



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
First Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday evening, December 1, 2015

Day 26

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**

First Session

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Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Feehan, Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)	McKittrick, Annie, Sherwood Park (ND)
Bhullar, Manmeet Singh, Calgary-Greenway (PC)	McLean, Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (ND), Deputy Government Whip
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Kleinstuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)	Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND)
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Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)	
Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)	
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)	
MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)	

**Party standings:**

New Democrat: 53    Wildrose: 22    Progressive Conservative: 9    Alberta Liberal: 1    Alberta Party: 1    Independent: 1

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, December 1, 2015

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 6

#### Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act

[Adjourned debate November 25: Ms Sigurdson]

**The Speaker:** Is there a member who would speak at second reading? The Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This has been an interesting week. I have had the privilege of being able to speak with many, many people in not only my constituency but many people from constituencies all across Alberta. I've had the privilege of being able to look into the eyes and get a sense of the concern that farmers and ranchers have over this bill. It's overwhelming when you think about the outpouring of concern and the actual outpouring of solidarity that we've seen for our farmers and ranching brothers and sisters, and it's heartwarming to know that Albertans still know where the foundation and the bedrock of this province is. I count myself blessed and lucky to be able to associate with them.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this is a bill whose intention was farm safety. I want to first of all say that I want to thank the NDP for trying to make farms and therefore Albertans safer. I applaud their efforts. Everyone wants to be able to do their job in the safest manner possible, and farmers are no different. No one wants to put themselves in danger or put others in a position that could endanger another life. Luckily, we have a great province, that we live in, and our farmers rank per capita just as safe as in other provinces.

In fact, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Alberta all have a fatality rate ranging from .09 per cent to .13 per cent, with Alberta being the lowest – the lowest – of these three provinces. This is something the NDP forgot to say in their press release. If we take a look across Canada, the highest fatality rate is seen in Quebec and the Atlantic provinces, with a total of .17 per cent, almost twice as high as Alberta's. It's important to note that Quebec has had OHS regulations on the farm since 1979. This would bring into question whether a government-led safety initiative will indeed help our farmers more than a farmer- and rancher-led initiative.

Now, I do not want to present these statistics to minimize the loss of life in any way or to reduce these lives to mere numbers because that's not what it's about. Every person deserves safety. I agree. However, it is extremely important, Mr. Speaker, to remind this House how proud farmers are of being among the safest in the country, and that's something that needs to be said. Albertans do their very best to ensure that their lives and the lives of their families and employees are kept as safe as possible. Albertan farmers have done very well in a challenging and difficult occupation. Make no mistake. Farmers and ranchers know that, but they go into it with their eyes open, knowing that because they love it, they will continue doing it, and they instill this in their children.

I know that farm safety is important on family farms because, truthfully, no one cares more about the safety of their families than the moms and dads who run them. This is something that I understand as a father and that I think everybody in here, as a father or a mother, would understand. There's nobody – nobody – in the

world that cares more about the safety of their children than the moms and dads. That again has to be said. I heard that quite a bit over the last couple of weeks. Parents and grandparents will do everything possible to ensure that their children are kept as safe as possible, and every day across this province there are thousands of families doing a fantastic job of raising their own children safely on farms and ranches while instilling in them the values and virtues that have carried farming as an industry and way of life for generations and generations.

Now, I had the privilege of living on a farm for two years when I was growing up. It wasn't a large farming operation, but I understood the value of work. This is where I learned how to work and the value of a work ethic. When I got older, I got into business. I got into a construction company, and I found out that there actually is a difference between someone who has grown up on the farm and someone who hasn't. I found that they were some of the hardest workers that I ever was able to have the privilege of working with, and there's something to that. If we want to stop that, if we want to curtail farming parents' and ranching parents' ability to instill this kind of work ethic in their children, I think it is shameful, Mr. Speaker, absolutely shameful.

I got to the point where I would ask one question in interviews: where did you grow up? If they told me they grew up on a farm, I would stop the interview and say: you're hired. That goes to show how very much we appreciate the work ethics that our farming and ranching moms and dads are instilling in their children. We do not want to let that go.

On the other side of the coin, the government, while perhaps well intentioned, may not be accomplishing their goals in the best interests of families when creating this legislation even though it may look good to them on paper. This is why consultation is so critical. To make sure we get things right before we implement this legislation, we need to consult with farmers and ranchers. These are the professionals; these are the people who have generations of best practices. They've been taught the best practices, passed down from generation to generation. I'm not aware of a single farming parent who would dispute the need for safety for their children, neighbours, or employees, yet I am flooded with parents, who happen to be farmers, who are telling me to do everything I can to ensure that this legislation will not hurt their family farms and their family's way of life.

Now, Mr. Speaker, my job as an MLA and as the representative for my riding is to listen to what my constituents want me to do and to take those concerns with me to this House. This is the same job description for every single member in this House. I would like to point out that for the 13 others on the opposite side of the House who have farm families represented in their area, I think it's extremely important that you pay attention to this. These are some of the numbers in the ridings that represent the farming and ranching areas of the province: for the Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose, 1,955 families represented there; for the Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley, 1,528 farm families represented in there; for the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, 1,430 families. There are 13 of these ridings that I could name, but I won't because there's lots more that I want to say, and the reason that I don't want to say the numbers is because that doesn't really show the face of who I'm talking about.

7:40

One of the dangers, I guess, of passing legislation so far away from the trenches is that they don't get to see the faces of those people who are working in the trenches every day. It's very easy, I believe, to say that this is a great project, that this is great legislation, that it'll work. Yet we have heard over and over again

– and I won't be tabling these today – the petitions. The names that I have are coming in daily. I get this every day. This shows the resolve of farmers. In reality, Mr. Speaker, if farmers were for this, I wouldn't have thousands of names. It just would not happen. Yet this is an indication of where we are on this legislation and the resolve that farmers have.

My job is not to blindly follow ideology. My job is to do what is best for my riding and for the families living there. The other day I had the opportunity of being able to put together a town hall meeting. In 24 hours we were able to send out information via Facebook and social media. Within 24 hours, Mr. Speaker, we had – we thought we were going to get maybe 20 to 30 people – 184 people jam-pack the house that we were in.

I had an opportunity of being able to look into the eyes and to hear the stories of the people who will be affected by this legislation. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that I learned something that I haven't seen before, and that is that you can go after someone's livelihood, but when you go after someone's lifestyle, that's when it becomes personal for them. This is a lifestyle for farmers and ranchers and the children that grow up on these farms and ranches. They want to stay. They love it. This is something they love to do. This isn't about just livelihood; this is about lifestyle. When you go after the lifestyle, I think that you've tackled something that I believe will come back to bite you.

Right now my job is to tell the members opposite that this farm legislation is not something that families in my riding want. The message was fairly clear the other day, I thought. The message, if they haven't heard it, was: kill Bill 6.

Mr. Speaker, when you came into this Chamber the other day, I made sure that I came in that door so that when you were coming in this door, our times would be the same so that the members here that didn't go out and talk to the people and look in their eyes, like I did, would have an opportunity to be able to hear them chant their resolve. Their resolve was crystal clear: kill Bill 6. Kill Bill 6.

Now, British Columbia and Saskatchewan, our neighbours on both sides, have exemptions for family farms and legislation that acknowledges the unique differences between various agricultural operations. They understand the difference and have been able to clearly demark the difference between a commercial operation and a family farm. The reason why they've done that is because they understand that there is a difference, that the magnitude, the economies of scale are different, and because of that, you cannot apply a solution for a commercial operation to a small family farm. It just doesn't work.

We hear this quite a bit from people: agriculture has been a vitally important part of this province's history and economy from our beginning and even earlier. Safety is a laudable goal, but let's consult with the tens of thousands of experts in the field whose families have farmed and ranched for generations. We need to give them that dignity, show them that we believe in them, not legislate them out of an industry. Believe that these farmers have the best interests of their families and their children, and do not legislate them out of this industry. This is not fair to them. This is not something that they want, yet we keep on hearing the government say that this is what they want. Fifty-four members of this House believe they know more than the thousands of people whose names dot the pages of these petitions. I am here to tell you that they don't know. The guys in the trenches do know, and we need to start listening to them. I invite the members opposite to listen to them.

If there are concerns, it certainly cannot hurt to get them straight from the source. Why is the NDP omitting something that both B.C. and Saskatchewan include in their legislation? Why is the NDP omitting something that every family-operated and -run farm in

Alberta is begging for? Why is the NDP not listening to what the people want and not knowing the best practices of other provinces? Why is the NDP not doing the job they were elected to do, which is to listen to the constituents and follow their advice? Mr. Speaker, it is amazing to me to think that not one person in this government, that has put this legislation forward, is a farmer, yet they're trying to tell farmers how to do it better. The hypocrisy of it is incredible.

I'm not sure what members across the aisle, particularly those who represent some of Alberta's largest farming regions, have been hearing from their constituents. It'd be interesting to hear them get up and chat today about some of the letters that they've been receiving. I doubt that our ridings are the only ones that are receiving these letters. Mr. Speaker, I think that it's important for us to get clear disclosure from the members on the opposite side about the letters that they're receiving. I think that would be illuminating.

In any case, I would like to tell you what they have been saying to me. Now, this is a letter, Mr. Speaker, that I don't plan on tabling today. Again, these are letters; these aren't just petitions. These are actually letters from concerned constituents. I'd like to just read you a portion of this because I thought this was touching. Again, to talk about the numbers does not give this justice. It does not serve the people. We want to be able to put a face to this because if you're not willing to look into the eyes of the people who you're going to be affecting, then I want to be able to bring their faces to you today.

Mr. Speaker, if you'll indulge me, this is from a lady by the name of Kayleen Neilson. It says:

Dear Sir,

Please fight for the amendment or end of Bill 6! I was raised on a ranch, and my husband and I are raising our children on a ranch. It is a way of life; much more than just a job, and unless you have experienced it personally, you really cannot have any idea of what that means. But I will try to enlighten you. It means that you often start your day at the crack of dawn, work hard all day with (hopefully) a quick lunch break, a quick supper, and eventually heading in to exhausted but proud sleep after dark.

And I'd like to punctuate that. Mr. Speaker, these individuals, these farmers and ranchers, are proud of what they do. They love to do it. Again, we need to make sure that we know the faces of these people. They love to do what they do.

And then starting over the following day. It means that you glance at the thermometer on your way out the door, but the fact that it says -30 C or +30 C makes no difference in your plan to work the day, except perhaps in how you dress. It means that you work one or two or three extra jobs away from the place, so that you can feed your family but still keep the agricultural upbringing. It means that you make do with whatever you have to get by (old machinery, tools from your grandfather's time, boots with worn out soles...). It means you rely heavily on friends, family, and neighbors for help – you help them, they help you. A simple, but effective arrangement.

