



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday evening, June 17, 2015

Day 3

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta The 29th Legislature

First Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker
Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees
Feehan, Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)
Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)
Bhullar, Manmeet Singh, Calgary-Greenway (PC)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND),
Deputy Government House Leader
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND)
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (ND)
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),
Official Opposition House Leader
Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (ND)
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W),
Official Opposition Deputy Whip
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (ND)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (Ind)
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC),
Progressive Conservative Opposition Whip
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (ND)
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W),
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (ND)
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (ND)
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (ND)
Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)
Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (PC)
Jean, Brian Michael, QC, Fort McMurray-Conklin (W),
Leader of the Official Opposition
Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (ND)
Kleinstuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)
Larivee, Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)
MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)
Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)
Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND),
Government House Leader
McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret,
Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (ND)
McIver, Ric, Calgary-Hays (PC),
Leader of the Progressive Conservative Opposition
McKittrick, Annie, Sherwood Park (ND)
McLean, Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (ND),
Deputy Government Whip
McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (ND)
Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)
Miranda, Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)
Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W),
Official Opposition Whip
Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND),
Premier
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)
Payne, Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND),
Deputy Government House Leader
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)
Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)
Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND),
Government Whip
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC),
Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND)
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND)
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)
Vacant, Calgary-Foothills

Party standings:

New Democrat: 53 Wildrose: 21 Progressive Conservative: 9 Alberta Liberal: 1 Alberta Party: 1 Independent: 1 Vacant: 1

Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly

W.J. David McNeil, Clerk	Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel and Legal Research Officer	Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms
Robert H. Reynolds, QC, Law Clerk/ Director of Interparliamentary Relations	Philip Massolin, Manager of Research Services	Chris Caughell, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Shannon Dean, Senior Parliamentary Counsel/Director of House Services	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Gordon H. Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
		Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>

Executive Council

Rachel Notley	Premier, President of Executive Council, Minister of International and Intergovernmental Relations
Deron Bilous	Minister of Municipal Affairs, Minister of Service Alberta
Oneil Carlier	Minister of Agriculture and Forestry
Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education, Minister of Culture and Tourism
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General, Minister of Aboriginal Relations
Sarah Hoffman	Minister of Health, Minister of Seniors
Brian Mason	Minister of Transportation, Minister of Infrastructure
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Innovation and Advanced Education, Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour

STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Coolahan
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider
Anderson, S. Jansen
Carson Larivee
Fitzpatrick McKitrick
Gotfried Schreiner
Hanson Sucha
Horne Taylor
Hunter

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Ms Miller
Deputy Chair: Mr. Nielsen
Cyr Piquette
Ellis Renaud
Malkinson Taylor
Miranda

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Sweet
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith
Goehring Pitt
Hinkley Rodney
Jansen Shepherd
Littlewood Swann
Luff Westhead
Orr Yao
Payne

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Ms Woollard
Deputy Chair: Mr. Dach
Bhullar Nixon
Connolly Shepherd
Cooper Sweet
Cortes-Vargas van Dijken
Kleinsteuber

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schmidt
Cooper McLean
Fildebrandt Nielsen
Goehring Nixon
Luff Piquette
McIver

Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms McPherson
Deputy Chair: Mr. Kleinsteuber
Anderson, W. Hinkley
Babcock Littlewood
Connolly McKitrick
Dang Rosendahl
Drever Stier
Drysdale Strankman
Fraser

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Dr. Turner
Deputy Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick
Carson Loyola
Coolahan McPherson
Cooper Schneider
Ellis Starke
Hanson van Dijken
Kazim Woollard
Larivee

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt
Deputy Chair: Ms Gray
Barnes Malkinson
Bhullar Miller
Cyr Payne
Dach Renaud
Gotfried Turner
Hunter Westhead
Loyola

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Ms Kazim
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen
Aheer MacIntyre
Anderson, S. Rosendahl
Babcock Schreiner
Clark Stier
Drysdale Sucha
Horne Woollard
Kleinsteuber

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Wednesday, June 17, 2015

Committee of Supply

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

The Chair: Hon. members, I'll call the Committee of Supply to order.

Interim Supply Estimates 2015-16 (No. 2) General Revenue Fund and Lottery Fund

The Chair: As per our rotation earlier this afternoon we're just going to finish up. We have eight minutes left. This next segment will be for the third party if someone wishes to speak. The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thanks, Madam Chair. I've got a few questions here. One deals with the government's platform. I'm referring this time to item 6.1, which reads:

Large profitable corporations will contribute a little more. We will cut the PCs' wasteful corporate tax breaks, by increasing Alberta corporate tax to 12% (from 10%), retaining the current small business tax rate and no sales tax.

My question is: how does the government delineate between large profitable corporations and medium profitable corporations and small profitable corporations?

Mr. Ceci: To the hon. member: the same way I think the third party did when they were in government. We're not changing any of that. The tax rates will stay the same for small businesses up to \$500,000, and then for those over that it'll change. We're bringing that bill before this House tomorrow.

Mr. McIver: So is that small corporations under \$500,000 that will still pay the 12 per cent? Is that correct, Minister?

Mr. Ceci: I think businesses.

Mr. McIver: I'm asking about corporations, Minister, quite specifically.

Mr. Ceci: Sure. Sure. I'm getting lots of nods of agreement on this side.

Mr. McIver: So corporations under \$500,000 won't pay the 12 per cent. Is that what I'm hearing?

Mr. Ceci: On the first \$500,000 they pay 3 per cent. [interjection] For small businesses 3 per cent.

The Chair: Hon. members, for the sake of order we need one person speaking at a time and only one standing.

Mr. McIver: I'm going to defend the government right now. I think we agreed to go back and forth, so I'm not offended by what happened there. I don't mean to be out of line, Madam Chair, but we did agree to go back and forth. So I'm going to defend them. If you want to give me heck, that's okay. Well, that is important to me.

Now, the other question I have is that I heard that Treasury Board is meeting later tonight. Madam Chair, I'm going to be less kind to the government now. Could it be that the government, who is in control of the whole schedule, including when Treasury Board is meeting and including when estimates happens – did they

intentionally put Treasury Board after this so they'd have fewer answers for us now? I'm going to ask the question.

Mr. Ceci: No. Treasury Board, as you know, hon. member, for us usually happens on Thursdays every other week. We have some caucus business that we need to attend to tomorrow at the time that Treasury Board usually meets. Unbeknownst to the chair, it was moved to 6 today so that we would get it in and deal with important business that had nothing to do with the kinds of things that you're concerned about.

Mr. McIver: Then, Madam Chair, you'll have to forgive me if I remain suspicious.

It was mentioned by the Minister of Human Services that there would be additional funding for FCSS. What percentage of additional funding do you anticipate, or are you going to increase, based on these estimates?

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Human Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for the question. We will be increasing the existing funding, which is at roughly around 76. We will be adding \$10 million more to it, and it will be based on the same 80-20 split formula; 80 per cent will be funded by the government, and municipalities will be required to come up with their 20 per cent.

Mr. McIver: So that's a \$30 million increase?

An Hon. Member: No, that's \$10 million.

Mr. McIver: A \$10 million increase. And on a percentage of what's currently funded it's . . .

Mr. Sabir: Currently it's an 80-20 split. The government provides 80 per cent, and the municipalities are required to put in 20 per cent. So that will remain the same.

Mr. McIver: I think I'll have to ask the question another time. How much time do I have left?

The Chair: Three minutes.

Mr. McIver: Three minutes. Then I will say that we have more questions and we'll continue, but before we're finished, I will say that I know there were a lot of complaints, quite a few complaints, about not having enough time. But I will say that the Official Opposition didn't use all the time they were allotted earlier on. They passed some on to us, so we will use it because we actually have enough questions to fill all the time.

Madam Chair, my question is . . . [interjection] I think it is my time now, Madam Chair. I will say that there is a remark in the platform of the government that says that they will get rid of private business that the government has. I think they used the word "experiment." Which things are you going to make public that the government now does business with privately, please?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you for the question. In terms of the platform it talks about experiments in privatization of health care. What we're referring to is a lot of the experiments of the caucus that the hon. member is a member of over the last several years. What we're talking about is making sure that we don't continue around bringing us toward an American, corporatized health care system. We are really proud of what we have here in Alberta, and we want to make sure that it continues to serve Albertans through not just public funding but public delivery.

Mr. McIver: Madam Chair, I'm quite pleased that the Health minister is very proud of what our government had going before they took over. I thank you for the compliment. It means a lot to me; it means a lot to our caucus. That was a wonderful endorsement that you just gave.

But it does lead to my next question. Are you going to privatize the PCNs? Because that's what it sounds like. I think the PCNs deserve to have an answer to that based on what I just heard here in the House.

Ms Hoffman: No.

Mr. McIver: Well, Madam Chair, that might be the first full answer we've received all night, and I would be remiss if I did not thank the Health minister for such a forthright answer without delay.

Now, Madam Chair, one of the other questions that I had – and there were comments about what is and what isn't – was about forest fires. To the minister of ESRD or the President of Treasury Board, either way: is there money allocated in the additional estimates for forest fires? We know from our time in government that that can be unpredictable. There have been a large number of forest fires now. Are any of those forest fires represented in these supplementary estimates?

Vote on Interim Supply Estimates 2015-16 (No. 2) General Revenue Fund and Lottery Fund

The Chair: I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but pursuant to Government Motion 8, agreed to on June 16, 2015, the allotted time of three hours has lapsed, so I must now put the following question. After considering the 2015-16 interim supply estimates No. 2 for the Legislative Assembly for the fiscal period ending March 31, 2016, support to the Legislative Assembly, \$33 million, are you agreed?

[The voice vote did not indicate agreement]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 7:38 p.m.]

[Ten minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Gray	Miranda
Babcock	Hinkley	Nielsen
Bilous	Hoffman	Payne
Carlier	Horne	Phillips
Carson	Kazim	Piquette
Ceci	Kleinsteuber	Renaud
Clark	Larivee	Rosendahl
Connolly	Littlewood	Sabir
Coolahan	Loyola	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Luff	Schreiner
Dach	Malkinson	Sigurdson
Dang	Mason	Sucha
Drever	McCuaig-Boyd	Swann
Feehan	McKitrick	Sweet
Fitzpatrick	McLean	Turner
Ganley	McPherson	Westhead
Goehring	Miller	Woollard

7:50

Against the motion:

Aheer	Hanson	Schneider
Anderson, W.	Hunter	Smith
Cooper	Loewen	Starke
Cyr	MacIntyre	Stier
Drysdale	McIver	Strankman
Ellis	Nixon	Taylor
Fildebrandt	Orr	van Dijken
Fraser	Pitt	Yao
Gotfried		

Totals: For – 51 Against – 25

[Support to the Legislative Assembly was agreed to]

The Chair: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Madam Chair, I would request the unanimous support of the House to shorten the interval for the bells to one minute for the remainder of the evening.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Chair: Moving back to the process on the vote. Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Office of the Auditor General \$11,000,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Office of the Ombudsman \$1,400,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Office of the Chief Electoral Officer \$1,000,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Office of the Ethics Commissioner \$425,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner \$2,852,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Office of the Child and Youth Advocate \$5,632,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Office of the Public Interest Commissioner \$525,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Aboriginal Relations
Expense \$84,800,000
Capital Investment \$10,000
Financial Transactions \$32,115,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Agriculture and Forestry
Expense \$336,121,000
Capital Investment \$9,804,000
Financial Transactions \$982,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Culture and Tourism
Expense \$174,910,000
Capital Investment \$2,092,000
Financial Transactions \$3,610,000

The Chair: Shall the vote be reported?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Education
Expense \$1,988,400,000
Capital Investment \$671,100,000
Financial Transactions \$7,687,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Energy
Expense \$160,000,000
Capital Investment \$2,500,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Environment and Parks
Expense \$256,378,000
Capital Investment \$111,046,000
Financial Transactions \$41,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Executive Council
Expense \$9,475,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Health
Expense \$7,746,317,000
Capital Investment \$32,494,000
Financial Transactions \$27,700,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Human Services
Expense \$1,803,518,000
Capital Investment \$2,279,000
Financial Transactions \$305,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:
Infrastructure
Expense \$228,500,000
Capital Investment \$440,000,000
Financial Transactions \$28,100,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Innovation and Advanced Education	
Expense	\$1,203,669,000
Capital Investment	\$21,440,000
Financial Transactions	\$437,000,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

International and Intergovernmental Relations	
Expense	\$14,680,000
Capital Investment	\$10,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour	
Expense	\$74,469,000
Capital Investment	\$500,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

8:00

Agreed to:

Justice and Solicitor General	
Expense	\$473,905,000
Capital Investment	\$25,960,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Municipal Affairs	
Expense	\$105,402,000
Capital Investment	\$4,246,000
Financial Transactions	\$173,704,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Seniors	
Expense	\$263,096,000
Financial Transactions	\$10,211,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Service Alberta	
Expense	\$116,916,000
Capital Investment	\$12,268,000
Financial Transactions	\$6,379,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

Agreed to:

Transportation	
Expense	\$339,712,000
Capital Investment	\$641,462,000
Financial Transactions	\$32,552,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

For the Department of Treasury Board and Finance for the fiscal period ending March 31, 2016: expense, \$62,840,000; capital investment, \$1,135,000; financial transactions, \$4,197,000; transfer from the lottery fund, \$386,929,000. Are you agreed?

