman, over the next however long we have in committee to debate this bill is that various members of this House will put forward or will attempt to put forward some amendments to Bill 10 to at least try and make it a more worthwhile piece of legislation than I think it currently is. I know that if I have the opportunity, I would like to bring forward amendments, if I have the time, that will seek to include rangeland and agricultural land within the definition of land to be considered in a regional plan to make it a little more specific there, to further clarify the proposed public consultation process, to create a process for appealing ministerial decisions so that cabinet no longer has absolute power over land-use planning in our province, to ensure or to try and ensure that fair principles guide the compensation process.

I hope to ensure as well that all regional plans are developed and approved in sync with one another. I'm not sure how I'm going to do that one yet, but I think that there's a need not only for seven regional plans to be approved individually; there's a need for a cumulative final ratification of the seven plans together to ensure that the last regions to go through the regional planning process are not negatively impacted or in some way held hostage,

if you will, by decisions made in earlier regional plans. It's entirely possible that the seventh region to develop its plan will be – maybe held hostage is the wrong way to put it – in a sense held captive by decisions made in the previous six plans. I believe that needs to be addressed.

Well, because the government is bringing in closure to limit debate on Bill 10 in Committee of the Whole, we don't know if we'll run out of time to present all our amendments. I don't think any of us who may be proposing amendments do know that. If time runs out or our amendments are defeated, well, then we'll have a decision to make in third reading as to whether we're going to support Bill 10 as a flawed piece of legislation or whether we're going to vote against it because it just doesn't do the job that it's supposed to do. I believe as it sits now it doesn't do the job that it's supposed to do.

There is, of course, a way to avoid all of this. There's a way to avoid bringing in the closure motion, going through five hours of very limited debate, a way to avoid partisan contentiousness, if you will, around some of the amendments that may be proposed. That way is that the government – and at this stage I believe it can only be the government that can do this because at this stage we can amend sections of the bill, but we can't propose an amendment, really, about the whole bill – could decide, the minister could decide to refer Bill 10 to the Standing Committee on Resources and Environment.

According to the standing orders there is a process which that standing policy committee will follow to put this through another round of public hearings, of appropriate and worthy public consultation. It's one thing to consult with the public. It's another thing to consider what the public has told you and to consider it thoroughly and honestly and openly and to take those consultations into consideration in a meaningful way as you're developing a regional plan or anything else that you consult with the public on. There is no point, Mr. Chair, in consulting with the public if you have no intention of listening to what they say in the first place. There is no point in consulting with the public if you're only consulting with the public so that you can listen to those members of the public who happen to agree with your point of view and discount everybody else's. That is sham public consultation.

You put it before the all-party, by nature at least somewhat bipartisan or multipartisan policy field committee, the standing policy committee. The process of inviting and taking in public submissions, the process of holding public hearings, is not an ironclad guarantee by any stretch of the imagination, but it certainly has at least as much of a shot at getting to the truth of how people feel about Bill 10 and Bill 36, what they feel is right and what they feel is wrong about the bill and how to improve it, really improve it as, for instance, the Health Quality Council has of getting to the bottom of the allegations of fear and intimidation around health care professionals in this province. It's not a guarantee, but it's at least as good a shot as the health minister's Health Quality Council investigation into fear and intimidation.

That's what the government should do, Mr. Chair. They should – I'll be nonsexist about this – person-up tonight or tomorrow at the very latest and refer Bill 10 to the Standing Committee on Resources and Environment and let the standing policy committee do its job, do the job that those standing policy committees were designed to do, which is to take proposed legislation, whether it's government or private members' legislation, that we all know misses the mark as written right now and fix it and come up with something better.

I know that it's very important to some members of the government – I don't know to how many, but I know to some – to get this bill passed. Maybe it's a legacy for the outgoing Premier. I

don't know. I don't quite get how this is a legacy in any respect other than that he gets to put another check mark beside another in a very long list of items on his to-do list without regard to prioritization of any of them. I think that's been a problem for this government since the current and outgoing Premier became the Premier, quite frankly.

11:20

There are others, I know, in government who really think, who really believe that they got it mostly right with Bill 36 and that it just needs a few tweaks to get it just about perfect. I think they're wrong, but I respect their opinion. I would just implore the government to respect the wishes of many, many, many Albertans: individuals, landowners, businesspeople. I believe the term is disinterested observers; in other words, those Albertans who may not have a direct and personal stake in any of these regional plans in that nobody is going to come necessarily, or at least they can't see that anybody is going to come, and take their property and knock down their house but who are as citizens of this province disinterested observers in the process who may wish to comment on this. Give them a fair hearing and another chance to tell the government how to do this right.

By pulling this bill off the legislative agenda and referring it to the Standing Policy Committee on Resources and Environment and using the standing orders that are in place, giving it to the standing policy committee to hold another round of public hearings, I think we'll get a much better bill out of this. We'll certainly get a much better bill out of this than we will by limiting debate to five hours and trying to fix a flawed bill that in itself tries to amend a very flawed Alberta Land Stewardship Act.

With that, I will cede the floor to the next person who wishes to continue debate at the committee stage. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

The Chair: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It never ceases to amaze me that we can spend an hour and a half or so in debate on a bill, lamenting the fact that we have no time to debate a bill, and during a portion of that discourse indicate, "If I had time, I'd bring forward an amendment," yet we've seen no amendments come forward. There are so many things that were said tonight that could be responded to and need to be responded to because of the inaccuracies of it, but given the hour I think we'll leave that for another day. I would move that we adjourn debate.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion to adjourn debate carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:22 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Cao in the chair]

For the motion:

Amery	Elniski	Quest
Benito	Griffiths	Rogers
Bhardwaj	Groeneveld	Sandhu
Blackett	Hancock	Tarchuk
Brown	Horner	Webber
Calahasen	Klimchuk	Xiao
DeLong	Oberle	Zwozdesky
Doerksen	Prins	

Against the motion:

Anderson	Hehr	Taft
Boutilier	Hinman	Taylor

Totals: For – 23 Against – 6

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Chair: Shall progress on Bill 10, the Land Stewardship Amendment Act, 2011, be reported when the committee rises? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move that the committee now rise and report bills 4, 1, and 11 and report progress on bills 15 and 10.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Nose Hill.

Dr. Brown: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bills: Bill 4 and Bill 1. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 11. The committee reports progress on the following bills: Bill 10 and Bill 15. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Having heard the report, those in favour of the report, please say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed, please say no. So ordered.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Hancock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move that we adjourn until 1:30 p.m. tomorrow.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:37 p.m. to Wednesday at 1:30 p.m.]

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