I love the way they put that: a simple but effective arrangement. There's no contract. There are no lawyers involved. There's a simple handshake. This is the sort of thing that made our province great. In fact, this is what made our country great.

7:50

Mr. Speaker, I have had the privilege, the great privilege, of travelling many parts of this world. I can tell you that in the places I've gone, when they describe Canada or Alberta to me, they say that the one thing they love most about us here is that we are honest with each other, that when we say we're going to do something, we do it. That kind of work ethic, that kind of honesty in business relationships is not easy to find in the world. People come here just

for that. They love that. This is something that I think we forget about.

It means you rely heavily on friends, family, and neighbors for help – you help them, they help you. A simple, but effective arrangement. It means that you put up with poor cattle/grain prices, restrictive laws and rules. . . .

Let me punctuate that one: restrictive laws and rules.

. . . poor weather, bad luck, big vet and gas bills, a ridiculous amount of operation debt, etc.! . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, thank you.

By the way, a reminder to everyone to make sure that we don't have our phones on.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As someone that was born and raised on a dairy farm my whole life and then managed the farm for 35 years after that – on the dairy we had usually at least five employees or more but the odd time fewer – I understand it. I get it. Safety is number one. It always was. You know, in all those years we had one incident on the farm. I think the guy was from a city down east, and he smashed his finger. He put his finger where he shouldn't have. I had my six-year-old son work there forever and never have one injury, but he learned as a young kid what to do and what not to do. Age doesn't mean anything; it's experience and the way of life.

Mr. Speaker, I don't take this lightly, though. As I said, safety is number one, and everybody, all farmers on all farms, supports safety and improvements that we can do to make farms safer. You know, it's not about legislation. Legislation isn't going to make any farm safer. I don't think that legislation will save one life. It's about outcomes and how you can make the farms safer. Legislation won't do it. I mean, the previous speaker quoted some great statistics. Around the country, obviously, this legislation hasn't necessarily made other provinces any safer. In fact, Alberta's numbers stand up very well without legislation.

So I think that, rather than legislation, education is the best way to make farms safer. You know, whether it's ag societies or 4-H clubs, we can help by putting that there. The government has given money to ag societies, and they wouldn't get grants unless they could prove that they had done work on farm safety and education around the country. But even all the education will never guarantee a hundred per cent that nobody is ever going to be hurt on a farm. That's just what happens when you work out in an environment with unknowns.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think that any farms, not many people anyway, would argue against OH and S as far as coming out, if there was a serious incident on a farm or, God forbid, a fatality, to do an investigation and try and determine what went wrong and what happened so that people can learn from it and maybe prevent it from happening in the future. That piece of OH and S isn't bad, and I don't think anybody would disagree with that.

You know, I think that our government had talked about it for quite a few years. Everybody said, "Yeah, you talked and you talked and never did anything," but that's because we were listening to the farmers. We would be brought legislation like this, and we would say, "No, that's too far; that's too much," and take it back. I think that we were getting close to bringing stuff forward, but we'd been consulting with industry for years, whether it was the Cattle Feeders' Association or different associations that actually run the feedlots, and had input. We'd been taking that input, and, yeah, maybe we should have done something sooner, but we were taking our time to get it right and consulting with everybody in the industry.

You know, it's been said before as well that one size doesn't fit all. I mean, I think everybody wants protection for farm workers. That's paramount in the big feedlots and in big industry, where there are lots of employees. There should be a safety net or an insurance program to cover the family or the person if something happens, but that doesn't necessarily mean WCB.

On our farm we had our own private insurance plan, Mr. Speaker, and then we had WCB because we did some off-farm work for a while. We were forced to have WCB to work in the oil patch, so we got it, but I can tell you that it was so much trouble and so much hassle and so expensive that when I quit working in the oil patch off the farm, we cancelled WCB and went back to private insurance.

When I did have the one casualty on the farm, where the guy got his finger smashed, we didn't have WCB; we had private insurance. But we didn't even use that. I took the young fellow to the hospital, we covered all his bills, I brought him home, and I bought him an airplane ticket to go back and visit his family in Ontario. We paid his wages a hundred per cent at the time, and we covered all of his costs. Within a week he was back on the farm, saying: "I don't like it in the city. I want to be here. I can't stand sitting around doing nothing." So he would start poking around the barn and doing light duty because he had his hand bandaged up. We paid him the whole time, and it wasn't long before he was back on full duty. I mean, his finger is a little gimpy, but it's still there, and it still kind of worked. WCB would have been – you know, he would have been back to work before the forms got filled out and he actually got a cheque from WCB, and he'd have suffered for a while without any kind of income. So WCB isn't the answer to everything.

I do know that that's not fair. I know that WCB has come a long way in the last few years, and it's a lot better than it used to be. When I first was elected to the House as an MLA, those first few years, most of the complaints to my office – all my girls did was handle WCB complaints. It wasn't a good program, obviously, but I'll give them credit that in the last few years the complaints are down, so they must be doing a better job. That's usually how you gauge how good something is doing. If you don't get any complaints, it must be all right. But as we see this week, when people complain or are upset about things, then something must not be right in the mix there.

Like I said, with OH and S and some insurance it doesn't have to be WCB, but you could make it mandatory, that anybody with farm workers has to have some kind of a level of insurance coverage. It could be specified.

You know, I think there are some good things that can come out of this, but as has been said before, it just went way too far too fast, without proper consultation with industry. We've seen that. Now my office is jammed with e-mails and phone calls, and we saw the steps of the Legislature yesterday. Obviously, this isn't what the farm community wants, and it must not be right for them even though people sitting in this House think they know what's right for the farm community. They don't know what's right for them. I don't agree with that, Mr. Speaker. Something has gone sideways here.

I think the legislation could be broken down into four parts. You know, there's too much in there. There's the Employment Standards Code, the Labour Relations Code, the OH and S Act, and the WCB regulation. It's almost like an omnibus bill, with too many things kind of jammed in there all at once. I think that if we started out slower and consulted more and eased into this, it could be the right thing to do for Alberta farms.

**8:00**

I know there was stuff said about – and I'm not here to blame ministers or bureaucrats or anything, but I did go to the original briefing on this bill, Mr. Speaker. I think I was the only MLA. No,

actually, I'm wrong. Dr. Swann was there. I got the information and the papers, and it says right in there that the legislation would apply to your farm members. Down further, under number 3, it says that OH and S would apply only when children are helping out on the commercial operation of a farm. That's when kids are working on the farm. It basically says that. It was there in writing in the detailed briefing when this bill was presented, so to say that it was the bureaucrats misrepresenting it, or whoever was misrepresenting it – I'm sure the minister had seen this briefing material before it was out there and knows what it said. I did notice that it's been taken down off the website now, so there must be something there that wasn't quite right.

I know there's going to be lots said over the next few days and into the night here, and it's going to be repeated, and I'm not going to repeat myself too many times. You know, the member before me did a really good job on comparing some stats across the country. I think one serious incident or fatality – even one – is too many. We can't say that we're good and we're happy with the numbers, but we'll do the best we can. I don't know if this legislation is going to save anybody on the farms, Mr. Speaker. I think common sense, education, consultation, and everybody working together is the way to get this job done.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

House leader of the opposition, do you have a question under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Cooper:** Yes, on 29(2)(a).

**The Speaker:** Please proceed.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wondered if the hon. member might just briefly comment. He's been in this Assembly for quite some time, and I'm just curious to know if there has been a time when he has been present where he's seen such a level of engagement on a bill, perhaps in terms of total amount of people coming to the Legislature to express some of their opinions and engage in the process.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Well, obviously, Mr. Speaker, what's been happening yesterday and in the last few days, I wouldn't say that it's unprecedented, but since I've been here, that's probably the biggest crowd I've seen out there. Whether it's good or bad, I don't know. I wasn't able to go back to my constituency last week because we had a committee meeting on Friday, so I didn't get there. But I can tell you that this weekend, when I go back home, there's a gathering in a local community hall that will be filled with farmers. I don't think I'll have a very enjoyable evening, but I'll be able to talk to lots of friends and neighbours, and I'll tell you what: it's going to be the buzz of the night. There won't be a whole lot of laughter and fun at the community Christmas gathering. There will be some pretty upset people, and I'm going to try and explain to them what's going on.

**The Speaker:** Any other questions to the member under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

**Mr. Cyr:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You mentioned about this legislation or this bill being taken off the website. What did that normally mean when you were in government? Can you go a little further with that?

**The Speaker:** Sorry, hon. member. I'm having difficulty hearing you. I couldn't hear you.

**Mr. Cyr:** I'm sorry. I'll repeat the question. How about I actually face the Speaker. Sorry about that, Mr. Speaker.

What does it usually mean when you take down a bill or information off the website? Does that usually mean that something is wrong, and has it happened in your experience in government before?

**Mr. Drysdale:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to speculate on what's going on. Everybody knows that there are amendments coming to this bill. I mean, it's been in the media. We haven't seen them yet, so we're trying to guess what they are. Obviously, they've had second thoughts over there, and they're going to amend things. Maybe they want to take down information that was up there because the amendments might contradict that.

From what I gather was said at the meetings – there was a meeting in Grande Prairie. Of course, we were in the House debating the bill, so I couldn't go there, but I heard lots about it. There was a lot of information given out then that contradicts what's in this stuff, and I heard today that in Red Deer what the minister was saying was contradictory to what was in print. Maybe that's why they took it down off the website as well.

I'm looking forward to the amendments coming forward. Like I said, we do need to do stuff to make things safer on the farm, so maybe we can try and make this bill better. I'll be waiting to see what it is. Obviously, it's changing from what they had up there.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

**Mr. Taylor:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti if he could expand a little bit more on that omnibus bill that he was talking about, and why he thinks it's a bad idea to have this omnibus bill.

**Mr. Drysdale:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as I said, there are different parts to this bill. Omnibus means, you know, there's a whole bunch of stuff wrapped up into one bill, and some of it gets lost in there, the employment standards, and when the bill passes, they won't have the regulations and all of the details. Even with what we've seen there, they may change it. There was nothing specific indicating what age limit they've decided for kids. I've heard 12, and I've heard eight.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I hadn't anticipated speaking this early in the debate. But I will happily take the opportunity, certainly, to speak on a topic that has, I would say, in the rather short time that I've been here, rivalled any in terms of the level of engagement from my constituents and not just from my constituents but from Albertans all around the province.