[The voice vote did not indicate agreement]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 8:03 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Gray	Miranda
Babcock	Hinkley	Nielsen
Bilous	Hoffman	Payne
Carlier	Horne	Phillips
Carson	Kazim	Piquette
Ceci	Kleinstauber	Renaud
Clark	Larivee	Rosendahl
Connolly	Littlewood	Sabir
Coolahan	Loyola	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Luff	Schreiner
Dach	Malkinson	Sigurdson
Dang	Mason	Sucha
Drever	McCuaig-Boyd	Swann
Feehan	McKitrick	Sweet
Fitzpatrick	McLean	Turner
Ganley	McPherson	Westhead
Goehring	Miller	Woollard

Against the motion:

Aheer	Gotfried	Schneider
Anderson, W.	Hanson	Starke
Cooper	Hunter	Stier
Cyr	Loewen	Strankman
Drysdale	MacIntyre	Taylor
Ellis	Nixon	van Dijken
Fildebrandt	Orr	Yao
Fraser	Pitt	

Totals: For – 51 Against – 23

[Support to the Department of Treasury Board and Finance was agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? Carried.

The committee shall now rise and report.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Ms Gray: Madam Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

The following resolutions relating to the 2015-16 interim supply estimates, No. 2, for the general revenue fund and lottery fund for the fiscal period ending March 31, 2016, have been approved.

8:10

Support to the Legislative Assembly, \$33,000,000; office of the Auditor General, \$11,000,000; office of the Ombudsman, \$1,400,000; office of the Chief Electoral Officer, \$1,000,000; office of the Ethics Commissioner, \$425,000; office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, \$2,852,000; office of the Child and Youth Advocate, \$5,632,000; office of the Public Interest Commissioner, \$525,000.

Aboriginal Relations: expense, \$84,800,000; capital investment, \$10,000; financial transactions, \$32,115,000.

Agriculture and Forestry: expense, \$336,121,000; capital investment, \$9,804,000; financial transactions, \$982,000.

Culture and Tourism: expense, \$174,910,000; capital investment, \$2,092,000; financial transactions, \$3,610,000.

Education: expense, \$1,988,400,000; capital investment, \$671,100,000; financial transactions, \$7,687,000.

Energy: expense, \$160,000,000; capital investment, \$2,500,000.

Environment and Parks: expense, \$256,378,000; capital investment, \$111,046,000; financial transactions, \$41,000.

Executive Council: expense, \$9,475,000.

Health: expense, \$7,746,317,000; capital investment, \$32,494,000; financial transactions, \$27,700,000.

Human Services: expense, \$1,803,518,000; capital investment, \$2,279,000; financial transactions, \$305,000.

Infrastructure: expense, \$228,500,000; capital investment, \$440,000,000; financial transactions, \$28,100,000.

Innovation and Advanced Education: expense, \$1,203,669,000; capital investment, \$21,440,000; financial transactions, \$437,000,000.

International and Intergovernmental Relations: expense, \$14,680,000; capital investment, \$10,000.

Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour: expense, \$74,469,000; capital investment, \$500,000.

Justice and Solicitor General: expense, \$473,905,000; capital investment, \$25,960,000.

Municipal Affairs: expense, \$105,402,000; capital investment, \$4,246,000; financial transactions, \$173,704,000.

Seniors: expense, \$263,096,000; financial transactions, \$10,211,000.

Service Alberta: expense, \$116,916,000; capital investment, \$12,268,000; financial transactions, \$6,379,000.

Transportation: expense, \$339,712,000; capital investment, \$641,462,000; financial transactions, \$32,552,000.

Treasury Board and Finance: expense, \$62,840,000; capital investment, \$1,135,000; financial transactions, \$4,197,000; transfer from the lottery fund, \$386,929,000.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Concur.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

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

Introduction of Bills

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

Bill 3

Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2015 (No. 2)

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. I'm rising to introduce Bill 3, the Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2015 (No. 2). This being a money bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to this Assembly.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 3 read a first time]

Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

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

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

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

[Adjourned debate June 16: Mr. Mason]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Yes?

The Deputy Speaker: You still have 15 minutes left to speak.

Mr. Mason: No. I'll cede my time. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Then the next member is the hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am truly honoured to have been chosen as the Member for Airdrie. I grew up in Airdrie, and now I raise my family there. Airdrie is a city of over 60,000 people, a very rapidly growing city, and it's full of lots of young families. Small businesses are the beating heart of my community, and they're responsible for so much of our volunteerism and our charity support and kids' sports programs.

We are a community that comes together when there is a need. When southern Alberta suffered devastating floods, the people of Airdrie came in droves with supplies, strong working hands, and

loving arms. When teenagers are bullied, they are welcomed with kind notes in the form of positive Post-its. The campaign against bullying: that started in Airdrie. When families suffer hardships, fundraisers are quickly arranged and local food bank shelves are stocked greatly. When a mother's child dies because an adequate health facility was not close enough, Airdrie takes its own action and forms a health foundation so this will never happen again. That is with the government's help, of course.

I am very proud of my city, but I also represent rural parts of Alberta, too: Bottrel, Helmsdale, Madden, and Nier, all vibrant, beautiful communities and with much concern over property rights. Airdrie has a beautiful walking and biking pathway system that treks through many wonderful parks, playground areas, and ponds. We have really neat regular wildlife. There's a blue heron family that actually lives in the pond behind my house and really cute muskrats. We've named one Henry. There are plenty of family-run restaurants, ice cream and gelato parlours, delightful coffee shops where a lot of local business owners meet and some – most – call it their second office. A lot call it their first.

Airdrie has recently hosted the Alberta Summer Games as well as other great events such as the Airdrie air show, Airdrie Pro Rodeo, the bikes and bulls event, empty bowls festival, and Artember.

8:20

Now, when I say adequate health facility, Airdrie has seen tremendous growth over the last 10 years. The infrastructure has never caught up. As I already said, our population is over 60,000, and if you get sick after 10 p.m., your option is to drive to Calgary to an extremely overcrowded hospital or to the hospital in Didsbury, which is much farther away. This is unacceptable, not for a town, for a city of 60,000 people and the affected communities like Crossfield, Beiseker, Bottrel, Madden, Helmsdale, and Nier. Residents from north Calgary frequent the Airdrie facility as well for their health care needs.

In response to the Speech from the Throne I have grave concerns for the vibrant business community in Airdrie as many of our small businesses will be forced to lay off employees, take on more hours themselves, and raise the price of goods and services to comply with the minimum wage increase. These are businesses that are vital to Airdrie's community as they're generous and they give so much. They support our charities, our children's sports programs, and so much more. Sadly, this will cease to exist to comply with the probable wage increase. I've been told over and over again by our business community, and some will even have to shut their doors.

Also in response to the Speech from the Throne I agree with and applaud your recognition for Alberta to have a long-term plan for health care and education, and both need predictable, sustainable funding. The problem we face is the allocation of funding. With a centralized system of big government we are not addressing the concerns of wait times or patient care. Bureaucrats really just get larger and richer, front-line service remains the same while the number of patients increases, and patient care fails. This large system leaves smaller cities like Airdrie in the dust, forgotten and hopeless. As a mom this scares me to my core. As a daughter I see no proper future for my aging parents in this too large of a system. In time my hope is for a better working system of communication, co-operation, and achievement for the people of Alberta that elected us to be here.

To restore Albertans' faith in government and increased voter turnout rates. I was very saddened while talking to the people at the door who just gave up voting altogether. They just didn't care. They gave up on democracy, and that, folks, is the biggest fear that we

all should have, the demise of democracy because people just don't care, and that's our fault.

Now, none of this would have ever been possible without the support of my wonderful husband, my two children, and my loving parents, who always thought that government as an institution was important. My parents, both coming from immigrant families and whose parents strived to become proud Canadians, know the dangers of trampled democracy, centralized government, and the need to defend the rights and freedoms of all individuals. They taught me everything I know, the importance of being humble, never forgetting to thank the people who helped me to get to where I am today. They taught me to love unconditionally towards others, and they taught me to stay true to my principles, my word, and my beliefs. Through their actions they have shown me how to give back to our community and be a good wife, a good daughter, a good sister, a great mother, and a friend. It is these values that I hope I can stay true to as MLA for Airdrie over the next four years.

There is no shortage of work to do. We all know that. Alberta, indeed, is facing unprecedented challenges. The size of government has grown too big, too fast, and now Albertans will have plenty of tough choices to face over the next several years.

I will speak passionately on the need to protect the future of our children by bringing down our rapidly expanding provincial debt. I will always argue for the need for eliminating waste and inefficiency without asking our vulnerable and core government services to do the heavy lifting. I will fight every day for a truly patient-centred health care system that focuses not just on dollars spent but on patients cured.

As a mother I will fight to protect the choice on the best way to educate my children and ensure that they have enough space in our schools, without bursting outside of the classrooms.

To close, I want to say thank you to my beautiful family, who has supported me. I will rely on you in the tough times, share in the good, and I will always do my best to make you proud.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, Standing Order 29(2)(a) allows for a five-minute question/comment should any hon. members wish to take advantage. The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Yeah, Madam Speaker, I would. I really would. I'd really enjoy speaking and asking the member, being a lifetime Albertan and born and raised in Airdrie: I'd like to get her to expound on the idea of small business and how wages may affect that.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you for that great question. I've had a lot of people coming into my office recently, a lot of small-business owners and representatives of local networking groups and business organizations, very, very concerned over the minimum wage increase and how it's going to directly affect their businesses and their lives, from taking away or having to pull back on employee benefits, laying off their employees and taking over for themselves full time – these are 12-, 16-hour days for these guys – having to raise the price of their goods and services, which will put them out of business because we can't afford to shop there.

Airdrie programs rely on Airdrie businesses for their donations to keep their programs going. It is our food banks. It is our community links, which provide so many services. These are children, right? This is really important; \$15 an hour minimum wage is going to destroy us. I just urge you guys to take a second look because this is a big deal. You're going to see these small guys go out.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other member wish to speak on 29(2)(a)?

If not, I will invite the hon. Member for Calgary-East with her statement.

Ms Luff: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm honoured to be able to rise in this House for the first time today as the Member for Calgary-East to respond to the Speech from the Throne. I'd like to thank Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor for the remarks brought to this Chamber. I'd also like to congratulate you, Madam Speaker, on your election to this Assembly. I believe the Assembly will benefit from your wisdom and experience, and you've been doing a great job so far.

I also congratulate my colleagues on both sides of the Chamber for your election to this House. We've been entrusted, through democratic elections, with the great privilege of representing our constituents, the people of Alberta. If the calibre of debate today and yesterday was an indication, I think we're really off to a fabulous start.

I also want to thank the Premier for the opportunity to rise in this House to speak to the people and the priorities of Calgary-East. I'm so thrilled to be able to represent the communities of Calgary-East. These include Marlborough, Marlborough Park, Penbrooke, Radisson Heights, Albert Park, Mayland Heights, Forest Heights, and my neighbourhood, Southview.

I chose to move to Southview six years ago because of its close proximity to downtown, great parks, mature trees, access to transit, and walkability. There's a plethora of fabulous restaurants, and let's face it, as a young family, there were affordable houses there. The people of Calgary-East are diverse and largely working class. Many work in the trades, transport, and in sales and service. Nearly a third are recent immigrants to Canada. They speak English, Cantonese, Mandarin, Vietnamese, Punjabi, Spanish, Kamai, Tagalog, French, and many others. Many are small-business owners.

On the doorsteps during the election they told me that they were concerned about making ends meet and about everybody having a fair shot at success. They were concerned about access to quality education for their children and quality care for seniors. The people in my riding are excited about a \$15 an hour minimum wage. This will do so much to ease the burden on new Canadians and single mothers, who disproportionately fill low-wage jobs in our communities.