Mr. Speaker, as I've probably bored the Assembly enough with – as you know, I'm a large-animal veterinarian – I was in mixed practice in Lloydminster for close to 30 years. But perhaps what people don't know is that I was actually born and raised in Edmonton. I'm a city kid.

I was exposed to farm life as a child. My uncle and aunt and my seven cousins farmed between Sangudo and Barrhead, in the Gardenvue district between the Paddle and Pembina rivers. We would go out there on Sundays usually. It all depended on whether or not it was a day that my father, who was a butcher, was doing farm butchering, an open-air abattoir out on the farm. Perhaps that's where I got my initial interest in anatomy. I can't actually speculate. But I will tell you that it was interesting.

Some years later, as a teenager I worked on a small farm near Ardrossan, and that was when I first got the taste of working with animals that were large animals. Prior to that, I had actually planned on going only into small animal practice, but my employer at that time teased me. He said: you don't want to be a poodle mechanic; you want to be a real veterinarian that looks after real animals. I had my first exposure to horses. Prior to that, I was actually quite frightened of horses, but as a 14-year-old I had a lot of experience working with horses. I found that I really enjoyed them and that I also enjoyed cattle. I think that's where I was first exposed to cattle. I did some work with cows for those two summers.

**8:10**

Then some years later, after two years of agriculture here at the University of Alberta, I went to the University of Saskatchewan to do my four years of study in veterinary practice, graduating in 1983. I will tell you that it was during the time I was at school, when I was exposed to the opportunity to work with large animals and work with farmers, that I became enamoured with mixed practice, as we call it, multispecies veterinary practice, that and all of the James Herriot books, which I thought were really, really cool.

In 1983 I moved to Lloydminster, but I was still very much a city kid. I'd worked for a couple of summers in veterinary practices. One summer I worked in the city of Camrose, and that was where I had my first exposure to the dedication of farmers that have animals. It was fascinating. It was a real watershed moment in my life. That was when I realized that the clock doesn't matter. The calendar doesn't matter. Whether it's your birthday or your anniversary or the weekend doesn't matter. Your work is dictated by the animals you care for.

That was a philosophy that I adopted early on in veterinary practice and had throughout my veterinary practice. Animals have a very poor concept of clock or calendar. I will tell you that right now. The number of times that I was called away on calls, especially on, you know, the birthdays of my sons or on my anniversary or at other times, was just something that happened. What I learned, though, is that farmers put the needs of their animals ahead of their own. They put the needs also ahead of their own not just in the case of animals but of the crops that they tend, the land that they are the stewards of.

I learned some very profound lessons as a young veterinarian. I started practising when I was 22. As a young veterinarian I gained a lot of experience. I would even say, especially in those first five or 10 years of practice, that I learned a lot more from my clients than they learned from me. One of the lessons that I remember, that one of my clients, who's now passed on, told me, is when he said: son, one thing that we learn is that if we look after our cows, our cows will look after us. You know, that was a lesson. He said: we look after our cows, and our cows look after us.

That was, I think, at the same time that I had unfortunately suffered the first death of a patient. Well, I felt terrible. I felt terrible about it. It wasn't really my fault, but it was just one of those things that happens. And this same client put his arm around my shoulder, and he said: son, if you're going to have livestock, you're going to have dead stock. It was one of those lessons. It's simple, very clearly said, a lesson that I'll never forget.

So I say all these things, Mr. Speaker, because the appreciation for what farming is all about is one that can only be gained over time. I would actually say that probably until I had practised for five to 10 years, until I had been married to my wife, who's a farm-raised girl, for five to 10 years, it was only then that I think I really gained an appreciation for the level of dedication that farmers have to their work and their lifestyle.

Working with kids in 4-H clubs was absolutely a joy for me. One of the things they had me do quite often was judge public-speaking competitions, which I really quite enjoyed. I worked with the students, and we talked a lot about different means and the things that they learned by directly doing them, by putting the trust and the confidence in these young people. That is why, I would suggest to you, there is so much concern over this legislation, especially from the 4-H community, because 4-H is one of those institutions in Alberta that is so highly prized. I can remember going out to my cousins' place when I was a youngster and seeing their trophy cases filled with 4-H trophies and being jealous because the only trophies I had at home were for my prowess as an accordion player, and that was just kind of geeky by comparison. Mr. Speaker, it was something, you know, where you gained this appreciation for the 4-H movement.

Over time, I want to say, I have gained an appreciation for farmers, for the farming way of life, for the fact that, really, farmers were a big part of the reason why our business, our veterinary practice, was successful, why it remains successful to this day. The whole concept of, "You look after your cows, and your cows will look after you," we extended and essentially just changed one word. I said to all of my colleagues: if we look after our clients, our clients will look after us.

Now, in the course of this debate we've heard quite often that Alberta is the only province that doesn't currently have farm safety legislation. You know, I sometimes worry about that justification. Alberta is also the only province that doesn't have a sales tax. One would hope that the fact that we're an outlier on the sales tax front doesn't stimulate this government to saying: "Well, gee. We've got to come into line with all the other provinces."

The one thing that I will say, Mr. Speaker – and it's a thing that I think we can agree on – is that one of the aspects of this debate that really bothers me is that the impetus behind a lot of this debate over the last 10 years was due to a specific fatality where the farm worker in question was not readily compensated, his family was not readily covered for the injuries, in this case the fatality, and it's been mentioned that sometimes that involves taking legal action. I think that there is broad agreement amongst all parties that employed farm workers on large commercial and corporate operations should have some sort of financial safety net to look after them and to look after their families in the event of an injury or death. I think that's something that we could get agreement on and probably move forward on.

There's a second area that I think we have broad agreement on, and that is that currently we do not have a mechanism within this province for doing adequate reporting of farm incidents, accidents, and fatalities. There isn't a way to go in and do a proper investigation as to how and what could be improved to prevent that from happening down the road. Most farmers I talk to, even those that are vehemently opposed to Bill 6, say that that makes sense to them, that it makes sense that that is a provision that should be there.

Mr. Speaker, I think there are areas that we could move forward on, that there are broad areas of agreement, and I would prefer, rather than trying to – and I'm going to use a football analogy; we just had the Grey Cup. Rather than throwing the long bomb and trying to score a touchdown right off on day one, we would be better off running the ball up the middle and making some short passes and making a few first downs and moving the ball down the field gradually, making the progress we can make and that we can all agree on.

You know, this was the approach that was taken in some of the other provinces as they introduced farm legislation. What you have in that scenario is that you have the introduction of something to a group of people who are fiercely proud of their way of life. If you

cannot sense that from the letters you've been getting, the calls you've been getting, the demonstrations on the front steps – if you can't sense that, then I'm sorry; you're political antennae need adjusting. Okay? You need to have a real adjustment as far as where things stand, what you're hearing from constituents.

Let's be very clear as we have this discussion. Farmers are not against the concept of farm safety. It's been said before and it will be said again that they are absolutely committed to keeping themselves, keeping their children, and keeping those that work for them as safe as possible. To suggest otherwise, quite frankly, is insulting to farmers. I have heard that, and I've heard that from a number of people, and I find that that just lowers the quality of debate, so let's flush that away right away. Let's at least agree that farmers aren't careless about safety issues. You know, that very suggestion really bothers me.

When we move ahead with this, I think one of the things that we really should do is move forward on those parts that can be agreed on. There are some that can be agreed upon. I'm not sure that we can adequately change the current legislation because the problem with the current legislation – it's such a short piece of legislation. It's enabling legislation to remove the exemption from four separate pieces of legislation, codes, and regulations. It removes right now that exemption and throws the farming industry wide open to every single regulation, every single stipulation within those four acts, regulations, and codes. If you wonder why farmers have been concerned and are now being accused of misinterpreting the legislation, it's because the information they have been given has not been adequate so they know exactly how this legislation will affect their farm. That is a failure of communication, Mr. Speaker, that has plagued the government in this particular initiative.

#### 8:20

The whole way the government has gone about this particular piece of legislation is seriously, seriously flawed. The consultation process has already been talked about as to just how bad it is. There's no question that the consultation process has some very significant problems. There were 500 people in Red Deer today. Most of the other meetings were full. Now the halls have been expanded. That's a good thing that they are, but a number of those sessions are already full. I'm hosting a town hall session in Vermilion this Saturday. I know that 325 people can go into the seniors' centre, and there are concerns that there won't be enough space for the number of people that are coming. People care, and they care deeply about this.

For this consultation process to be happening essentially after the legislation is passing, that pattern by itself does not engender trust. Legislating first and then consulting after the fact: that just simply does not engender trust. I will tell you that in any relationship, whether it's a personal relationship, a business relationship, or a political relationship, once trust is broken, it is very, very difficult to rebuild. If trust is broken – it only takes one thing that breaks trust – it then takes months, years of consistent trustworthy behaviour, behaviour that is undertaken with integrity to rebuild that trust. Anybody who has been through a situation where the trust has been broken within a relationship – business, personal, political, whatever type of relationship – will know that this is true.

So the trust has been broken, and it now is left to the government to rebuild it. I would suggest with respect to the government that if you want to rebuild the trust with farmers, the best way to do it is going to be to pause this process and indicate that you will actually, meaningfully, respectfully listen to people, and while you're at it, it might not hurt to admit that you didn't do a really great job from the outset.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any questions for the member under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I found it very reminiscent, I guess, some of the sage comments that the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster talked about. One of them was the sage saying about the cattle. I remember another old saying regarding the tail of a cow and the economy. I was wondering if that member could recount that for the Legislature this evening.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I have to confess that my knowledge of western idioms is nowhere near what the knowledge of the Member for Drumheller-Stettler is, but I will tell you that there are a number of things that are of concern to me. I wanted to go back, if I might, for just a second to the whole flawed consultation process and not just consultation. We've heard repeatedly that this legislation will pass and that a lot of things will be worked out in regulation. That's a way of doing business that has come under some very heavy criticism in the past in this very House.

In fact, the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, when he was in opposition, on December 10, 2014, stated:

What we were looking for is to defer this bill into the spring to ensure that it includes everything that it should to maximize protection for condo owners and consumers. Many issues, Mr. Speaker, that should be dealt with in this legislation as far as what impacts condominium owners on a day-to-day basis aren't being dealt with in the legislation, and this was probably one of our largest concerns. They're being left to regulations.

Well, Mr. Speaker, you can take out the words "condo owners" and put in "farmers" and you've got a perfect substitution. That was from the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview, and there are many, many other examples that we will bring forward in debate where the whole process of legislating first and allowing things to be left up to regulations, regulations that are developed and passed behind closed doors, not in the light of day, is not the level of transparency that this government ran on. That's what they promised. They promised that they would do things differently. In point of fact, they are doing things exactly the way our government did, and I would say that it is a very good way for all of you folks – well, what's left of you, at least – to occupy these chairs over here in three and a half years.