8:30

The priorities laid out in the throne speech are the priorities of the people of Calgary-East: stable, predictable funding for schools so parents know their kids will have the supports they need and a fair progressive tax system. We can all benefit from the wealth in this province. People I met at the door spoke of the need to ensure a prosperous future for their children and for a government that would work to reduce the growing inequality that we face. They voted for a government that would provide these things. They voted NDP.

It's a riding that is historically an NDP riding, as much as that's possible in Calgary. Parts of Calgary-East were represented by both Bob Hawkesworth and Barry Pashak, and many folks I ran into when door-knocking referred to the late '80s as the good old days. In his maiden speech Mr. Hawkesworth said that he and Mr. Pashak were only the first of many NDP MLAs to be elected from Calgary. Well, it's been a long time coming, but I'm happy to be here with my colleagues from Calgary to fulfill Bob's bold prediction.

The people I represent are passionate volunteers who are active in their community associations. They're creating safer and more inclusive communities, and they're working to foster relationships across cultural lines. They're building opportunities for youth,

creating spaces for arts, forwarding poverty reduction strategies, helping new Canadians, and promoting local businesses. Some of these organizations include Momentum, the 12-community safety initiative, the Calgary Immigrant Educational Society, the Calgary Centre for Newcomers, and the Cornerstone Youth Centre.

At the heart of our riding is 17th Avenue S.E., or International Avenue, and its motto is Around the World in 35 Blocks. I'm not sure there's anywhere else in Calgary that you can eat dinner at an Eritrean restaurant or Vietnamese restaurant or Ethiopian restaurant, then head over for dessert at a German bakery and then finish off your night with some karaoke at a Filipino bar. The 17th Avenue BRZ has worked tirelessly over the years to promote our area and has some amazing plans for improvements in the future. They're working towards the eventual improvement of International Avenue into a multimodal boulevard with dedicated transit lanes, wide, safe sidewalks, and bike lanes. The BRZ and community have worked tirelessly to propel the area into the award-winning vision that was brought forward a number of years ago through the International Avenue design initiative. Improvements are much needed as the street is central to the 50,000 residents that live near the avenue.

Other projects to reduce poverty are under way. A positive step in the right direction is work that the communities have brought forward on limiting payday loan lenders. The interest on these loans can be a huge burden and contributing factor to the incidence of poverty, and this is a piece of work that I will continue to work on at a provincial level.

Now, there is still much work to be done. Reading through the past speeches of Mr. Hawkesworth, Mr. Pashak, and Mr. Amery, I see that my riding's issues have not changed much in 40 years. We still have high numbers of children living in poverty, high numbers of constituents without a high school education, and there are still issues with crime in the area. I have much hope, though, that in co-operation with the community groups that we've mentioned, our new NDP government can make a difference. We can initiate plans that will bring all stakeholders together to create a pathway to success to ensure that these are not still issues 40 years from now. In the past Calgary-East has seemingly been a footnote in the considerations of various levels of government. It is my intention and my passion to change that. It is my passion to change Calgary-East from being a footnote to becoming a headline. Our focus on education, poverty reduction, and fairness, as mentioned in the throne speech, will make my riding a better place for all of its residents.

I got into politics for a few reasons. As a teacher in the Calgary public board I was tired of the lack of care paid to education by the previous government. I was tired of larger class sizes, less education assistance, less prep time, and less support for the 70 per cent of my students with ESL needs. As a scientist and social justice advocate I was tired of a government that always put the priorities of industry over those of the environment and our First Nations brothers and sisters. I was tired of unnecessary tax on our working people. I think Mr. Hawkesworth put it well in his maiden speech when he said: I want a society "where quality education and opportunities are available to all Alberta children, regardless of the economic circumstances in their home environment ... where people are valued for being people, not valued simply by what they produce or [what] they earn. I want a society which recognizes ... the true value of labour [and] its ability to give expression and meaning to the human soul."

The NDP also runs in my blood. My grandfather Alan Bush ran against Grant Notley in 1968. He did lose that race and was subsequently run out of Grande Prairie, which is why I grew up on

Vancouver Island and not in Alberta, but his passion for democratic socialism lived on.

I want to take this opportunity to thank my amazing husband and partner, who helped me tirelessly on my campaign, shares my vision for the future of Alberta, and is at home right now with our two small children. I am so lucky to have his unwavering support.

I'm so proud to be a part of this new NDP government, that is breathing life into politics in this province, a government committed to caring for our air and our water, a government committed to investing in the future through education, a government committed to reducing inequality. As a mother of young children, just 10 months and two and a half years old, to have a ministry for the status of women is no small thing, and I'm very hopeful that Leg. daycare is forthcoming.

I'm truly grateful and humbled to have the opportunity to represent the people of Calgary-East. I thank them for the trust that they have placed in me. Calgary-East and Alberta are amazing places to live, and I promise to work tirelessly for you with the NDP government to make them even better.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Any hon. member wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? Questions or comments? The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, I grew up in Marlborough Park, and I understand those challenges. My father was a single parent. We grew up in Georgian Village. I went to Dr. Egbert school, and – you know what? – not everything in Calgary-East was bad, as much as sometimes it gets a bad rap. I'm living proof of that. So as we debate bills in this House, as we debate law, know this. Somebody from Calgary-East wants to see the very best of Calgary-East come true.

Talking to my fellow mate here from Calgary-West, him being a police officer, myself being an advanced care paramedic, I spent a lot of my first part of my career at Forest Lawn, 12 station, so I've seen the best and I've seen the worst from that community. What I can tell you, again – and I'll go back – one of the inspirations for me as a kid: half of the guys I grew up with are in prison or worse. Half of the guys I grew up with are either police officers or they're paramedics, they're physicians.

Some of them have been in Legislatures. You know what? Our dear Premier, I think we can all agree, has served us well, whichever side of the House you come from, and that's the hon. Ralph Klein. That gentlemen came to my school, encouraged me. We saw him in that community all the time. So as we move forward, as we talk about past governments, as we talk about possible new governments, governments that just were and new governments like yourself, we should be talking about the very best this province has to offer, collectively how we can make it better.

And just when you think you couldn't imagine it, there's a kid from Marlborough Park, from a single parent, you know, who had paper routes there. My dad had a small business there. You know what? I thank the government. I thank the courage of the people in this House, past and present, to work on behalf of Albertans. I'm a success story because somebody cared. Let's continue that. I'll be happy to work with you in that, so thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I, too, would like to talk to the hon. member about the minimum wage because back in the time when the Member for Drumheller-Stettler had hair, there was a young fellow who went out to work for \$2.50 an hour and was pleased to do it simply to get the experience. I did not

demand the wage. I took it, and I earned it. I worked long hours, and I got expenses, and I learned experience from that. I'd like the hon. member to explain to me how she feels that demanding a certain wage will create that experience.

8:40

Ms Luff: I feel positively about the \$15 an hour wage, and people in my riding feel positively about this. My husband teaches ESL for many new Canadian immigrants, and many of them are working 16-hour days just to make ends meet, and they're not demanding that \$15 an hour wage. They're working. But they have to work 16 hours a day and then go to an English class so that they can possibly, maybe, make it to go to a university to get an education where then they might be able to get a job that pays them more than \$15 an hour so they might be able to spend some time with their family. The fact of the matter is that we're not really talking about the 16-year-old kid here. We're talking about single mothers who don't have an option, who have to work two jobs, who don't have time to go home.

There are plenty of studies, as was mentioned by some of my colleagues earlier, that a \$15 an hour wage actually creates retention. My husband, previous to teaching ESL – as I mentioned, he's a stand-up guy – managed a liquor store and wasn't able to retain any staff and was having to train new staff all the time because the owner refused to pay more than \$11 an hour. The fact of the matter is that people making \$11 an hour are constantly going to be looking for more because in Calgary to make a living you have to make at least – I'm not exactly sure of the number, but I think it's even higher. I think it's 17-something.

The fact of the matter is that it's just not feasible for most people to make that wage. We're not talking about doing it overnight. We're talking about doing it gradually, in consultation with business so that they have time to prepare for it. Many people in my riding, as I mentioned, are small-business owners, and they are with me on this.

The Deputy Speaker: I'll now recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and speak to the throne speech. A truly historic time in our province. I'm also proud to be part of this important time in Alberta and a fresh, new possibility for Alberta that hopefully will leave a legacy that we can all in this House be very proud of.

I want to thank the people of Calgary-Mountain View, first of all, who elected me for the fourth time in spite of all my failings. [some applause] Thank you. I remember in the 2012 election a young New Democrat opponent in the campaign said to the people in our debate: friends, are you going to vote for this man when he's been here for eight years and hasn't changed the government yet? I apologized for not achieving a change of government in eight years, but we've now done it, and I'm very proud of that. With all due respect to many of the colleagues in the former government, it was time for change, and Albertans were very clear about that, and I think we will all be better for it.

I want to be a little bit historic here. I'm in my 66th year. I've worked from South Africa in my early years in medical practice to the Canadian north, Inuit, Métis communities, for six months. I've worked in the Philippines for a year and a half with my young family and in Asia for another brief period. What that really opened my eyes to was the profound impact of public policy, the profound impact of good politics and bad politics. For good or ill, politicians create the conditions for health, and they create the conditions for waste, disease, turmoil, and collapse.

We have a really important role, that is hard to measure, and many of us have avoided politics for some of those reasons – we've realized how profound it is, or we believe it has no significance to our lives – and many of the young people, including my own children, fail to see what relevance politicians have to their lives. So there's this interesting dichotomy: profound impact on the one hand, the perception of profound impact, and a sense of trepidation to get into it; on the other, a real sense that it's a waste of time, that it's a game, that it's, quote, politics.

Well, politics has a bad rap because, for me, politics is negotiating the public interest in the long term. Now, there are many different definitions of politics, but for me, whenever I talk to groups about the meaning of politics: we are negotiating here, folks. Everyone has an interest. Everyone has a vision. Everyone has a desired route to get there. We are here to negotiate the common interest for the long term. I think that if we keep that in the forefront, we will make good decisions, and we will be proud when we leave this place, whether we're carried out or whether we're kicked out or whether we leave voluntarily. We will be proud of what we've done here.

I guess I want to emphasize just how critical these times are in our world: the turmoil in the Middle East; the crisis we're facing economically, with the oil prices and the job losses and those sorts of issues; the growing concerns about climate and the growing number of extreme weather events; refugees migrating out of their countries in desperate attempts to find a home and a secure place to raise their families; poverty, widespread poverty. I know that something like 20 per cent of the planet, 2 billion people, lives without fresh water and on a dollar a day, that sort of thing.

We have a huge responsibility to work together here as well as we can and to not let partisanship undermine good decisions in the public interest. We have a real opportunity to set aside some of that, think about our children, our grandchildren, our province, the province we love so dearly and want others to come to and have opportunities. We cannot squander this opportunity, particularly now, when there's so much at stake on the planet. Everyone, I think, realizes how blessed we are in Alberta. Most Canadians realize the great potential of Alberta and of the rest of the country, but I think many of us have been frustrated by the partisanship that has in some ways undermined our best efforts as a team of people that are really looking for the best that we can bring forward for our future.

Really listening, respecting each other, genuinely looking for solutions, not being right but being honest, finding the truth as opposed to winning and losing: I really look forward to that possibility. Many of us felt that the past government had lost a sense of that. They projected a sense that they had the answers, that they weren't prepared to really listen to changes because things were going pretty nicely the way they were, and they were benefiting from the way they were, so why wasn't everybody happy with the way they were?

Well, we didn't have a fair tax regime. We weren't addressing the growing poverty and inequality in our society. We just weren't. Access problems to education and health care were growing. We weren't shifting to a preventive, community focus, that would be a tremendous financial savings. Human suffering would be reduced. And then we weren't serious about climate change, the biggest crisis to hit our generation. So we needed change, and notwithstanding the fact that Albertans tried to give them a second, a third, and a fourth chance, any government at 44 years is past its best-before date. I dare say that even a Liberal government should be changed at 44 years, and I even said to people in my campaign: every century, you know, you should try a Liberal government.

Conscious Albertans are really aware of our domestic and international threats. They really are hoping that we will put our

minds and hearts together and come forward with really thoughtful, wise policies, longer thinking than just these next few years. So when the New Democrats say to me, "We need time to put a budget together," I say: "Take your time. Do it right. I don't want a fast budget; I want the right budget." But do your homework, use the best evidence, call in good experts, and I don't mean Jack Mintz. There's a guy that gets hundreds of thousands of dollars from Imperial Oil and runs the Calgary School of Public Policy. I'm sorry. I've told Jack that. I think he has to temper his comments in support of the oil industry. Am I getting off track?

8:50

We are now, hopefully, in a transient economic downturn. But make no mistake; the growing evidence suggests that our way of living, our way of working, our way of planning is failing. On a global level we are failing the future. We have to do better. We have to start thinking differently and working differently together. The war on carbon grows across the planet, and we must actively plan for a different future before we're forced to in Alberta, before we have to tell the oil companies: "Sorry to see you go. Are you not going to clean up the mess?" We've got to start planning now and put in place a conservation plan, a new technology plan, and really move forward so that when they do finally have to move on, we have a strong economy and a strong energy future.

Our most pressing need, though, is to learn to live and work together respectfully, with genuine appreciation, as if our lives depended on it. They do. Our lives depend on finding some new ways forward together, ways that we don't necessarily know and haven't experienced fully yet in our homes, in our communities, in this Legislature. We may have to find some new ways to meet and talk, eat together, talk together, sort out our differences, and get on with what really is needed by Albertans.

Various populations around the world taught me that we must include the planet because, whether or not we're ready, they're coming to us, and we cannot turn them away forever. We have to have resilient, broad-thinking, creative ways of including them in our culture that really support them to the point where they can actually be successful and contribute to our society. Many today – I know them in Calgary – are very frustrated. They get six months' funding, and suddenly they're expected to function fully, and they cannot. They need more support than that. So one of the areas that I want to see improved is how we treat newcomers and engage them and help them transition, integrate into our society.

More than ever we legislators have to work together for long-term well-being. One hopes that our sophisticated public will not tolerate opposition for pure political advantage and will appreciate and vote for genuine cross-party meetings, consultations, knowledge sharing. Some of my Wildrose colleagues have tremendous things to teach me about small business and economic opportunity. My New Democrat colleagues across the way will teach me about how we can be more inclusive in our communities and support longer thinking and planning around our human potential. We have seen positive steps on this already, and I congratulate the government on some of those steps, that we've all talked about; for example, a mental health system, which I'm very privileged to be part of helping to hopefully shape and move forward.

Moving from opinion to facts and values is part of what I think our challenge is. We've operated a lot on opinion here in this House. We've operated a lot on ideology. We've operated a lot, in some cases, on political opportunity. We have not been focused on evidence, science, facts, and values. Let's make sure we include all of those. Facts, science, and values have to be part of good public policy. I know that many people can say that, but at the end of the

day, we have to acknowledge that some of our policies might not look as good for our party, but it will be better for the long term. We have to start biting the bullet, and that's what our job is over here, to hold you accountable when you think you're going to get away with something just because it may serve your short-term political interests.

Parties must show willingness to engage in the difficult questions of where the market, with limited foresight and no conscience, and where short-term profit fit into the larger issues of saving our future and ensuring that environmental limits are respected in development decisions.

Small business does have needs, and I know that, and I caution the New Democrats on how fast they're moving forward on the small-business tax. I, too, have heard from a number of people in my community, especially the Chinese restaurant down the street who says that they will lay off two of their people right away if it jumps to \$15. Now, it's not going to \$15 right away, but it's a significant increase for them, and they're just scraping by in this Chinese restaurant. So I don't know how you're going to measure that, but we think you should go slowly and measure impacts as you go and decide in the next two years whether to go to the full extent of where you're going.

I don't mind a government that changes its mind if it's got evidence and it comes to us and says: we've changed our mind because we see impacts here and there, and they're not what we thought. I respect a government that does that. Don't feel that you have to follow through just because you have said so without full evidence. All of us create platforms without full evidence. That's why we call in scientists and experts.

Our First Nations have to be included in any of our planning, and I certainly will be including them if I get a choice in this mental health review. They are the fastest growing population here, and they have to be meaningfully engaged. They cannot be tokens. They are tired of this so-called consultation where they come to the table, are told the facts, and then asked to agree or disagree, and then have to end up in court to actually get any resolution because they haven't really felt listened to. They have many challenges that we will never, never, never understand or appreciate fully.

The latter, as I mentioned, are the fastest growing population, and they continue to be at serious and increasing risk of illness, violence, and premature death: a tremendous opportunity for both greater contributions to our society if we help them to make it, and a tremendous opportunity for crisis and cost and chaos if we don't do a better job of integrating them into our culture.

It's equally clear that jobs and the new economic opportunities are there, and the government can provide some incentives without picking winners and losers. You have an opportunity to help small businesses move from the experiment to the full business opportunity and to stop the breakdown between that chain. I've met some people who are really helpful in that.

Thank you for the opportunity to say a few things. I have much more to say.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. My question to the hon. member is with regard to consultation with other experts around preparing for the budget. Obviously, we're going to have him facilitate part of that consultation around mental health, but did he have any other recommendations for health care consultations?

Dr. Swann: Well, thank you for the question. That's a very thoughtful issue to raise. I think we have a lot to learn from countries like Sweden, Scandinavian countries. They have put people, seniors and the poor, very much at the centre of a lot of their planning. They realize that there are billions and billions of dollars to be saved when we put people at the centre of our economic planning, let alone our social supports. As a result, they save billions of dollars on poverty, on homelessness, on seniors who are feeling neglected and isolated and depressed. They put serious investment in high-risk families before they get into the breakdowns and the drug addictions and the suicides.

They don't do everything right, but I have seen evidence in the literature and from talking to people who've lived there and worked there that they have come a long way in providing a culture of well-being, support, a sense of community, a mutual responsibility, that we've lost in this culture, a sense that health and prosperity begin – sometimes it ends – with a sense of community. When you feel supported, when you can lean on people, when you can gather ideas from other people, it opens up a lot of opportunities, economic and social, and even environmental changes that we all know would help create better – an example locally is the whole cosmetic pesticide issue that Calgary and Edmonton are debating. They want to continue spraying these chemicals over dandelions. Well, dandelions don't kill anybody, but chemicals do.

9:00

In the 21st century I can't say that I know what Scandinavia is doing about pesticides, but they're making longer term decisions. They're thinking longer term about innovation and wise use of resources, minimizing risk where they can, and putting up with minor inconveniences like dandelions when they realize that the cost benefit is so much in favour, and the long-term future and health are affected by that.

I think we could learn from First Nations about health. They have lived on the land. They have lived together. They have made decisions in a different way than we do. Their organizations tend to be flatter and less hierarchical. There are all kinds of values, spiritual values as well, respect for elders. There are a lot of things that First Nations, I think, could teach us about health and well-being.

Costa Rica has one of the best health – or did have; I haven't looked in the last five or 10 years. They spend a third of their budget on prevention. We spend 3 per cent of our budget on prevention and community. They have close to, maybe not really close – our infant mortality rate is somewhat similar to Costa Rica's, and they spend one one-hundredth per capita on health care that we do because they focus so much on community, mutual supports. They know they have little money, and they put it into water, sanitation, breastfeeding, immunization, kinds of basic home-care services that they can provide. So a third-world country like Costa Rica might have something to teach us about where to find that balance between high-tech medicine and the basics of keeping people in the community supported and well and active.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other comments under 29(2)(a)?

If not, I will recognize the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. As one of the new members of this Assembly it is both an honour and a pleasure to rise today for the first time on behalf of the residents of Edmonton-Decore to address the Assembly and respond to the Speech from the Throne. I'm happy to begin by offering my sincere congratulations to all of my colleagues in this Assembly on their

election victories and the hard work that they put in as well as the volunteers who supported them in those campaigns. With those victories, of course, comes great responsibility to represent each of our constituents and to represent all Albertans. I have no doubt that each of you will make them very proud.

I'd also like to congratulate you, Madam Speaker, on your appointment as well as our Speaker of the House. I have no doubt that your appointments to lead this great House in Alberta will be nothing less than stellar. I'm honoured and excited for the opportunity to work with both of you and all the new chairs of the committees.

I'd also like to thank my partner and soon-to-be wife, Natalya, whose love and support has kept me going since this journey began a little over two years ago. It seems, of course, like just yesterday that it really started, but the calendar actually has expired two years later.

I would also like to thank my friends and campaign team. Without them this maiden speech, of course, would not have been possible.

Madam Speaker, as the new Member for Edmonton-Decore I must say that I feel like the luckiest individual in this Assembly. I have been given the trust to represent an area that is a microcosm in the diversity of Alberta, with mature neighbourhoods in the south of the riding like Killarney or some of the newer neighbourhoods in the north like Crystallina Nera as well as everything in between like neighbourhoods such as Delwood, which will be celebrating their 50th anniversary here right away, and Evansdale, which is where I live.

Edmonton-Decore was of course established back in 2012 and named after Laurence Decore, who served as the member for then Edmonton-Glengarry as well as the Leader of the Official Opposition following a distinguished career in municipal politics. With a population of over 44,000 I have great pleasure interacting with people from all walks of life, all different age ranges, and all kinds of different backgrounds. Knocking on thousands of doors over the past two years, I was able to meet small-business owners, plumbers, accountants, oil patch workers, government employees, retired seniors, teachers, health care workers, lawyers, students, our military personnel, and so many others making a wide range of contributions to life and the economy here in Alberta.

What I found was a common theme among these diverse residents, a theme that was repeated over and over again door after door. They were looking for a government that would ensure that health care is there when they need it, a government that would ensure that quality education is available for all our children, a government that would look after our seniors as they looked after us when we were all younger, a government that treats everyone fairly and equally, including our indigenous and our LGBTQ sisters and brothers, a government that honours the contributions of those who have lived their lives in this province, and a government that ensures new futures for those freshly come from other places.

My pride in the responsibility of being the MLA for the people of this constituency is that these themes are ones that matter deeply to me personally. As I bring the voices of my constituents here, as I take the information about our decisions to them, I know that together we will be building an Alberta that will be a model of justice and success. Madam Speaker, I am so very proud to stand before you and this Assembly today as the representative for Edmonton-Decore because I know that the qualities that my constituents are looking for can and will be provided by the members of this Assembly and by the government that was elected for the people of Alberta by the people of Alberta.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?
The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and address the Assembly for the first time. I'd like to beg the patience of all members of the Assembly because I'm winging it here. I'd like to offer my heartfelt congratulations to the Member for Edmonton-Decore on his victory. I know that he's been working hard for a long time on this. You know, if I can share something with you, Member, in this private setting: I didn't think you were going to make it, but I'm very pleased that you did. I'm incredibly pleased that we're surrounded by a number of colleagues to assist us in our work. To watch the Member for Edmonton-Decore work single-mindedly on achieving the goal of being the elected member for his constituency has been inspirational. I know that this perseverance and dedication that he brings to the Legislature will serve the people of Edmonton-Decore and all of the people of Alberta very well indeed.

9:10

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.

Any other member wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

If not, then I will recognize the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Well, here we go again, Madam Speaker. I'm honoured to rise today to speak as the new Member of this Legislative Assembly for Strathmore-Brooks. It is truly a privilege to be a member of this great Assembly and to be heir to its traditions, its history, and its heritage. I was selected by the people of Strathmore-Brooks to be their representative in this House, and I will do my utmost to serve them well.

Strathmore-Brooks represents what has made Alberta great. The city of Brooks, the town of Strathmore, the county of Newell, and the county of Wheatland are as Albertan as Alberta gets. Its people are enterprising and hard working. They are rooted in the best of our traditions and our heritage, but they also are forward-looking and not afraid of change. They don't care if your great-grandfather came across the prairies in a wagon or if you landed at Calgary International in a WestJet 737. They do care if you work hard, contribute to your community, and do your best. They are ranchers, farmers, small-business people, and oil patch workers. They are the key sectors of our economy in Strathmore-Brooks that I will defend everyday.

I will stand up for keeping taxes competitive on local businesses. No society has ever taxed and borrowed its way to prosperity. It was as true in British Columbia and Ontario during the early 1990s as it has been in Greece over the last decade. It would be ignoring the evidence to believe that it will be any different here in Alberta today.

I was raised in a family where freedom and liberty were the ultimate political values instilled in me. My oma, Charlotte Fildebrandt, and opa, Gerhard Fildebrandt, were both forcefully expelled from their homelands and lived under the brutal oppression of socialism and communism in East Germany. I can remember my oma telling me about working on a farm under Stalin's rule. With the state confiscating most of the wealth produced on the farm, even it was a hungry place to be. They escaped to Munich and then to Canada because they never wished to live with war, with tyranny, or with socialism again.

They lit Wyatt's torch behind them as they left, refusing to be instruments that exist merely for the state's production quotas. They believed that at the root of a free society was the rule of law, where the government is constrained from itself, where the people

understood and defended their freedom and were not willing to bargain it away for comfort or political correctness. Those deep beliefs were passed on to my father, Gerald, my sister Samantha, and myself.