I'd like to close by just quoting from an e-mail that I received from a client. He states:

Going forward, I expect that we, like many others will simply take the chance that an inspector is not going to pop by, or that they will get lost on the way out to our farm. We may simply resort to processing calves on long weekends or evenings when the OH&S office is closed. I will be very surprised if we limit our children's eagerness to help and work alongside us or resolve to quit helping our neighbours. In essence actions speak louder than words, thus rendering the legislation a moot point. I can't speak for other friends and neighbours, but I suspect the vast majority of us will be knowingly contravening the law of the land. I would suggest that in a democracy this is a sign of poorly thought out legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I can't add much to that.

I urge this government: press the pause button. You know how it's done. Press the pause button, and let's not push this bill through with such haste.

**The Speaker:** Are there any questions under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Nixon:** Yes. Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Just real quick for the member. I know that the member is not in his first term in this

Assembly, and many members are, of course. Maybe if you could elaborate a little bit on how big a reaction this is compared to normal. Lots of members won't have anything to compare that to in the short time they've been in the Legislature. Maybe you have some advice for some of the rural backbencher MLAs in the government.

**Dr. Starke:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I realize that time is very limited. It is by far the largest of any issue that I've dealt with, and that includes some very controversial issues that came up in the last Legislature.

I'm not going to presume to offer advice to the government members, whether they are in cabinet or private members. They will no doubt receive advice from their House leader and from their whip and from the Premier as far as how they should vote. Certainly, that advice has been very closely followed thus far, based on the voting record.

I would suggest, though, that as far as the overall size or the volume of letters, e-mails, that sort of thing, by far – by far – this is the largest issue that I've dealt with in the roughly three and a half years that I've been an elected member.

**The Speaker:** Any other questions under 29(2)(a)?

To the motion itself, the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

**Mr. Strankman:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's somewhat reminiscent of some of the things that we've done in this Legislature to stand and to speak to some of the legislation that's before us. In this case it's very near and dear to my heart as a lifetime agriculturalist, I might say, agrarian involved in the agrarian community for my lifetime. Actually, in the early years of my career, just out of school in 1972 I made a decision whether I would be working in the oil patch or in agriculture. The gentleman that I was working on the pipeline with told me that our next job was going to be in Red Earth, and I thought that I'd really rather stay at home and be involved in the farm. We had a chance to expand the farm operation, so we did, and I was fortunate enough to marry my wife, Dianne, who was a high school sweetheart, and we raised two fine kids there.

I actually got to introduce my son Jay in the Legislature as a young man, 24 years old, who knows the value of a verbal contract. In a modern society, modern-day, verbal contracts are difficult to come by, but I made a lot of my career phoning people or getting a phone call in the middle of the night saying that the grasshoppers were chewing their backside out and they needed – in 2002, particularly, myself and a very good friend from near Wainwright spent a good part of the summer sitting in ag planes dispensing chemicals to help those farmers save their pastures so that they didn't have to haul their cattle out.

**8:30**

I can appreciate some of the comments from the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster about livestock. Livestock just, for some reason, don't know how to read a watch. They don't know what day it is. They do know if there's snow on the ground, if it's 30 below, if the grass is green, or if there's no water in the water trough. They don't care, you know, about what's going on.

I want to talk to you and to the members of the Assembly about the potentiality of Bill 6 and its possible unintended consequences. A good friend of mine made comment of how his farmhouse is situated. If you enter in the back door, Mr. Speaker and other members, and you would turn to the left, that's where his farm office is, but if you turn to the right, that's where the kitchen is, and that's where a lot of the business is done.

They are concerned about the potentiality of OH and S entering the facility to inspect the paperwork and everything because in the closet right there they have a goodly number of predator control devices. Some of these predator control devices are found in the back of the truck and out in the shop and in the tractor in the springtime when they're calving because those predator control devices keep the coyotes away from the baby calves and they keep varmints controlled. Going forward, there might be unintended consequences that this legislation might bring forward in that regard.

This legislation is somewhat vague in the full definition of an agricultural producer. What is an agricultural producer? In some municipalities people with as few as four chickens, I understand, can keep them in their backyard. Now, you know, that may lend to the private member's bill – I believe that it was Bill 202 – about local food production. But is that a definitive agricultural producer? How do we do that? I had my research assistant today look up the definition of an agricultural producer in B.C. because it's been touted by members on this side of the Chamber and others that B.C. has exemptions for small family farms, but I can't find out what that definition is.

What my researcher did find, Mr. Speaker, was that in Saskatchewan, a much-touted and highly agriculturally driven province, OH and S is under the current act, but there seem to be as of 2014 several exemptions. The friends that I know from Saskatchewan had never even seen one of these farm police, as they call them, or grass police, as some people call them in the grass industry. My researcher writes down: exempts farming and ranching from the section on trained operators for powered mobile equipment, describes that farms and ranches over 10 employees must have an occupational health and safety program. Now, that's over 10 employees, and that's, you know, a significantly sized farm operation. It could be construed to be a factory farm.

Now, again, the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park, with her private member's bill, talks about a production where they have an intensive vertical operation there. I believe it's a greenhouse operation. They may have more than 10 employees. I don't know. I appreciate the fact that it's local food production. I visited a farm in Coaldale just this summer, intensive agricultural production. They are producing what they believe to be either all the broccoli or all the cauliflower for the Calgary Co-op, and under the roof of the greenhouse they're going to, hopefully, be producing all of the green peppers. But all that is supposed to be done with the mandate of safety. Nowhere did I see or hear in talking to any of these people that were they openly flagrant about the exhibition of safety.

Again back to Saskatchewan. It prescribes that farms and ranches with more than four or fewer than 10 employees must have an employee representative and must set out in writing who is the supervisor of the worksite. It goes on to explain who these people are and what their job description might be. Mr. Speaker, they do have some legislation. In the potentiality of this government's motions coming forward, it's just a broad description. They are now coming forward after some consternation by Albertans in demonstrations like in Red Deer and Grande Prairie and just the other day out at the front of this illustrious Chamber. There is a lot of vehemence being brought forward.

I took particular enjoyment in one person out there. I think his name is Buddy. He chortles a lot. But he was wearing the sign: kill Bill 6. Apparently, Buddy made it past Thanksgiving and did not find it to somebody's Thanksgiving dinner table. As a result of that, Mr. Speaker, I penned a column this weekend, and it says that even in strong winds sometimes turkeys can fly. Some of you may remember, if I could embellish a little bit, a TV series called *WKRP in Cincinnati*, and during that show they exhibited an unsafe

procedure where they were actually throwing frozen turkeys out of the airplane.

**An Hon. Member:** They were live turkeys.

**Mr. Strankman:** Well, they weren't live when they hit the ground, for some of those people. You know, we need a little levity in here sometimes, and I'm hoping to provide that.

Safety, though, Mr. Speaker, is not a laughing matter, as somebody who has been involved, not unlike the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti, in a situation where somebody put their hand where a post pounder found it. That was not a personal experience. One of our members advises that you shouldn't put your fingers where you might not put something else. I've always found that to be a valuable rule. A valuable rule.

Mr. Speaker, again, getting back in seriousness to the Saskatchewan WCB now because they do have exemptions there, too. Even though they have WCB legislation in the province, they have exemptions for dairy farming; feedlot or livestock yard operations that are not in connection with an industry within the scope of this act; fur farms – I don't know how many fur farms they have in Saskatchewan; grazing co-operatives; land clearing, brush clearing or stumping not in connection with an industry, again, within the scope of the act; livestock brokers; mobile farm feed services or portable seed cleaning plants, which they have a lot of in Saskatchewan; pig farms; poultry farms; and trapping. So, Mr. Speaker, we've been told that they do have coverage, but they have a goodly number of exemptions. That is what I believe is being asked by the people that we've seen come out to these functions to demonstrate against that. They would like to have definitive input.

Earlier on it was asked, again, of the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti if in his time in the Chamber he had seen occasions when there was legislation that was brought forward that was not, I believe, popular with the citizenry or was found to be unpopular, and some of those pieces of legislation were bills 19, 24, 36, and 50. That, at one point in time, Mr. Speaker, was the battle cry almost for the Wildrose candidates because a lot of that legislation was brought forward without full consultation by Albertans, and once Albertans found out about that, they were enraged.

8:40

Last winter I read an article – I believe it came from the *Edmonton Journal* – saying that there's nothing that engages Albertan voters like good, old-fashioned anger, and I think that's what we're seeing out there, some people who are concerned. If it turns to anger – a lot of people in this Chamber may not know that this member after the beginning of our session the other day went out and actually spoke to the rally group out there. I told them that they needed to tone things down, that they needed to be respectful and peaceful in their demonstration. I was fearful that the security guards out there might have a lapse or someone else might have a lapse, and their presentation would not be respectful and democratic. That's what they have a right to do. In a democratic society they have a right to make their positions known. In fact, the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View has a private member's bill that actually talks about recall. It's an attempt to bring democracy forward in a good fashion.

Mr. Speaker, we had several forums. I mentioned bills 19, 24, 36, and 50. I happened to be in the Chamber when the Premier at that time was bringing forward his first bill, and it was much touted as a property rights bill, but it turned out to be the retraction of Bill 19, and Bill 19 had never actually been proclaimed. That's part of the choreography of what can go on in this Chamber. Some legislation

can be passed in here, but if it does not achieve royal assent, it's not law.

In this case there was much ado. I still remember to this day – and I think the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat and the Member for Livingstone-Macleod may remember – that the bill that was presented to us by the pages was the equivalent of an eight and a half by 11 piece of paper, and we were looking at the front and the back and the sides and trying to figure out if that's all it was. This was an important piece of legislation brought forward in a democratic situation, in a democratic Chamber like we have, and this is all that was being presented to the people? What kind of a shallow piece of work was that?

To have these people come anywhere from four to six hours and take goodly time out of their personal lives – Mr. Speaker, I had constituents from the south end of my constituency. The Roes and the Griffiths came. I introduced them as guests to the Chamber. They had kids in swaddling clothes. These kids were two and three years old. These people have legitimate concerns about how those children will be exposed to the lifestyle that they believe is important as agriculturalists. These folks are ranch people. They don't have any more aspiration to be in this chair, really, than I ever sought to going forward.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Hon. member, a question under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Panda:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the privilege and honour to know the Member for Drumheller-Stettler's family. I visited his farm three years ago, when I spent some time campaigning with his son. I want to ask the member specifically about the consultation process adopted recently by the government of the day about the climate change report or, in other words, the carbon tax grab or whatever you call it. The government has taken credit for showcasing that as a successful bill they brought in, implementing their agenda about protecting the environment and whatnot, and they lined up all the stakeholders. But in this particular case, all those stakeholders are missing. They can't take them into confidence. Being a lifelong agrarian, I want to ask the Member for Drumheller-Stettler how he feels about this whole thing, being treated as a second-class citizen. What are your views about that?

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Strankman:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member from Calgary. It is somewhat disconcerting although at one point in my agrarian career I had a rash on my wrists from handcuffs, when I got in trouble for hauling a little bit of wheat one day.

I want to speak though to that, specifically, because many people don't understand how change occurs. It's taken me a long time to understand how change really occurs. Many times change does not occur from within. This government is going to make a lot of change, and this government has a mandate at this present time to make a lot of change, but this government is going to realize that the democratic method that got them here is also the democratic method that can take them out of this Chamber. Mr. Speaker, it is an important thing to know and understand and recognize just what I said, that change does not necessarily occur in this Chamber. Change occurs outside the Chamber.

There are a lot of people – and I myself was one of those people – that asked for and requested change. I have great respect for the member bringing forward the royalty review, and I have great respect for the member bringing forward a carbon tax, et cetera, for their view, their democratic view to effect change, but, Mr. Speaker and to the member from Calgary, in three to four years there is

going to be a chance for I'll call it redemption, I guess, by the voters, and at that time that will prove the truth of what Albertans feel. That is the responsibility, and it's somewhat onerous.

I've seen it through two cycles, both with the Progressive Conservative government that was in power and now with the NDP government in power in this province. I'm viewing it with cautious optimism and with the greatest respect for Alberta voters. In this case we have rural Alberta voters who are highly frustrated with what's going on here because of their perceptions, correct or not, about the presentation of a piece of legislation that's going to horribly affect their farms.

There are those that say that this is the beginning of something as inconsequential as a simple piece of legislation, and that may well be true, Mr. Speaker, but you look at some of these other jurisdictions, and I read off the exemptions from only one other province. Beyond that, there may be and can be a whole host of unelected and unintended consequential regulations. That is the danger that is being brought forward by the people that you see at these meetings and that you see on the steps of this Chamber and of this building. People are concerned, not necessarily about the legislation but about the regulation. The regulation is as important as the legislation.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise this evening to talk about Bill 6. I'm a city boy, but I have a little bit of farm experience. I certainly threw some bales for my grandfather, when I was younger, on his farm in southern Ontario and actually spent two full summers in the tobacco fields, which is a different kind of experience, so different that Stompin' Tom Connors actually wrote a song about that called *Tillsonburg*. As the phrase goes, "My back still aches when I hear that word." I won't sing, you'll be glad to know.

I also spent 25 years in the meat business, starting off at the time when I was a butcher, which is why the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster thinks of me as a father figure, as he mentioned earlier. I thought, when he was telling the tale about his father open-air butchering, that that's probably where the saying comes from that sunlight is the best disinfectant.

Mr. Speaker, during my 25 years I was probably in every packing house in western Canada and, really, was in contact with agricultural product at the end of its production and was aware of how much care farmers had in the process from the gate to the plate, as they say, from the farm gate to the plate, and how much they care.

**8:50**

I'm going to give you some of my own thoughts, but someone on the steps of the Legislature said it way better than I ever could, and her experience is way better than mine ever will be, so I got her permission to get her remarks and read them to the House. For those that are interested, I'm going to table them tomorrow because everybody should read these. Her words:

My name is Coral Robinson and I live on my family cattle and grain farm 3 hours Northeast of Edmonton with my husband and two small children. We are fortunate enough to be keepers of land that has been in my family for three generations. We have one employee who is treated and respected as family. We would never ask him to do anything that he [feels is] unsafe. He chooses to work for us because farming is his love as well.

I just want to make one thing clear here today. We are not farmers against change, and we are not farmers against safety regulations in the farming industry. We are here today because

Bill 6 will change the lifestyle of thousands of very real families like my own across Alberta by January 1, 2016. We simply want to be heard by the Alberta government before Bill 6 becomes legislation. Why does it have to be pushed through the Legislature at breakneck speed without consulting with the people who are most affected? We are here asking for the Alberta government to stop Bill 6, right now and come and get to know us. Did you know that not one of our ministers pushing this legislation has made a living farming?

If they had, they would realize that there has to be a distinction between family run farms and industrial farms which are operated by employees. The family farm is our home. It is where we live; it's where we work, and it's where we play. It is where our children will grow up and learn life skills that they are fortunate to learn on the farm. It's where our neighbours and friends gather when we need help, with the only payment, a good meal and maybe some drinks at the end of the day. The family farm is a unique way of life. It's a business because it has to be. It is a lifestyle first, which involves hard work, long hours, risks, love, and family. You could not possibly understand the work, the passion, and the life that comes with it, unless you live it. Bill 6 will regulate when I can teach my children our very lifestyle. It will regulate if my neighbours, family and friends can offer a helping hand when we need it most. It will regulate the hours worked in a day when we are harvesting and snow is in the forecast. This is not something that should be rushed through and passed before our MLA's go on Christmas break. This is over 100 years of lifestyle and tradition of farming families that is now going to be regulated. These are families who have passed knowledge and passion for farming down through several generations. Can we not take time to get this right?

[The Premier] and her supporters have painted safety on the face of Bill 6. I will tell you this. Safety of my family in my home and on my farm is the absolute most important thing to me. I know my three year [old] does not understand what OH & S legislation means. What she does understand is the love she has for everything farming. What she could understand is educational material directed toward her age group focusing on the dangers and hazards that are on the farm. What she won't understand, is not being able to bear any responsibility on the farm until she is 12, and even after she is 12, she is allowed to spend only two hours on a school day doing what she has longed to do since she started walking and talking (but only after I've obtained a permit from the Alberta government[]). If the government truly wants to save lives of people on the family farm, why not try to educate rather than regulate? We truly believe in safety but what we don't believe in, is being told when our children can have chores and responsibilities at our home.

Our urban friends; I want to try to relate to you how this group of people feels here today. Bill 6 is like you giving me a blank cheque to fix your car. I know nothing about you but I assume things like, you have a fancy car so you have a lot of money. I assume that you use your children, maybe even putting them in harm's way to earn your money to have your nice car. I am telling you that I am going to fix your car fairly but I am not going to tell you what I have found wrong with it. I am simply going to fix it and write the amount of money you owe me on the cheque. You are not allowed to dispute this amount. If Bill 6 passes through the Legislature in the next couple of days (just over two weeks after it was first proposed), it is like that blank cheque for farm families. At this point, there is no distinction between family farming operations and industrial farms which have several employees. [The Premier] claims that there will be distinction but she is going ahead on passing Bill 6 right now as a standard blanketing program. How can we trust that our lifestyle will be protected through proper consultation after this Bill is already law? I forgot to mention when you brought your

car to me to get fixed that I in fact am not a mechanic, I am a gardener and I have never fixed a car in my life.

I want to leave you with a few realities of the family farm which are near and dear to my heart:

For the 75 year old grandfather who still has 30 cows left on his farm and the only reason he keeps them is because he is afraid if he sells them, he will have no reason to get out of bed in the morning; he has made his money and this is his retirement; this is his life and all he knows. His children and grandchildren help him when it comes time to bring in the cows or process calves. To them, and him, this is not work: this is love, happiness, pride, and a reason to get together after months apart. At the end of the year, he has to sell his calves and there is a business transaction, but this is not business. How do you regulate that?

For the husband and wife who work 12 hours a day at their day job and come home to 3 hours of chores to make sure their cattle are fed and taken care of. They built their farm from the bottom up. They are trying to afford their life and love of farming. This is their home; not their job. How do you regulate their hours of work in a day?

For the dad who picks up 'mom and the kids' on a Sunday afternoon with the side by side to go check cows; this is a family day. This is not work today; it is love and life but to OH & S this would be work. Where do you draw the line? How do you regulate that?

Bill 6 is not cut and dry. There is no possible way that the proper boundaries and regulations can be set by January 1, 2016 while respecting our rights as families to live our lifestyle at our home. This is the wrong approach for family farms. We believe in safety and we believe that there is a place for OH & S in the farming industry BUT there is one special and unique distinction that should be made, and that is the family farm. Other provinces have this distinction and Alberta should too.

Those words are better than anything that I could say because this is a woman that has lived the farming and ranching lifestyle, and we should listen to what she is saying.

Mr. Speaker, I've heard from the Minister of JSTL that they talked to people and this and that, but the fact is that that's not what farmers or ranchers are saying. I can tell you that when I was minister, along with the agriculture minister we did talk to farmers and ranchers. The likes of Page Stuart and Bryan Walton were leading almost every producer group in Alberta, and we were making progress. We were getting quite close to the point where safety legislation, regulations could have been put in place on the farms and ranches with the advice of farmers and ranchers. They would have embraced the legislation, which means that they would have lived by it. People will support that which they help to build.

My colleague talked about: you know, if you put a law in place that people don't follow, maybe it's not a good law. Maybe it's not a good law. If you actually bring them along and help them write the law and let them help government understand what needs to be in the law, then farmers and ranchers will embrace it, and government will have a lot fewer problems with enforcement, with inspection, with all of those things, because people will live up to a just law. One of the best ways to make sure that it's just is to actually consult with people who live the life that you think you're trying to regulate.

Mr. Speaker, there was a big protest out here this week on the steps of the Legislature, the biggest I've ever seen. You know what? Our friends across the aisle that are now in government: lots of them were out here carrying signs. But the fact is that half the people that were carrying signs with them were professional protesters. Certainly, a lot of them were, and they could never generate the type of enthusiasm that was on the steps of this Legislature this week,

not by local Edmonton people that have a garage full of signs but, rather, by people from all over Alberta, honest, hard-working, decent farmers and ranchers, children, families. Whole families came. There were kids in diapers, and there were people that were very experienced in life, seniors. They were all here with a common purpose, not to say to the government, "Leave us alone" but just to say: "Talk to us first. Talk to us first. Listen to us. We'll work with you. We believe in farm safety."

In fact, Mr. Speaker, as has been said here in the House tonight, Alberta's record on farm safety is an enviable one in Canada, better than most provinces'. You know what? I believe that my colleagues across the aisle are good people and that they're trying to make the world better. I believe that. They're just going about it the wrong way. If you think you're going to save lives and injuries on the path you're going, you're confused. What is being contemplated may not save a single life or a single injury because Alberta's record is already amongst the best in Canada without the legislation. So I don't know where the magic is going to come from when you have got people with the best safety record, to a large degree. You know what? There are some things that need to be fixed, and the farmers and ranchers know that. They just want a say in making it better. They do. It's not an unreasonable request. It isn't. All they're saying is: talk to us first.