My mother's side of the family brought another set of values. My great-grandmother was a Scottish war bride and, most unfortunately, an Old Labour socialist. [some applause] That may be the first and only time I am applauded by the NDP side and not my own members.

It seems the Fildebrandts would live with socialism again after all.

But she did have some redeeming qualities. She was Scottish. [some applause] From the Scots in the back here.

My grandparents on that side, Patricia and Gordon Graham, were typical of the people you'll find in the Ottawa Valley, where I'm from: hard-working, community-minded, and owners of a large stockpile of unregistered firearms. They passed on that deep passion for their community and their family to my mother, Kimberly, and my sister and myself.

Strathmore-Brooks is a place where you know your neighbours, where you know your local policemen and the teachers at your local school, where community matters. One of the most important ingredients to maintaining a strong local connection to communities in Strathmore-Brooks is ensuring that residents have access to proper, quality long-term seniors' care. The people of Strathmore have been promised and denied a quality seniors' care facility since 2008. They are tired of broken promises. They need a long-term seniors' care facility that has access to proper medical services. I want to work with the new government to ensure that this long-lost promise is finally fulfilled.

In Bassano the Newell Foundation has done incredible work to bring together people from the city of Brooks, the county of Newell, the town of Bassano, and many other community organizations. They have contributed hundreds of hours to putting together a plan for a truly visionary aging-in-community facility. They seek to give seniors from the region the independence, the choice, and the support that they need. The Newell Foundation and its volunteers have already done the work. All they need is for the provincial government to follow through with the final agreement. I will be reaching out to the Minister of Seniors and of Health to ensure that this community initiative does not fall through the cracks involved in a transition of power. It truly has the potential to become a model for seniors' care in rural Alberta right across this province.

Fighting for your constituents involves fighting for specific goals like these, but it also involves fighting for your principles more broadly. Too many people are elected to places like this and forget their principles at the door. This is not to say that we cannot make an honourable compromise in the name of getting a proverbial half-loaf of bread, but it is to say that we must never allow re-election to become our only goal. We must stand firm for the reasons that we came to this place. Now, this piece of advice is only meant for my Wildrose colleagues. My NDP friends' principles are most clearly incorrect, and I will spend the next four years trying to convince them of the error of their ways.

I've generally had a healthy distrust of politicians for most of my life. Serving six years with the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, I routinely made a pretty good time out of skewering politicians for wasting this and stealing that and generally being a bunch of weak-kneed careerists who would say or do anything just to keep their jobs. Then I started to get to know a group of folks in the previous Wildrose caucus. I began to trust many of them, believing them to be on the right side of history, perhaps even friends. Boy, I was wrong. I saw every single stereotype of the morally corrupt, self-serving politician confirmed before my eyes. I nearly gave up

everything to do with public life and democracy, and I nearly even swore off voting.

Instead, I and my fellow caucus mates made the decision to prove them all wrong. We stuck to our principles when the going was tough. We refused to do the easy thing. We stood up for democracy, and we stood up for conservative values, and I will not check those values at the door. I will fight for limited government, for fiscal responsibility, for property rights, for gun rights, for freedom of speech and freedom of association, for individual liberty, for the right of the minority to be wrong no matter what the majority might think of them.

When my cynicism with politicians was turning towards doing something positive about it and running to represent the people of Strathmore-Brooks, I asked my wife, Emma, to keep me grounded. I asked her to never let me become so accustomed to this place, so entitled to my seat, or so blinded by my office that I would do what some of our predecessors did before us. I asked her to never let me lose sight of why I am here, others. I will do my outmost to do honour to the electors of Strathmore-Brooks, who entrusted me with their representation in our government.

God bless Alberta, and God bless Canada.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?
The hon. Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar.

9:20

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Madam Deputy Speaker. It felt so good to speak once, I thought I'd take the opportunity again. I have a question for the Member for Strathmore-Brooks that I hope is taken in the good-natured spirit in which I intend it. I know that the organization that he used to represent, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, was well known for travelling a debt clock around the country that continued to count how high the debt was going. Given the fact that NDP governments are proven by Statistics Canada to have the best record of fiscal responsibility of any political party across the country, I was wondering if the Member for Strathmore-Brooks knows if that debt clock goes down, because they're going to need it.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Well, Madam Speaker, in four years, when I've got his chair, it will go down. [interjections] Enough from the peanut gallery.

Madam Speaker, the most fun I've had in my career was travelling to every single corner of this province with the Alberta debt clock, where I got a bunch of people to sign a pledge, which they promptly broke. Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, the Member for Drumheller-Stettler, and the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat were the only three members who were incumbents of the House to sign the pledge who actually made it back here.

Madam Speaker, some NDP governments have balanced the budget from time to time; some have not. I grew up in Ontario under the Bob Rae government. He crossed the floor. In British Columbia, in Ontario, in Nova Scotia we have seen what NDP governments can do to balance the budget. But, you know, I generally hope for the success of this government in doing so. I genuinely do.

Now, I will say this. Some PC governments have not had a particularly good record of balancing the budget. But I'll say that the statistic he is referring to nationally lumps in PC as the word "conservative," which I might take some umbrage with. All Liberals across the country would include the B.C. Liberals. Many Liberals would take issue with that. But I would say that that statistic nationally does not include the Wildrose, and we will be 100 times out of 100.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much. I want to make just a comment to the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks in congratulations on your first speech in the House. I want you to know that I have been the recipient of two letters of commendation from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. I wish I'd saved them.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Madam Speaker, there is something good in everybody.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wish to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Ms McKittrick: I just wanted to let the Member for Strathmore-Brooks know that he has a friend on this side of the House. It has been my pleasure to work in your constituency and to do a lot of the research that you alluded to around seniors and the need for senior housing in your riding. I know that the people of Brooks also need things like affordable housing, and they need employment, so I look forward to working with you from this side of the House to make sure that people in your constituency have the help that they need through some of the policies and the things that we are going to implement as the NDP government.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I move that we adjourn debate.

The Deputy Speaker: With respect, hon. Government House Leader, you have already been recognized on the Speech from the Throne, and you can't adjourn debate. Someone else can, but you can't.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Bilous: I now move to adjourn debate on the responses to the Lieutenant Governor's Speech from the Throne.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

The Chair: I'd call the Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill 1 An Act to Renew Democracy in Alberta

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Madam Chair. It is my honour to rise and speak to Bill 1, An Act to Renew Democracy in Alberta, which will amend the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act. This bill will ban corporations and unions from making political contributions in this province and give back Albertans their voices in the Legislature.

During second reading I was glad to hear a number of positive comments and some proposed amendments. Albertans want these changes, and it's good to see that my fellow Members of the Legislative Assembly want them, too. I also appreciate the comments and questions raised. That's what good democracy is about, the opportunity to debate and the freedom to express opinions. I responded to many of the comments and questions during second reading, but at this time I'd like to highlight a few key points and expand upon my answers.

With respect to loans some of the hon. members brought up the section in the act that deals with loans. There were questions about the correct reporting consequences of prohibited contributions. There were also concerns expressed about the fact that interim financing was not excluded from this bill. Political parties, constituency associations, candidates, and leadership contestants are allowed to take out loans but only from authorized financial institutions. This is not new. It exists in the current legislation. What is new is that there are consequences if the borrower fails to reimburse corporations and unions who have made payments directly to those loans. If the borrower fails to reimburse the corporation's or union's payments on a loan before the borrower is required to file their financial statements under the act, then the loan payment is deemed to be a contribution. The borrower will have to reimburse whomever made the payment on their loan on their behalf.

The Chief Electoral Officer could also recommend prosecution. If prosecution proceeds, fines up to \$10,000 could be imposed. Alternatively, the Chief Electoral Officer can impose administrative penalties.

Regarding the questions about the mechanisms to ensure correct reporting, hon. members will be reassured to know the Chief Electoral Officer requires detailed contribution receipts, including dates. As for loopholes, corporations and unions will not be able to funnel donations through individuals. Individuals are prohibited from donating funds that do not actually belong to them. A breach of these rules can be subject to administrative penalties and fines, similar to the consequences of making other illegal contributions.

As to why loans were not excluded in this bill, the loan provision is part of the existing legislation. This legislation, the new legislation, prohibits corporate and union donations. It does not make any changes to the existing ability of candidates to obtain loans. They will not be able to obtain donations from corporations or unions, but through interim financing they will continue to have access to temporary assistance to get their campaigns off the ground.

9:30

With respect to the June 15 effective date, Madam Chair, several hon. members expressed concerns that the effective date of the bill, June 15, 2015, could open the government up to possible court challenges. In a free and democratic society anyone can challenge legislation in court. That is their right. However, we are confident that these changes will stand up in court. Hon. members have suggested that it would make more sense to have the legislation become effective in July, at the end of the writ period. This would probably be easier, but it wouldn't be fair to Albertans. A deadline so far in advance would give political parties plenty of opportunity to fund raise from corporations and unions. This goes against the spirit of the bill, which is to refocus our politicians on Albertans and not on how much money could be collected as quickly as possible before a deadline.

With respect to the other suggested changes, there was also a discussion about other topics such as third-party advertising, campaign contributions, and government announcements during elections. Some said the legislation doesn't go far enough, and this government agrees with that statement. Bill 1 is just the beginning of our efforts to fulfill our campaign promises to reform democracy in Alberta. For this reason we have proposed a special legislative committee to look into all aspects of Alberta's elections. They will be reviewing aspects of the bill that haven't already been covered, including areas like third-party advertising and government announcements during election periods.

There is a lot to review, and it won't be a quick process. We knew this, but we wanted to ensure that this crucial change was included

among our first pieces of legislation and fulfill a campaign promise near and dear to our hearts and the hearts of all Albertans. So to those who feel this bill doesn't go far enough, I encourage you to work with us. More changes are coming.

Madam Chair, this is an important piece of legislation that brings much-needed improvements to Alberta's democratic process. Albertans are the ones who brought us here. Our citizens deserve to have their voices heard. That's why I'm pleased to stand in support of Bill 1, and I urge all members to support it.

Thank you.

The Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have an amendment that I'd like to table. I'll wait until . . .

The Chair: Please do.

This amendment will be called amendment A1.

Go ahead, Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you again. I'm grateful for this opportunity to rise and contribute to the Committee of the Whole on this discussion of Bill 1, An Act to Renew Democracy in Alberta. We are certainly moving through this process at a rapid pace, Madam Chair. I hope that we will still be able to give such an important piece of legislation the attention it deserves. The last thing we want to do is rush and do a haphazard job.

With that in mind, Madam Chair, I would like to make a few remarks on some of the particulars at the issue of this bill. Specifically, I would like to take time for a closer look at the retroactivity of this bill's provisions. I believe that there is a potential problem here, one that we have raised but which the minister has not adequately addressed, and that is why our caucus would like to propose an amendment to this bill with respect to the date it comes into effect. We would like to see the effective date of this bill changed from June 15 to July 6, which will be the first day after the election period we presently find ourselves in.

I understand that this government wants to avoid a run on donations, but we also think that it would be a shame for this bill to encounter a hang-up simply because of a rush to pass this in the middle of the election period. In principle, of course, we in this caucus support the intent of the bill, Madam Chair. We do not want to see it derailed on legality.

Perhaps we should take a moment to look at how donations during an election period work. During an election period donations are the sum of money without a date attached to them, unless it is a cheque, but dates on uncashed cheques are not exactly ironclad either.

Now, Bill 1 in its present form cites the date of June 15 as the effective date for corporate and union donations to be banned. An election period runs two months after the polling day. This year, since the polling day occurred on May 5, the last day of the election period will be on July 5. Clearly, June 15 is right in the middle of the current election period. The obvious question at hand is this: how would this ban on corporate and union donations, effective in the middle of the current election period, possibly be enforceable? This is especially concerning when we consider that donations during election periods have no dates attached to them unless they're deposited. How can we possibly expect the Chief Electoral Officer to track when donations were made in order to determine whether they occurred before or after the date of June 15? I can foresee this will be ripe for controversy, Madam Chair.

In addition to the enforceability, there seems to be a legitimate issue in fairness, particularly when it comes to candidates and CAs who have campaign debts. A candidate could very legitimately have planned to spend the next two weeks asking unions or corporations who may have supported him or her or even pledged money to help him or her pay for campaign spending. I assume cheques written before June 15 but not cashed yet are okay. But what about promised donations?

The problem with rules like this is that they can't be enforced. It actually rewards those willing to bend rules by getting donations backdated. It's all a bit messy. It seems a bit unfair and perhaps, worse yet, is potentially subject to court challenge. We want to avoid the eventuality of candidates making a legal issue out of this in the event that they were counting on unions and corporations to pay off deficits run up in the course of an election. If that were the case, the entire bill would be in danger of being tossed out. This would not be good for anyone, Madam Chair, particularly the mover of the bill but, really, for all of us. As this is our first bill that we pass in the Assembly, it will reflect on us.

9:40

As is well known, the Wildrose has long been an advocate of restricting donations to Alberta residents. In fact, my colleagues here all campaigned on it. We do not want this bill to be rejected on the basis of a court challenge. Given how ambiguous the legalities are surrounding the effective date of June 15, it seems odd that this date was pinpointed in the first place. Would it not be more effective to select a date after the election period has expired? We have a really hard time believing that the Chief Electoral Officer agrees that this is the best way to go. We've heard from people in his office that this is, in fact, problematic and that July 6 would be a much cleaner date.

We want this bill to be successful, Madam Chair, and this small change could easily contribute to making sure this bill passes without undue controversy and court challenges. It would be a shame to go through all this work for such a worthy cause only to have its sound principles defeated on a mere technicality. We believe that Albertans would be far better served if the date of this bill was pushed back to July 6, after the expiry date of the current election period. Albertans deserve this legislation, and waiting just a few more weeks for it to take effect is worth while. It ensures that confusion of the retroactivity can be avoided.

Confusion aside, Madam Chair, we need to revisit the question of enforceability. By pushing the date back to July 6, we enact legislation during a period in which donations can be tracked and documented far more thoroughly. As I've said, donations during election periods often have no dates attached to them, making the tracking of them much more difficult for the Chief Electoral Officer. From July 6 onward that problem disappears.

It would be embarrassing for us all but particularly the government if the first bill we were to pass in this legislative session ends up getting bogged down in court proceedings. It would be even worse if it was ruled unconstitutional. We want to help this government to get off on the right foot and to make sure of delivering on promises of positive change for the province of Alberta. Clearly, an unconstitutional bill would not be a good way of doing this. So let's stop the potential problem before it becomes a real problem.

Madam Chair, this is really a minor amendment. It does nothing to change the principle of the bill, which, as our caucus has noted repeatedly, is more than sound. Albertans have waited a long time for this, and we want to help to ensure that they get it in a form that is efficient and effective. We want to make sure this principle

becomes law. If anything, this amendment should only strengthen the principle of this bill.

At the end of the day we are advocating for transparency and accountability. Does making legislation effective as of June 15 contribute to transparency and accountability? I don't think it does, Madam Chair, not when accurate dates are not attached to donations made, not when it is impossible to even enforce. In order for a piece of legislation to be both transparent and accountable, it must be enforceable and it must be dealing with hard, measurable facts. By having this legislation be effective as of early July, we can achieve both of these goals.

We think that supporting this amendment will help the government to pass a law that reflects democratic principles to the strongest degree possible. Government members who value accountability ought to support this amendment. Also, I certainly hope that the Justice minister will lead the way to help us correct this bill. The minister has a chance to take a good idea from the opposition and use it to improve her bill. One little change can make Alberta politics all the better. We have a chance here to remedy the shortcomings of this bill for the good of Albertans.

The bill is a promising first step, Madam Chair, but we should always be looking to do better. The next step towards improvement is adopting this amendment. Political influence is rightly placed in the hands of Albertans, not in those of unions or corporations. We all know this on both sides of the House, so let's reflect that with this piece of legislation. Let's pass something that can be enforced. Let's make this bill effective July 6, not in the middle of a current election period.

We are in this together, Madam Chair. It is in all of our shared interests to ensure that union and corporate donations are eliminated from the electoral process. At the very least, let's do it right. I will certainly be giving my support to this prudent amendment. I would encourage all of the hon. members from all of the caucuses to do the same.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you for the comments. I remain of the view – and I would encourage everyone to support this – that the effective date of June 15 better serves the purpose of this legislation. Not only does it prevent a run on donations; we remain of the opinion that this would withstand a court challenge. We do have confirmation from the Chief Electoral Officer that donations, when made to political campaigns, are made with dates on them, and those dates are usually reflected in the tax receipt received. So I'm not really sure how I can further address that.

In terms of the constitutionality it's my understanding that the presumption against retroactivity is a principle of statutory interpretation and not a constitutional principle. I'm not really sure what can be meant by saying that it's not constitutional.

I will close by saying that the June 15 date supports Albertans. It supports them in having their voices heard right away and in having this legislation come into place as soon as it was proposed to prevent a sort of rush on donations. Ultimately, we don't believe that it will be subject to successful challenge. Whether or not it's subject to challenge is obviously not in our hands.

I would encourage everyone to vote against the amendment. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise today and speak in support of this amendment. Madam Chair, I fully support

Bill 1. Wildrose believes in putting democracy in the hands of everyday Albertans. We believe that banning corporate and union donations is a critical step towards doing that. Pay-to-play politics is the way that politics have been done here in Alberta for quite awhile, and we want to put the power of democracy back into the hands of Albertans regardless of their financial backing or their ability to donate. This is the Wildrose policy, and we're grateful that the NDP have adopted it, but we believe this bill needs a few changes, and we would like to help fix some of the problems.

I'm a bit worried about the date the bill goes into law. The concern is that the retroactivity could leave . . .

The Chair: Sorry. Hon. member, I need to recognize a point of order.

Point of Order Factual Accuracy

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I hesitate to interrupt the hon. member, but under 23(h), (i), and (j), particularly (i), "imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member," I just wanted to remind the member and the House that the New Democratic Party has had this policy for a very long time, and it was recently adopted by the Wildrose Party.

Thank you.

9:50

Mr. Cooper: Madam Chair, here we are. It's coming up to 10 o'clock on the second night of this great Legislature, that we had the pleasure of being elected to, a position where we were assured we would not be debating legislation well into the evening while my children are sleeping and most of Edmonton is thinking about getting into bed. We have heard all sorts of statements from the government talking about how wonderful the NDP policy is. We've heard statements from the opposition about our policy.

Clearly, this is not a point of order and merely a matter of debate. It's totally ridiculous to rise in this place and say: we had the policy before you had the policy; look how awesome we are. This is a matter of debate. It is not a point of order. It's one thing to rise in this place and say: it's our policy. It's another to rise on a point of order to dispute who had the policy first. It's neither here nor there. It's a wonderful Wildrose policy. We're glad we've found some common ground.

Let's get on with the important matters of the House and not quibble about who had a policy first. This is a matter of debate and not a point of order.

The Chair: Hon. members, this issue seems to be more of a disagreement about facts, and I don't think it's a point of order. However, thank you for clarifying the record.

The hon. Member for Airdrie to continue.

Debate Continued

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to finish here, I find that this is odd to have the date of this bill take effect immediately, even before the campaign period is over. I urge all members here to join me in voting in favour of this amendment to change the date that the law would take effect from June 15 to July 6.

Thank you.

Mr. Mason: I'm informed by the table, Madam Chair, that my motion in committee to shorten the bells to one-minute intervals does not apply to the House. Can I just have some clarification? Because I'm happy to move it again if I need to.

The Chair: Yes. The word is that the motion you made only applied in Committee of Supply, so if you want to do that again, you would have to make another motion.

Mr. Mason: May I do that now?

The Chair: Okay. All right.

Mr. Mason: Then I would seek unanimous approval from the House to shorten the bells to one-minute intervals.

The Chair: For the balance of Committee of the Whole.

Mr. Mason: For the balance of Committee of the Whole.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Chair: Moving back to debate on the amendment, any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak in favour of the amendment. Unfortunately, there are issues with the legislation the NDP has proposed. That is why we have Wildrose. We are here to help the government make legislation stronger and fairer than what has been proposed. It would be wise to make the effective date early July, when the campaign period officially closes.

Madam Chair, sometimes when you make ad hoc announcements and changes in the middle of an established, legislated timeline, you get yourself in trouble. In general we oppose the idea of retroactive legislation. In this case it would change the rules governing the current election period before it even closed, which might get the whole bill thrown out by the courts. This legislation is too important to get sent to the courts so early on. No one wants the government to be liable to court challenges from candidates or other parties who are counting on unions or corporations to pay off election debts. It would be an utter embarrassment for the governing NDP and the Wildrose Official Opposition, but mostly for the government, if this first bill ends up getting challenged in the courts or even ruled unconstitutional. Let's not let that happen, and let's pass the amendment.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other member wishing to speak on the amendment?

Mr. Schneider: Madam Chairman, I rise to speak to Bill 1, An Act to Renew Democracy in Alberta. Kudos to the NDP government for adopting a policy long advocated by the Wildrose, the banning of corporate and union donations. Wildrose has tried to make this happen in the past only to be scuttled at every turn by PC majorities. This is a chance to level the political playing field. The big money from business and big labour puts a perception of undue influence in people's minds. We live in an era where perception is reality. As such, we need to curb the influence of these special interests. The PCs neglected the grassroots because they became dependent on big money. I congratulate the NDP for being selfless and willing to forgo the union donations that they are known for.

That being said, Wildrose has identified a risk here with the legislation as proposed, and we wish to prevent embarrassment to the government. It would be an utter embarrassment for the governing NDP and the Wildrose Official Opposition, but mostly the government, if the first bill ends up getting challenged in the courts because someone decided to arbitrarily change a date before the existing legislated date came to pass. This legislation is too

important to get sent to the courts so early on. No one wants the government to be liable to court challenges from candidates or other parties who are counting on unions or corporations to pay off election debts.

Let's not make that happen, Madam Chairman, and let's pass the amendment. Thank you.

The Chair: Any other member wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Madam Chair. It is a great privilege and honour to stand in the House for the first time to join in the debate on Bill 1 and speak to this amendment we have proposed. First of all, I'm very glad to see this legislation brought before the House. I don't think it's possible to overstate just how important it is that we begin to restore trust, ethics, and integrity to our political system. Bill 1 aims to do that in part, and I am very supportive of its goals and measures. I'm proud to be part of a caucus that has long believed in limiting special interests, interests with vast financial resources, from exercising undue influence on political parties and, by extension, our democratic institutions.

Albertans spoke loudly and clearly with their ballots and pencils this past election. We said that we wanted a political system we could trust. We wanted accountability, accountability of our government to the people, and we wanted the assurance that those who represent and serve Albertans act with integrity and honesty. As an everyday Albertan and especially as an elected representative I found it disheartening to hear from so many who lost faith in the system. It is discouraging when those you represent feel that their voices cannot be heard fairly.

10:00

As appreciative and excited as I was to be elected on May 5, I know that the voters put us to work that day. They gave us our marching orders and sent us to the Legislature to begin the important task of rebuilding confidence in our political system piece by piece. One such piece in this rebuilding of trust is Bill 1. It goes straight to the fundamental democratic principle of putting the citizen, the Albertan, at the top of the political machinery rather than being caught under its weight.

We certainly expect and deserve accountability from our government, and we are truly committed to that principle. We must ensure that government serves the people and not the other way around. To this end, we must ensure that our political system is influenced by Albertans, free individual citizens, and only Albertans. I am pleased to be here discussing a bill which strives to accomplish just that by removing the potential for undue and improper influence on political parties by corporate and union special interests, and I'm encouraged by the constructive debate which has accompanied it in this House.

In the interest of strengthening the bill, I will be supporting the amendment put forward by my colleague. Make no mistake; my desire to see the bill amended is in no way a reflection of any disapproval of the spirit of the legislation and the principles it represents. My desire is only to see this legislation strengthened, and I implore all members here to do the same by voting in favour of this amendment. I have spoken about this legislation as being a key piece of an overall move to improve the health of democracy in Alberta. Given its importance we ought to double our resolve to get this bill done right.

I am concerned that the good work this House has set in motion may be undone by a court challenge regarding the retroactive provision of the bill. I worry that we will expose the legislation to legal battles over its constitutionality by setting the effective date in

the midst of a campaign period, a campaign period that has still not ended. I believe that it would be wiser and more prudent to amend the effective date to the end of the current campaign period in early July. As important as it is to get those corporate and union limitations into law, we should be judicious and fair about applying this new law to those candidates who were operating under the old rules.

I also question how enforceable the retroactive provision would be given that contributions are not required to be reported with dates attached. Again, with the potential for court challenges it would not be wise to expose this legislation to turmoil and uncertainty over a provision that might not even make a practical difference.