9:00

The government could do that several ways. They could put a pause on this: no more readings until they do that. They could send it to committee and invite farmers and ranchers to address the committee so they could learn what things there are. They could kill Bill 6, talk to people, and come back with a better informed bill.

Mr. Speaker, again, I'm sure government means well – I'm not going to cast aspersions on them – but the signs are all there of bad legislation. You've got meetings, including tonight in Red Deer, where you've got a government official saying one thing, and the pieces of paper they're handing out say something completely different. This baby is not cooked. It's not even half baked. Again, I know the intentions are good. I get that. You know what? The results could be good if they'd just slow down a little bit. It really would not be that hard to do. It really wouldn't.

You know what? I'm sure everybody on our break between 6 and 7:30 – what did we do? We ate something. Why don't we just spare a thought for the people that provided that food? Good people. Good people that feed the rest of the planet. Yeah, you know, they make a living at it. We should be proud of them, and they should be proud of themselves. Why would we make it more difficult for them to feed us? Why would we unreasonably make it more expensive for them to feed us?

You know, one of the advantages that Alberta can have just being part of Canada is that almost everybody says that it will be one of only six or seven countries in the world that will produce more food than it can itself eat. Why would we not try to make the most out of that instead of hobbling the people in that field?

Certainly, you know, out of a policy difference – and it's a really serious policy difference – the current government is going to lock billions of dollars, if not a trillion dollars, of value in the ground with coal. There's talk by some of them about locking billions of dollars of value in the ground in the oil sands and other places. Why not let one of the things that you haven't decided to lock in the ground yet, which is plants and animals – why not let them thrive? Why not let the people that produce that do that? Why not let that create more jobs for Alberta families? You know what? You'll even create more jobs for city folk.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Little Bow.

**Mr. Schneider:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** We're under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Schneider:** Under 29(2)(a). As I listened to the Member for Calgary-Hays talk about this bill, I was wondering as I sat here – I was sitting at the time; now I'm standing, as you can see – if a gentleman like the Member for Calgary-Hays, that has been in this House for several years and has seen bills come and go and been part of constructing bills and amending bills and had all of that kind of experience, could expound and give us an idea, if you had the opportunity to write this bill from the beginning or to change this bill, of what would you do to make this bill better so that the farmers of this province would be proud of their government?

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, it's a good question, and I'll frame it for the government-side members as a cautionary tale.

**An Hon. Member:** Keep it simple.

**Mr. McIver:** No, no. Listen. I'll congratulate them. Again, you'll like the first part of this but maybe not the second part quite so much. There is a reason that you're over there and we're over here. We made some mistakes, Mr. Speaker. We did. Some of the mistakes we made were in rushing legislation. You make enemies when you rush legislation. You make enemies that remember when you rush legislation. You make enemies that remember when you don't consult with people, when you regulate their way of life or the way they make a living without actually doing them the courtesy of a proper conversation. That is the mark.

With all due respect, it took us, you know, four decades to have people throw us out of there. If you like what you do now, don't rush to that 44-year mark in six months, okay? Don't do that. I'm trying to help you here. Right now I'm the best friend you've got with what I'm telling you. I am. Don't rush to the finish line if you want to stick around, or we'll be happy to go back there. Believe me; we'll be happy to. If you want to save yourselves, this is good advice.

What the hon. member says is the mark of bad legislation: the mark of bad legislation is when a minister stands up in the House and says, "We've consulted everybody," and then everybody they were supposed to consult says, "No, you didn't, and we're not happy at all about it." Our government did that a few times, particularly in the last year or two. That is a sign of a government closer to the end of their life than the beginning. Folks, you've only been here six months. Don't do this if you want to stick around. Again, we'll be happy to go on the other side. I know there are other people here that would be happy to go on the other side. But this really has the marks.

You know what? Again, in your own ridings you've got what is reputed to be, I think, 11,000 farms in ridings that voted for people on your side of the House. Without those 14 seats, it's going to be a lot harder to hang onto that majority. Without the 11,000 votes times three or four family members times all the friends they have, that's really going to make it hard to keep those 14 seats in three and a half years. It's not in my best interest to give you this excellent advice. But you know what? I love Alberta. I love farmers and ranchers. I love to eat. So what choice do I have? What choice do I have?

To the hon. member: I would say that these are marks of bad legislation. When you've publicly got the Premier throwing the

bureaucrats under the bus and you've got the minister responsible for the legislation under the bus, when you've got the biggest protest we've seen out here in years from people that don't protest on a regular basis, these are not good signs. To answer the hon. member, I'd say that from what I've seen – and I don't feel like the old man on the mountain, but I guess there are not a lot of people that got re-elected the last time around, and this is only my second term – from the experience that I've had, this has all the marks of something that will bring a government closer to the end of their existence rather than the beginning.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under 29(2)(a). I agree. You made the statement that the people on the other side of the House are basically good people and have the right idea. In your experience what is the best move forward for them on consultation?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak against Bill 6. You see, I was elected to represent the people of Grande Prairie-Smoky. During the past week I have received more e-mails, more phone calls, more texts than I've had since I've been elected. In fact, I've received more in the last week than in the total six months that I've been elected. Those communications were unanimous in that they all speak against Bill 6. Each one of those speaks with passion, with intelligence, and with respect in their call for this government to withdraw Bill 6.

**9:10**

I'd like to read a quote from a letter from one of my constituents, Travis.

For 98 years Alberta's farmers and ranchers have circumvented the onslaught of self-righteous, meddling, bureaucratic socialism, proving that industry, communities and families can exist and thrive based on simple yet fundamental principles of personal freedom and liberty. No farmer is opposed to the safety, the wellbeing, fair wages and fair treatment of their employees. What we are adamantly opposed to is the socialist ideology that the small group of ruling elitists knows what's best for other people's personal affairs without any consultation, and using force and intimidation to compel others to submit to their philosophies.

You'll notice, Mr. Speaker, "consultation." That's very important, and we'll see this repeated over and over again. We'll also see that no farmer is opposed to safety, and that's something that we hear over and over again from the farmers in our communities.

He goes on to say:

In a free society people are free to think how they choose and are also free to try to persuade others to agree with their way of thinking. Through persuasion and discussion different ideas are traded, weighed, and developed.

Actually, I would say that that would be a definition of consultation there.

He goes on to say:

A consensus is arrived at with all parties compromising and learning and, although imperfectly, they will eventually agree to a course of action.

Your government has chosen instead to arbitrarily decree a course of action, devoid of that free discussion, and to declare that those who are thus affected will have no freedom of choice, no freedom of democratic say in the matter and you will use force of law and the fear of bureaucratic or legal retribution to quell dissent.

Mr. Speaker, Travis has a very good command of the English language, as you can see. He speaks very eloquently and very respectfully to this government in his request for consultation. Of course, none of this takes away from his desire to see safety on the farm.

Now, I've just heard recently that in the phone calls that constituents have been making to ministers' offices about Bill 6, some of them, from what I understand, are being forwarded to OH and S and over to WCB. I also understand that the Premier's office phones sometimes are not getting answered. Sometimes they're not returning phone calls. I can understand that due to the volume of phone calls that must be coming in, they're having difficulties responding properly.

Now, this should serve as an indication that something is wrong. But, sadly, we hear that the Premier is doubling down and has promised that this bill will pass. Unfortunately for the people affected by this bill, with the government in place having a majority in this House, the Premier will be able to do whatever she wants. What's truly unfortunate is that the members opposite that represent rural ridings will not be able to represent their constituents, and that's sad. It's sad for democracy, and it's sad for the constituents that they're here to represent.

I want to read from another letter, from Terry and Maureen.

We are writing out of desperation and frustration as this government, which is supposed to be working for us, seems to not be listening to the very stakeholders this Bill 6 is supposed to be for.

Now, we heard in Grande Prairie loud and clear. Anybody that was there knew exactly what the mood of the room was and what the consensus was. When the question was asked, "Who is against this bill?" every single person in the room put up their hand. Every single person. So that would send a pretty clear message, I would think, to the members of this Assembly of the feeling of what's happening in rural Alberta.

Terry and Maureen go on to say:

We do not have fences marking out boundaries around our home to differentiate between what is deemed yard and what is deemed to be "commercial." The whole quarter section is our home, from the farm equipment parked in my driveway to the tools and farm items stored in our basement, tight to the fence line with our neighbors to the south and west of us.

They go on to say:

I ask you, is that a reasonable piece of legislation to pass?

I urge you all to go online to the Farm Safe handbook if you haven't already, and read it. I did last night and it was laughable. To document every aspect of everything we have to do around here to be stewards of the very land we sweat and toil on, which ends up in the food chain that will eventually feed Alberta families in cities, towns and in the country, actually is frightening.

These people, Mr. Speaker, are doing the research. They're studying. They're trying to learn what could affect them with this legislation.

They go on to say:

We are afraid for our civil liberties being taken away. This is not a job for us, it is a lifestyle choice as we could sell up and move to town. But we don't want to. We love farming our little farm. Oh and by the way, we do not make enough cash flow off of the 80 acres we actually have in crops to make it work so my husband also works full time to keep this place afloat. This is a dedication of a way of life he has known his whole life. It's not a job as I have said, it's our way of life. I am pleading for some common sense to prevail in regards to Bill 6 and withdraw it totally from being tabled.

Mr. Speaker, here's a couple that write this letter out of desperation and frustration with this government. They're not asking for anything unreasonable here. Like others, they're asking for consultation. They're concerned about safety, too. They don't want to see anybody hurt on their farm.

Now, the other day I was talking to a couple of my constituents. They're an older couple that has farmed their whole life. When they heard about Bill 6 and its implications, the wife asked the husband: so should we just quit now? Can you imagine having to have that conversation about your life, about the career you have chosen, all over a government bill that was brought forward without consultation with the very people that will have to live it daily.

Now, here's a question from a concerned farmer, Nico.

I have a question about bill 6 and the proposed rules for farmers and ranchers. Sometimes we get casual labour just for the day to process cows, and I pay them at the end of the day. How am I to pay WCB on these workers who may show up only once every year or two for about 8 hours? Can a farm pay into a "casual labour fund" – based on historical payment towards casual labor for a year – to cover these casual workers?

We both know this is going to pass; I just want to make sure it is workable. We already pay for WCB on workers that we produce T4 slips for, so I do not mind paying WCB. That is not the issue with me or I suspect most farmers. It is the details of this legislation that could be troublesome.