Again, I am proud to stand and endorse a piece of sensible legislation that we as a party have been willing to fight for in the past. This is proof that we can work together on common ground to make improvements to our political system and the governance of the province. Let's continue the spirit of co-operation and constructive debate by supporting respectable, measured, and reasonable amendments such as this one. Let's show Albertans, who sent us to work, that we can produce meaningful, lasting, and effective change. Let's strengthen our democratic institutions by voting in favour of this amendment.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you for allowing me to rise and speak to this amendment. Bill 1 is a historic piece of legislation in that it is the first government bill to be tabled by a party other than the PCs since 1971. You should be congratulated. It's always easier to read about history than to write it, but today we are debating a piece of history. It's interesting that one of the amendments that the Wildrose is proposing stops the government from trying to in effect rewrite history by introducing retroactive legislation. In general, the Wildrose opposes the idea of retroactive legislation because it changes the rules in mid-game.

Now, I've been a teacher for 30 years. I've been a basketball coach for 30 of those years. As a basketball coach I can imagine what would happen if we changed the rules in mid-stride, if after game 2, say, of the NBA finals with Golden State I was suddenly told that the three-pointer was no longer allowed. This would have serious consequences. While I don't see the political equivalent of a Steph Curry or Golden State in this Assembly today, the point is that changing the rules mid-season is not considered fair, and that's why leagues don't do it.

In the same way, this government proposes to make this bill retroactive to a date that is in the middle of the election period. While I support Bill 1 in principle, in its present form it cites June 15 as the effective date for corporate and union donations to be banned. But, Madam Chair, given that an election period runs for two months after the polling, which this year was May 5, the last day of the election period is July 5. It makes much more sense to have the bill become effective after the current election period comes to a close.

I can see what the intent was, to avoid encouraging more last-second donations from unions and corporations, but this goal is not worth the many problems in terms of a level playing field and legal challenges that arise from making the bill retroactive to June 15. As far as fairness goes, I'm thinking predominantly of candidates who may have campaign debts. That goes beyond party lines. They may have had pledges of support that they were counting on but couldn't or hadn't collected yet or plans to hit up corporate or union supporters in the final push to clear their debts, and this is pretty unfair to them.

Situations like that make me think that a lawsuit is going to challenge this law. It would be a real shame to have the first piece of legislation, a historic piece of legislation by your new government and the first piece of legislation this 29th Legislature will pass, get tied up in the courts or even ruled unconstitutional, just as unfortunate as if the NBA board of governors had changed the rules mid-playoffs to change the historic outcome of the NBA finals this year. I therefore speak to and will support this amendment.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just have a quick two questions for the minister. While I am certain that the CEO of Elections Alberta told you that technically there is a date on donations, did he tell you that those dates would be accurate, and did he agree or think that your retroactive date would not be problematic? That's not what we're being told.

The Chair: Hon. minister, do you wish to respond?

Ms Ganley: Just to respond very briefly to those questions, political entities are required to report the date on which they receive donations. Whether or not they're doing that or whether or not they choose to break the law, I mean, I can't really speak to that. I can only speak to what the law says, and that is that they are required to report the date on which they receive donations.

In terms of the second question – I'm sorry; I'm going to ask you to repeat it.

Mr. Nixon: The question is simple. When you talked to Elections Alberta, did they think that retroactively putting in this legislation was not going to be problematic? Every indication that we are having from them is that it will be.

10:10

Ms Ganley: In terms of the legal opinion on the fact that the challenges to the bill would unlikely be successful on that basis, those were from the department. What we had asked the Chief Electoral Officer was whether or not parties are required to record the dates, and the answer to that question was yes. They are required to record the dates on which donations were received.

Mr. Nixon: Did he say that he supports the retroactive date?

Ms Ganley: I think the point on this front is not whether or not – honestly, I don't have the e-mail in front of me. What I can tell you is that we are confident that this date is supportable and that it will withstand a court challenge.

Mr. Nixon: So it would be fair to say they didn't support the date?

Ms Ganley: No, that wouldn't be fair to say. I said that I don't have the e-mail in front of me in terms of what exactly we canvassed.

Mr. Nixon: Did you discuss the fact that you were going to bring in retroactive legislation to deal with the Election Act with Elections Alberta, and if you did, did they have concerns with bringing in retroactive legislation in the middle of a writ period? It's a very simple question.

Ms Ganley: And I will once again give my very simple answer, which is that we are confident that this bill will withstand a court challenge as presently worded.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak on amendment A1? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Madam Chair, I would like to ask the Minister of Justice on what date she consulted with Elections Alberta.

The Chair: Yeah. This is kind of drifting away from the amendment itself. It's to be a debate on the amendment, and this going back and forth is not really going anywhere.

No other members to speak on the amendment?

We're going to call the question on amendment A1, as proposed by the hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

[The voice vote indicated that amendment A1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:13 p.m.]

[Two minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hanson	Schneider
Cyr	Hunter	Smith
Drysdale	Loewen	Stier
Ellis	MacIntyre	Strankman
Fildebrandt	Nixon	Swann
Fraser	Orr	van Dijken
Gotfried	Pitt	Yao

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Gray	Miranda
Babcock	Hinkley	Nielsen
Bilous	Hoffman	Payne
Carlier	Horne	Phillips
Carson	Kazim	Piquette
Ceci	Kleinstauber	Renaud
Clark	Larivee	Rosendahl
Connolly	Littlewood	Sabir
Coolahan	Loyola	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Luff	Schreiner
Dach	Malkinson	Sigurdson
Dang	Mason	Sucha
Drever	McCuaig-Boyd	Sweet
Feehan	McKitrick	Turner
Fitzpatrick	McLean	Westhead
Ganley	McPherson	Woollard
Goehring	Miller	

Totals: For – 21 Against – 50

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

The Chair: Back to the main bill. Are there any further comments, questions?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

The Chair: The question has been called. All those in favour of Bill 1?

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Chair: My apologies. I forgot that there are three parts to this bill. We'll have to just start again.

Are you ready for the question on Bill 1, An Act to Renew Democracy in Alberta? On the clauses . . .

Mr. Cooper: Madam Chair, we have some significant amendments that the Government House Leader has agreed would be heard this evening. I don't think I saw a call for other amendments or speakers, just moving to the question. I would suggest that this is out of order and that we should be able to proceed at Committee of the Whole.

The Chair: Hon. member, I did ask if there were any other members who were wishing to speak or comment on the bill.

10:20

Mr. Mason: Madam Chairman . . .

Mr. Cooper: Time allocation now, too, or what's the plan?

Mr. Mason: Do you want me to change it, or do you just want to keep talking?

Madam Chairman, it is true that we knew the Wildrose opposition had more amendments. It was unfortunate they were not in a position to make them when they were called. But since the House leader is now here, I propose that we allow them to move their amendments.

The Chair: All right. Are there any further speakers on the bill? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm glad to rise again to address another aspect of Bill 1. Along with it an amendment we would like to propose will better enable this bill to fulfill its intent. To reiterate, we appreciate what the government is trying to accomplish by bringing this bill before the House, and that is admirable, but that is not to say that we can't make it better. So directly to the point, our caucus would like to amend Bill 1 to more clearly restrict donations-in-kind so unions and corporations can't indirectly donate to parties by supplying their workers, equipment, or property to political campaigns. I have 95 copies here of an amendment that Parliamentary Counsel has approved, and I'd like to add a definition of contribution to help resolve the ambiguity currently in the act.

I will wait for them to be distributed.

The Chair: This will be amendment A2.

Mr. Cooper: Madam Chair, for the ability to expediate this process, would you mind if the hon. member continued while the amendments were being passed out?

The Chair: Yes, I was just going to ask for him to continue. Please.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you. Given that we're prohibiting direct donations from unions and corporations, the matter of indirect donations becomes even more important. The matter is something people at the chief electoral office have confirmed is already too much of a loophole. It is not unusual to hear of unions and corporations giving office materials to political campaigns. It is also not unusual to hear of union staff or corporate staff being sent during work hours to help the candidates campaign. Neither case ought to be acceptable.

Now, it is one thing to ban direct donations to political campaigns, candidates, constituency associations, and so on. That is comparatively easy to monitor and enforce if we get it right. But it is another matter to address the problem of indirect donations. We need to be much more vigilant and explicit when it comes to indirect donations as they are often far more innocuous. There is presently a section elsewhere in the act, section 22, which addresses the topic of giving real property or goods to a campaign or party. However, it contains nothing clear with regard to donating staff or services,

nor is the topic addressed anywhere else in this act. It strikes me as odd, Madam Chair. This is because we all know perfectly well that such donations occur now.

Should this bill pass, and union and corporate monetary donations be made illegal, donations of a more indirect nature can be expected to become even more commonplace. We in this caucus do not think it is appropriate, and I'm sure everyone here would agree that it goes against the spirit of the bill. If such donations were to become even more commonplace, this would risk giving the perception of undue influence of unions and corporations in the political process, thereby defeating the entire purpose of this proposed legislation. It is clear that we need to address this adverse consequence of the bill as it's currently written. We are here to help the government, and to that end we encourage the hon. members opposite to support this amendment. Surely we can agree that donations in staff and materials are clear forms of political contributions. In ways this is worse than monetary donations. By donating staff, unions and corporations take valuable work hours and direct them to influence the democratic process. At this point they might just as well be a political party in their own right.

Let us not forget the risk of employee coercion inherent in this practice. Unions and corporations are capable of putting undue pressure on those that they employ, sometimes even without conscious or malicious intent. It is very important that Albertans not feel pressure to engage in political activities not of their choosing. This is fundamental to freedom of speech, the very foundation of our democratic principles. Albertans need to feel unrestrained regarding the policy viewpoints they chose to endorse or oppose. It is not the place of unions and companies to tell their employees or members how to vote let alone who they should actively campaign for or which policies they should advocate for. Our members opposite, for example, might be surprised to find out how many of their unionized colleagues actually support us in the voting booths. This is all in addition to the obvious unfairness of candidates leveraging the resources of entire nonpolitical organizations for political purposes.

Madam Chair, the ability of unions and corporations to make these types of indirect contributions to political causes was already a significant loophole in the existing legislation. It is important to note that indirect contributions are still contributions nevertheless. A contribution can refer to money, real property, goods, or services. Just because we term them "indirect" doesn't make them any less impactful in the real results and consequences. Addressing this issue is long overdue, and this bill is incomplete and ineffective if it does not include provisions that close this gaping loophole. Given that we will be taking away the ability to make direct donations in monetary forms, it will be even more important to tighten the loopholes, allowing indirect donations right away; otherwise, this legislation would not achieve its aim. We have a real chance to make this meaningful piece of legislation here. Let's not waste it. We have a real chance to strengthen the voices of Alberta residents in this election. Let's not pass that up.

I urge the government to accept this amendment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

10:30

The Chair: Anyone wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Thanks, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise this evening and speak to the amendment, an amendment that I think is sound and reasoned, that has been well thought out when it comes to strengthening a piece of legislation. I spoke yesterday in this House about the best idea winning and not being about partisan

politics or our idea or your idea. Where the idea originates is not what's key. What's key here is that we can all agree that getting unions and corporations out of politics is a positive step forward for all Albertans and certainly for those who have elected us. I just think that while we have the opportunity, we might as well go ahead and do everything that is within our power to ensure that that's exactly what happens.

Here we have some situations that I have been informed of where some significant law offices in downtown Calgary had encouraged employees to have the afternoon off work if they would go and campaign on one particular campaign or another. We have a significant gift from a corporation to a political campaign that's taking place, and this gift has the ability to influence the outcome of an election. I have also heard reports of large union organizations strongly encouraging their employees to do the same.

Let me be clear. I have no problem with a union member or an employee of a company that wants to engage in the political process on their own time. In fact, I think we should be doing more to encourage all Albertans to engage in the political process. But when it comes to a corporation, a law office in downtown Calgary, a union, or any large company encouraging employees with, "We'll pay you to take the afternoon off provided that you go work for this campaign," that in anyone's terms is a contribution, and here today in this House we are making the effort to ban those types of contributions.

In fact, I'm quite surprised that it appears that the government doesn't also want to ban these types of contributions. If the government is truly serious about going all the way, about allowing the best idea to win, then they, too, will support this reasoned amendment that is based on ensuring that we get corporations and unions out of the political process and focusing on the things that they do best.

You know, I look at members in this Assembly, and I'm curious to know if there are, in fact, folks who may have received donations in kind from unions or corporations. I don't know the answer to that question. Perhaps some other members are also curious. I think what's fundamental this evening is that we have the opportunity to make a bill even stronger for our province, to get unions and corporations out of politics and focusing on the things that they do best.