Mr. Speaker, you see here that we have a classic example. This farmer already covers his regular workers with WCB, but he needs to have his questions answered. Unfortunately, even if he shows up at an information meeting, he will most likely not get his questions answered. You know why? Because this government doesn't know what the rules are. What they want is a blank cheque, and then they want to make the rules afterwards. Why should he trust this government? What has the government done to encourage that trust?

Now, I want to go on to a letter from Rosanna.

I've watched our farm grow from nothing. It takes passion. Determination and a lot of hard work. Long hours. Many long hours. These are hours worked out of necessity to have a successful year. We fight the one thing no one can control, and that is weather. We work when we can and as long as we can, because that is the key to survival.

Mr. Speaker, farmers don't have control over a lot of the things that they are subject to in their business. They don't have any control over the weather, and it's something that's always on their mind.

9:20

She goes on to say:

If we shut down after X amount of hours, it would mean watching our crops get rained/snowed on and most likely even left out on the ground. Which leaves them worthless, and us without our yearly income. I don't believe our workers are mistreated, underpaid, or made to do unsafe activities. We try to take care of them, appreciate them, and pay them well. We know better than anyone the dangers and risks. We do not put ourselves, our workers, or our children in a dangerous position. We understand the operation inside and out. We understand the machines. We understand the need to be very well informed, trained, and always, always aware of what is going on around you. There is no need to have someone who is "trained" to monitor us, inspect us and control our operations.

Mr. Speaker, that's why the farmers of Alberta keep talking about this word "consultation." They want to be consulted because they know better than anyone the risks on their farm and how they could alleviate those. All they're asking for is, simply, consultation and to be able to work these things out.

She goes on to say:

This would just financially drain family farms that already have small profit margins. Some years, no margins at all. I don't believe even 1 person who has never grown up on, or owned a farm, could ever understand the dynamics, risks, dangers, safety, and overall operation of a farm. It is not something you learn in a book. It is something you learn growing up around it, watching, doing, working, observing, and riding. It is more than a job. It is a way of life.

How many times have we heard that, Mr. Speaker, that it's a way of life? It's not just a job. That's why these people are so passionate when they show up en masse to protest things like Bill 6. It isn't just a job.

She goes on to say:

A way of life that we have worked hard to obtain and keep. One that we want to pass on to our children. This way of life instills in youth an incredible sense of work ethic, and the ability to work hard and never give up. It also teaches values and principles that cannot be learned so well from a book. We are a community that will always band together to support and help each other out. Don't change that. That is one thing still good in this world. Stop Bill 6. Remember who puts food on your table and thank a farmer instead.

Stop Bill 6. Those who attended the rally on the steps of the Legislature yesterday heard the term over and over: kill Bill 6. If this government is truly listening to the people, I would say that they would have no choice but to act on what they've heard, but we don't see that, Mr. Speaker.

I hear some say that there is misinformation regarding this bill. Maybe there is, but the truth that is spelled out in black and white is scary enough. Farmers are resourceful, intelligent, and willing to work with government regarding any concerns they have. All they have to do is consult with them, work with them, talk with them, meet with them. That's what has to be done.

I'm going to go on to a letter from Jay:

Personally, I'm not a farmer or a rancher, but I share many Albertans' concerns regarding this bill. I'm aware of the implications it places on the hard working farmers and ranchers in our communities . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any questions for the hon. member under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Airdrie.

**Mrs. Pitt:** I heard a lot about farm families in there, and it seemed like there was just so much passion, you know, from the people that are speaking to you. I was wondering if you had any more stories to share.

**Mr. Loewen:** Mr. Speaker, as a matter of fact, I do. Thanks for that question there.

I'll go on to what Jay was talking about. He says:

We all know someone, or have family members who choose this lifestyle to make ends meet and enjoy their lives.

Another concern I have is how this will affect hunting, shooting, recreational vehicles (quads, ATVs, Skidoos, etc.) on private farmland. Will the same rules and regulations apply to the average citizen who wishes to go hunting or do other lawful activities on privately owned farmland?

Mr. Speaker, these are all important questions that are left unanswered.

Again, when they show up at these meetings to have questions answered, it seems like there are no answers. In Grande Prairie the most common thing said was: well, we don't know; we're not sure. I guess that in Red Deer today the most common thing was: well, there are some amendments coming. Unfortunately, nobody knows what's going on. The people sent to these meetings don't

understand what's going on, and it seems like even the people that do speak at these meetings contradict themselves over and over again. That's not helpful. That doesn't help the people that are concerned about their livelihood. That doesn't help them with their concerns at all.

I do want to make sure I fit in one letter here. This is from a 17-year-old girl named Megan. She says:

My name is Megan . . . I am a 17 year old high school student residing in Northern Alberta. I have been raised on the farm my whole life and am going on my 9th year as an active 4-H member.

This is the letter that she actually wrote to the Premier. She says:

Please note that attached to this letter are photos from across the province gathered from my 4-H friends and Family. They have come from as far south as Calgary and as far north as Manning.

I am responding to the issues brought up by the proposed Bill 6. I must say that any tolerance and patience I had in this government, let alone the faith I may have had, is completely gone. The first straw was the attack on the oilfield, and now this.

Now, remember, Mr. Speaker, that this is a 17-year-old high school student.

**An Hon. Member:** Smart girl.

**Mr. Loewen:** She's a very smart girl. I know her.

I'm a bona fide "Farm Kid." I grew up hauling hay, chasing cows, and moving cattle on horseback. My workday was never limited to 20 hours a week like a part time job, nor 40 hours like a full time job. Farming for me is, and always has been a way of life.

A farmer does not check in and check out, wake up is my check in and when I go to sleep the work doesn't end. There are no scheduled breaks, it's not the typical 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. day with 2 coffee breaks at 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. and lunch at 12:35 p.m. We work until the job is done. During calving season someone in our household is up at 3 a.m. and out checking the cows.

My way of life is something that I cherish and to impose a law that restricts my way of life is not something I can stand for. I know I speak for a large majority of family farmers when I say that this Bill threatens that way of life. To say that the government has support of the farmers in my community is a broad lie and an insult, one I wouldn't dream of making.

To make myself perfectly clear, on the farm I was taught "common sense" a trait that doesn't seem to be as common anymore. To expand on that I have never been asked, told or forced to do work that I believe is unsafe on the farm. Even if presented with a situation I have been equipped with the proper tools to defend myself, stand for my rights, without the need of new legislation. This view would have probably been brought up if any of the MLAs in the NDP Party came from a farming background. I know this to be true, which gives me the validation to say that because of this fact the NDP government is not qualified to be dictating the affairs of the local farmer.

Remember that this is a 17-year-old girl, a high school student.

The government cannot expect the farming community to respond positively to a Bill that causes unnecessary hassle, paid out of our pockets, that threatens our livelihood. When combined with the shift from "chores" to "child labour." I'd have to ask the government to show their work. Where on any typical farm have those two words been synonymous? I strongly believe that the values that I have learned on the farm are imperative and fundamental. Some of the best times I have had were when I spent an entire day on the farm with my Dad, or rode in the tractor with my Papa. These skills include work ethic, determination . . .

**Speaker's Ruling  
Question-and-comment Period**

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

You mentioned that your constituent referenced the point of patience. As the hour gets later, my patience gets somewhat tested. I want to remind all of the members, particularly, of the following, 29(2)(a). I quote an excerpt from it: “to allow Members to ask questions and comment briefly on matters relevant to the speech and to allow responses to each Member’s questions.” Could I ask you all to please read this again and make sure that we practise this as we move forward.

9:30

**Debate Continued**

**The Speaker:** I believe the next member is Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is really an honour to speak to this bill, as it is an honour to speak to all bills in this Assembly. Now, I may not be from rural Alberta, but I know a bad bill when I see one. This is actually not a rural issue or an urban issue. It is an Alberta issue. It is a fundamental issue of how a government goes about passing legislation and how, in fact, a government consults or doesn’t consult the people who are impacted by a certain piece of legislation.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Let me tell you this. As an MLA representing an urban constituency, I want to let everyone in this Assembly and through you all of your constituents know that urban Alberta has got your back because this is not an issue of urban and rural. This is a fundamental issue of fairness and democracy, and there is a lot of concern about this bill that I’ve heard from my constituents in Calgary-Elbow. It is not an issue that impacts people just in rural Alberta.

Now, there’s an extended way that we are all impacted no matter where we live. As it’s been said many times, if you ate today, thank a farmer. Absolutely, that’s true. But there’s something more important than that. Albertans all around this province, from inner-city Edmonton and Calgary, Red Deer, Lethbridge, rural Alberta, and even from outside of Alberta, as I’ve heard from my cousins and relatives in Saskatchewan, are wondering what the heck is going on, wondering what the big deal is about Bill 6. The minute they learn a little bit about it, they say: “Well, that doesn’t feel right. That just doesn’t seem right. What in the world are we doing here? Why are we rushing through this?”

Now, I want to be very, very clear that farm safety is important to me, and I think that it’s absolutely important to every single one of us in this House. We want people to go home safe at the end of the day. We want people who work in paid employment on farms to be safe, to have access to compensation, workers’ compensation, and we want people to make sure that proper standards are applied. We want every single person, whether they’re a paid employee, whether they’re a family member, whether they’re hired help, whether they’re an uncle from across the fenceline, to be safe on a farm. But what I haven’t seen and what I’m very, very curious to know from the government side is: what are the numbers? What problem are we trying to solve here?

Early on tonight in the debate the Member for Drumheller-Stettler quoted some statistics and indicated that, in fact, Alberta’s numbers of injuries and fatalities on the farm were, in fact, no worse than other parts of Canada. Now, I don’t know that to be definitively true. I’ve heard it here in the House tonight. I’m going to do some research, but I would hope that the government would also have done that research and could tell us definitively what problem we are trying to solve here. What is the scale of this problem? Tell that to this House. Tell that to Albertans. How big

a problem is that, really? I’m learning here. I’d like to know. I’d really like to know.

One farm fatality is too many. I think we would all agree with that. Any injury is too much of an injury. That’s not something that any of us want to see, but how do we go about solving those problems? Before we go to solve a problem, we need to identify what the problem is. We need to understand the scale of the problem, understand the nature of the problem. Do that research; present it here to this House so we can all make sure we understand how that works. I noticed that every speaker this evening has been on this side of the House. I’d be really interested to hear what the government caucus has to say on this issue and would love to hear what the rationale is and some of the details because I genuinely care about people’s safety in this province.