I strongly encourage all members of the Assembly to consider the amendment thoroughly, to consider that we have the opportunity to create a culture in this place where ideas come from all sides of the House. I can tell you that in the last three years the Official Opposition caucus, the Wildrose Official Opposition caucus, sat in many of these desks. There were two amendments accepted by the previous government. I believe that it's very possible and, in fact, quite likely that we had many more good ideas than two.

I think we can start off this Legislature with the right foot, the left foot if you prefer, but one foot in front of the other and agree together that this bill can be strengthened, and I encourage you to do that.

The Chair: I'll recognize the hon. minister and then the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Given the lateness of the hour I will make the comment once and I won't address it further. My friends can continue to raise the point if they like. There are many things that this bill doesn't do. There are many changes that this bill doesn't make. This bill bans corporate and union donations. In addition to this bill, there will be a committee going forward that will propose additional amendments and additional changes.

In the present case, in terms of the definition of services, off the top of my head I can come up with a couple of complications. For instance, I was working a full-time job when I was campaigning. During the course of my campaign I happened to have some times when I was off work when normally I would have been expected to be at work. Potentially, that would put my employer on the wrong side of this legislation; i.e., having made a donation of services in kind to a political candidate, that being me.

The point is that, much like many of the other amendments having to do with third-party advertisers, maybe some of these things are good ideas, and maybe they will come up in committee, but for right now our intention was to put forward a bill which banned corporate and union donations, which fulfilled a very clear election promise that we made and which, I think, has support of the House.

I would urge everyone to vote down this amendment.

Mr. Clark: Madam Chair, I rise to speak against this amendment. I agree with the comments of the hon. Minister of Justice that this bill doesn't do everything, and I know that we didn't intend it to. There is an opportunity to have this conversation, a broader conversation about this in the committee, because I think it is an important conversation.

However, I see several problems with the concept itself. It is very difficult to track and prove what is in-kind donation. The hon. minister has come up with one example. If a postal worker does a literature drop for your campaign, is that something that needs to be counted? If my wife, who is a physician, puts a Band-Aid on the scraped knee of a campaign worker, does that salary for that moment in time count against your campaign? Can an accountant be your CFO? Could a lawyer interact with Elections Alberta, providing guidance and advice to your campaign? These are all things that we've dealt with in our campaigns, and it adds a remarkable complexity.

10:40

I understand the rationale behind the amendment, and I understand what we're trying to achieve here, but I really worry that we'd be overly constraining participation in the democratic process in doing this. How do we define what is on one's own time? While we may hear stories of law firms or others granting people time off to work on a campaign, I think that is actually a legitimate democratic expression of what people and organizations choose to do. It is an idea where perhaps when we have the time to discuss in the special committee further changes to campaign financing and democratic renewal, we can discuss it further at length.

With that, I will end my remarks and say that I'm going to vote against the amendment. Thank you.

Mr. Cooper: You know, perhaps the hon. member, the independent member from Calgary-Elbow, didn't like the example that I gave. But let's say that a corporation donated, say, a bus for a political organization to use for their campaign. This is a sizable donation in kind. They haven't asked for any compensation, they're not being paid, but they've donated a significant asset to a political campaign, perhaps a minivan for a leader of a political party to drive around in or, you know, a bus, an aircraft.

An Hon. Member: A Winnebago.

Mr. Cooper: A Winnebago. A Winnebago is a perfect example of a corporate donation that, moving forward, wouldn't be allowed.

So we're not just talking about an employee being asked to take time off work. There are all sorts of assets of gifts in kind that one could give, and they could amount to a significant amount of

money. You know, I know that the hon. member from wherever he's from, Drumheller-Stettler, has a very . . .

Mr. Mason: You mean a lot to him.

Mr. Cooper: It's just where he lives that doesn't mean that much.

He has a very sizable riding, and if he needed to, say, get from one side of the riding to the other in some expedient manner for some reason and somebody wanted to donate the use of a helicopter, for example, to perhaps fly a banner – who knows what the gift in kind is that comes from a corporation? This is the challenge, that we are creating a significant loophole – not in the words of the Chief Electoral Officer but the words of people from his office – where corporations and unions can find a way around the legislation that we're passing.

While I fully agree that the purpose of the bill was to ban corporate and union donations, which we've said on numerous occasions we're in support of, we need to seize the day. Today is the best opportunity to make the legislation right. I can assure you that if past practice has anything to do with this House – and it certainly seems that there's that chance given that we're here now – bringing these things forward is not the easiest thing for a government to do. So make it right today; ban donations in kind from corporations and unions. We're not talking about someone who's taking their own time to engage in the process. There are limits on these sorts of things. The rules can be followed. Do the right thing and support the amendment.

Mr. Mason: In perhaps a vain attempt to urge members to deal with this amendment before it gets really, really late, I would just offer the following. I think that the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow was quite right. We are not finished with the reform issues that need to be brought into play in a wide range of areas, including in electoral financing. We've never said that this was the final word. We wanted to provide a bill that was an initial step that could be defended and did not require an extensive amount of work to deal with the complexities. As you get into other areas of electoral reform, you will find that they become more complex and they require more study and they require more time. We wanted to bring in a bill in the very first session to set out the direction of this government with respect to democratic reform and that had a simple goal of eliminating financial contributions by unions and by corporations, and that's what we've brought forward.

The Premier has worked with the Leader of the Official Opposition to work on an all-party committee that will allow the study of a wide range of things in terms of improving democratic reform in this province, greater transparency, and openness. On an all-party basis all of these things can be considered. We have never said that this bill is our last word, but it is the thing that we thought that we could get, a defensible piece of legislation, within a matter of a couple of weeks to bring forward at the First Session of the Legislature.

So we'd urge hon. members to please understand that we are not necessarily finished here, but we believe that this bill as it is should be passed by the House, and then we can get on with the broader task of a deeper and more thoroughgoing reform of our democratic institutions in this province. I'd urge members to please let us move forward in a timely fashion tonight, and we can finish the debate in the committee stage not today but tomorrow, as soon as possible.

Thank you.

The Chair: I'll recognize the hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Sorry. I just wanted to make one point of clarification because I think we've sort of gotten a little bit confused. Currently

in the act section 1(1)(e) reads, “‘contribution’ means . . . money, real property, or goods or the use of real property or goods,” so I believe that the Winnebago would already be a problem.

The Chair: Thank you for that clarification.

Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Make no mistake, Madam Chair. The Wildrose intends on supporting this bill. This is the part where you guys clap. But my parents used to tell me that if you're going to do a job, do the job right. I would also say that I think that my dad, who is a wonderful man – and because of the hour I won't go into how great he is – would have called this a Halfway Harry. We're half, two-thirds of the way there. We just haven't quite got there. You know, I think we have that chance. I think that there is lots of opportunity, but my concern is that – again, I recognize that there is the committee coming, and there's the possibility that we can bring these things back to the House, but I do have some concerns. I ask that hon. members will indulge our discussion just a little bit longer this evening while we work to encourage the government to consider the breadth of the bill.

10:50

Mr. Fildebrandt: Madam Chair, I will attempt to be brief. This bill is near and dear to my heart. I think this is critical to getting the influence of undue big money from big corporations, big unions out of politics in this province. It has had a corrupting influence in this province for far too long, where businesses have felt that they can make the right political donations and then get the right sole-source contracts or favours and access to the government. It's wrong, and I commend the government for making this the first bill that they put forward. We in the Wildrose truly believe in the spirit of this bill. We genuinely want to help make this better legislation. It doesn't matter that it came from us. We're not going to hold it against you. Maybe a bit. We want to make this good legislation today.

Now, we can already see from across the aisle that they're not terribly open to accepting the amendment to this bill. The Government House Leader has indicated that the special committee that has been struck between the Leader of the Opposition and the Premier will be travelling the province working on other issues of democratic reform, which appears to leave the window open to the idea of this amendment.

I believe we should make it today and get it right on day one. My question would be, and I would ask the Government House Leader, if he would agree with the spirit of our amendment. I will also ask a second, slightly more loaded question: would the governing party assure the House that they will not be accepting donations in kind during the Calgary-Foothills by-election?

Mr. Mason: With respect to the first question we are open to the public view on what is important to democratic reform. I am not going to commit to you now that we would support this in principle. I think that that would be an overstatement. What we will do is commit to a process whereby these matters can be explored, and we can work together in areas of common agreement to bring forward beneficial changes.

I'm certainly not in any position to make any comment whatsoever about the Calgary by-election, hon. member, and I think you probably know that.

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

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Chair. I want to also affirm that I really do believe in the bill, I believe in the spirit of the bill, and I

congratulate you for bringing it forward. I am urged to speak to the amendment as well, though, for a couple of reasons because I really believe that without it we do defeat the spirit or the intent of it entirely. Why not take to the public something that is truly enforceable rather than something that's only half there? Furthermore, I feel like we probably will leave the door wide open to corporate and union influence in ways that become untrackable and unmeasurable.

In addition to some of the areas that have been suggested, it concerns me that now we not only leave the door open but probably encourage, by the nature of the bill, that office spaces, for instance, will be donated to campaigns; automobiles by businesses that are willing to offer cars; computers, to set up computer offices. Why would a business or a union not go ahead and buy all of your signs for you and just give them to you in kind? Why not encourage volunteers to show up by offering them coffee and T-shirts and movie passes and anything else that you want? It just opens the door to an endless number of things that I think will be extremely difficult. If we really want to keep corporations and unions out of the election process, we should not allow all of this to happen. It will just corrupt campaigns immensely.

I'm concerned further that we should defer it to a committee. My accountants have always told me for years that the best way to deal with taxes is to defer – defer, defer, defer – and if you defer long enough, you can actually almost defer them forever. Why should we leave till tomorrow the good that we can do today? I would just like to ask the government: in the interest of a co-operative spirit and working together, would it be that hard to add an amendment that actually will make you look better before the public by adding this bit to the bill and actually making it that much cleaner?

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Madam Chair, thank you so much for recognizing me once again this evening. The Government House Leader has done such a fine job of pointing out that I've been on my feet five times tonight, so it's a pleasure to rise and ask a couple of quick questions as I believe we're wrapping up debate here on the amendment.

I'm thankful that we have this all-party committee to discuss much of these important issues about accountability, ethics, transparency. I look forward to the motion before the House forming that committee in the coming days. I understand that there has been some discussion around that. I look forward to the committee being very active over the summer.

I guess one of my concerns – you know, sometimes governments do some things through self-preservation. Sometimes they do things for the betterment of Alberta, hopefully more often for the betterment of Alberta than the previous. I guess I just have a quick question. I want to ensure that the governing party is not so adamantly opposed to this particular amendment of gifts in kind because they have absolutely zero intentions of receiving gifts in kind from unions or corporations during the anticipated Calgary-Foothills by-election.

The Chair: Any other hon. members?

Mr. Clark: Maybe the point I want to make is that if corporate and union donations of all kind are banned – donations in kind are clearly defined in the act, as the minister has said, and we all know that in many of our campaigns we've taken some donations in kind from corporations, be it a Winnebago or a campaign office or some goods rendered. If that's no longer acceptable as corporate

donations – I presume that's not allowed based on the contents of Bill 1. The question to the Minister of Justice is: if cash donations from corporations are not allowed, will donations in kind from corporations and unions also not be allowed under Bill 1?

The Chair: Hon. minister, do you wish to respond to the comment?

Ms Ganley: Yes, I do. I guess in response to that I would say that, again, I mean, it's my understanding that the present definition in the act of contribution includes money, real property, goods, or the use of real property or goods. So I would say that that would include donations in kind.

The Chair: Any further speakers to the amendment?

If not, we'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

The Chair: Back to the bill. Are there any further questions or comments on this bill?

Mr. Cooper: I move that the committee rise and report.

Mr. Mason: No, we don't want to do that. Do you not have more amendments, hon. member?

Mr. Cooper: No. They're not ready.

Mr. Mason: But you do want to introduce more.

Mr. Cooper: Yes.

Mr. Mason: Do we rise and report? Okay. You're right. [interjection] The correct motion is to move that the committee rise

and report progress when we're not done. Otherwise, you would have ended the committee, and, you see, I didn't want to let you do that.

[Motion carried]

11:00

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you. Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 1. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

Mr. Mason: Madam Speaker, I want to thank all members of the House for some excellent discussion and debate tonight and the progress that we've made on Bill 1 and on responses to Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech from the Throne.

I think that given the hour and the good progress that we've made, I will move to adjourn until 1:30 tomorrow afternoon.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:03 p.m. to Thursday at 1:30 p.m.]

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