With the bill itself I have significant concerns, which have been talked about previously. What this bill is, when we look at it, is a very thin bill. It is a shell of a bill that says that at some point in the future the government will pass some regulations that do some things. We’ve heard some pretty concerning things of what Bill 6 might do. It might regulate 4-H. It might mean that kids can work only limited hours. It might mean that once equipment is a certain age, you can’t use it anymore. Well, Bill 6 doesn’t say any of that. Nowhere does it say that in Bill 6, but nowhere in Bill 6 does it not say that. When there’s a vacuum, when there’s a lack of information, in rush judgments. We have no leg to stand on. When someone says, “Greg, this bill regulates 4-H,” I can’t point to anything in this bill and say, “No, no, no; that’s not true; look here; it says right here that it doesn’t do that” because that’s not what Bill 6 says.

Now, we hear that there are some amendments coming, and I look forward to seeing those amendments in committee, but until such time, unfortunately, speculation is going to be rampant, and, my friends, that is on this government for allowing that to happen.

Now, I’d like to compare what happens with Bill 6 with the work that the environment minister did on the climate consultation. You all know, I think – I’ve been very clear in this House – that I think very highly of the process that the environment minister went through in creating a panel with very clear terms of reference, an expert panel that included stakeholders from industry, that included stakeholders from environmental groups. They had a very broad public input process. The outcome of that process: while I don’t agree with absolutely everything in that, we can’t argue that the process that was followed was a very strong and very sound process.

I sincerely hope that the royalties process is the same thing. There are expert people who are in charge of that panel. They’ve consulted widely across industry. They’ve held public consultations. In fact, up until December 4 we as Albertans can submit our input to the royalties panel. I’ve done that. I hope everyone here does the same thing. The outcome of that work product: I don’t know if we’ll all agree with it or not, but we won’t be able to quibble with the process that they used to come up with those results.

Let’s compare that to what has happened with Bill 6. Now, you’re the NDP. We know you’re going to legislate in this area. That’s not a surprise. What is a surprise is exactly what’s in this bill or what’s not in this bill. I would really encourage you to reflect on why we had 1,500 people on the steps of this building protesting and concerned about their livelihoods and concerned about family farms. We haven’t had that on the climate panel, and there’s some very bold policy coming out of that climate panel that is going to fundamentally change how Alberta operates. That’s a big deal. It’s important. It’s important to the future of this province, and it was taken seriously by your government. You should be given credit for that. Why haven’t you taken Bill 6 seriously? Why haven’t you taken the family farm seriously? Did you just think: “Well, it

doesn't really matter. We're just going to do it anyway"? This is a lesson, and I think it's an important lesson for all of us in this House to understand, not just on the government side but for all of us to understand. It sure feels like you're taking rural Alberta for granted. It sure feels that way.

As we get towards the amendments, so far what we know of these proposed amendments are two bullet points in a news release. So getting closer, there's talk of exemptions for family farms, but there were some exemptions earlier on this evening listed out in other jurisdictions – our neighbours to the east, in Saskatchewan – some of the specific areas that are exempt from family farm regulation. It raises questions for me. What if someone brings in hired help for a couple of days to help fix fences, to move cattle, or to help during calving season? What if you accept payment in kind? Will you have to get WCB or OH and S for that? Will you still be able to use equipment? What if you bring somebody in to use equipment? None of these things are clear. To simply say, "We're going to pass regulations at some point that cover these things," it just leaves so many questions that I really believe this bill needs to go back to committee. We need to either pull the bill entirely and do a proper consultation or at least send it to committee.

So as it stands, I can't support this bill. I care very deeply about the safety of all Albertans. I care deeply about farm safety, but this bill is ill conceived. It needs to go back to the drawing board. At the very least, we need to send it to a committee, we need to study it extensively, we need to consult Albertans, and that may mean killing this bill entirely and starting again.

I guess I'll conclude, Madam Speaker, by just saying that what Bill 6 lacks more than anything else is respect, respect for the people who are impacted by the provisions of that bill. That is a fundamental tenet of any legislation.

9:40

You have to consult, but what does consulting mean? Consulting doesn't mean telling; consulting means asking. Consulting is a two-way process; it's a dialogue. I think the government would find that had you consulted on this bill, we wouldn't have had 1,500 people on the steps of the Legislature. You wouldn't be receiving angry e-mails and phone calls and letters in your constituency offices. I think that you have the opportunity to make this right, and I encourage you to do that.

Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any questions under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Madam Speaker, I am just so thrilled to hear from the Member for Calgary-Elbow that the good folks in Cowtown, the city folks, the urbanites in Cowtown, that do like to wear cowboy boots though they've never maybe stepped in what cowboy boots step in, are supporting the stand of the farming community against this bill. I am just thrilled. Thank you so much, hon. member.

I would be interested to know from the hon. member if he can recount to us maybe some of the comments of the Cowtown folks that he has spoken to, the city dwellers who have the backs of our farming communities and are supporting our farmers in opposing this very ill-thought-through bill that has not consulted the experts in farm safety, the very farmers themselves.

Thank you.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Having grown up in Calgary, being born and raised there, I've spent a lot of time at the Calgary Stampede. It is, I think, an important part of our western heritage. It's not working on a farm – I acknowledge that – and there are some other parts of the Stampede that are not purely related just

to our western, agrarian roots. But one comment, I guess, that I can recount to the House was that after the Member for Calgary-Hays had made some comments, someone – he used his name, obviously, as opposed to his seat – said to me: I have a hard time believing I'm agreeing with the Member for Calgary-Hays; this is a first.

**An Hon. Member:** He's learning and growing.

**Mr. Clark:** They're learning and growing, I guess.

You know, it's a process issue, absolutely. There is some concern over the process that was used here, or lack of process, as it relates to Bill 6, but there is something more fundamental than that. What I'm hearing from people is that they're saying: "Well, a family farm is different. It's different. It's not a regular workplace. It's not an oil sands site. It's not a drilling rig. It's not a welding shop. There's something else. There's something different about it. It's home. It's home." We understand that.

I don't claim, by any means, to speak on behalf of all of urban Alberta, but as a representative of an inner-city, big-city constituency I can tell you that a lot of the folks that I've talked with have expressed exactly that, saying: I'm starting to understand what the big deal is with this because there are some pretty fundamental things about what it means to be Albertan. So they have a lot of questions, and hopefully I've fairly represented those in my statement tonight.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. To the Member for Calgary-Elbow again: you mentioned the Calgary Stampede, and I think that's very, very important to Calgarians and Albertans and Canadians. It's a tradition that's gone on for a very, very long time. I'm just wondering if you have any idea how this new legislation is going to filter down through the years and how it's going to affect the Calgary Stampede.

**Mr. Clark:** Well, that's a good question. I don't know. I mean, what I know is that I remember that my relatives from Saskatchewan would come in, and they'd bring their polled Herefords in. They'd come for the Stampede show, and that was great. We got to see them. My cousin gave me her fifth-place ribbon to keep. I thought that was a pretty big deal.

But, you know, in all sincerity, we're taught to respect cultures, all cultures all around the world. I have a tremendous amount of pride in Alberta's multicultural society. Our culture is western heritage. That's who we are. That is who we are. We shouldn't ever apologize for that. That is absolutely who we are, and I maintain that. You know, my exposure to that is through my family on my mom's side, who still farm in Saskatchewan to this day.

You know, the Calgary Stampede is a lot more than a midway and Cowboys nightclub. It's an awful lot more than that. I think it's really important to remember what it is and what it represents, and that is a tangible reminder every day in the big city of Calgary about our western roots. It's not such a stretch to think that people in Calgary would be concerned about this issue because we still identify with that ranching and farming heritage.

**The Deputy Speaker:** The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you. To the member a further question. The issue about rodeos is actually . . .

**The Deputy Speaker:** We are back on the main bill. I want to call on the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am very happy to rise and speak to this legislation on behalf of the farmers in the beautiful riding of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. The majority of our farmers are within the county of Red Deer, some in the county of Clearwater. We have mixed farms, and we have ranchers. I have heard more from my constituents on this bill than on any other issue, in fact on all the other issues combined. Many of my constituents were here at the Legislature the other day. More were at the meetings in Red Deer. Some brought some four-footed friends along. There were a few turkeys there.

**An Hon. Member:** With feathers.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** There were some with feathers.

My constituents have voiced pretty consistently their concern about the speed with which this bill and other bills – but we're talking about this bill – is being run through this House. That's number one.

Number two: the fact – and it's a sad fact, Madam Speaker – that this bill was crafted by people who are not experts in farming. They may be experts in a lot of things, but there was nobody who crafted this bill from the farming community. They are the experts, especially the family farmers. They are the experts in farm safety. They have been the experts in farm safety for a long time, and the statistics that my colleague quoted earlier are statistical proof of just how well Alberta farmers have been operating safely in this province. We have the best statistics in the country. Surprising? Not really, not if you would take the time to go and live and work on a farm. Go through the four seasons and see all of the things that farmers do to ensure safety for themselves, their families, their workers, and for all of the living creatures whose lives they are responsible for. Safety doesn't just involve people.

Like all Albertans, farmers want to make sure that we in this Legislature get this legislation right, and they do not trust this government to do so because they have not been consulted appropriately. This government has a pattern of legislate first and so-called consult second, and that's not genuine consultation whatsoever. That is actually very dictatorial, and it has no place in a democracy. They want to make sure that their voices are heard. We had 1,500 or more of them on the steps of the Legislature.

I want to applaud the Hutterian Brethren for coming out. Members opposite may not know who they are. They were also at the Red Deer rally. You've got to understand that this is a religious order that is pacifist – they have a 500-year history of staunch pacifism – to the point where they have been persecuted for being pacifists, yet this bill was felt by them to be so draconian that they, you know, almost against every fibre in their being, came to that rally.

**9:50**

I was shocked to see the Hutterian Brethren there. I happen to have a long history with the Hutterian Brethren. I have worked for them as an employee of the Hutterian Brethren. I know them very well. They're a wonderful people, pacifist to the core, and they were here. I was very surprised to see them here and very surprised to receive a text from my constituency office manager in Sylvan Lake, who was at the Red Deer rally, saying: the brethren are here. She, too, was surprised.

That's the level of concern that the farming community is feeling about this bill, which they have not had input into. No input into this. It's shameful. Now, the Hutterian Brethren don't vote, but I'll tell you something: that can change. That can change if you push them into a corner. We'll see. I mean, they came to this rally, for crying out loud.

Farming and ranching are fundamental to Alberta's economy and culture, and this is as true today as it has ever been for generations. Our province grows wheat, barley, canola, alfalfa, oats, peas, and many other crops. We raise cattle, horses, chickens, pigs, and children by the boatload. We grow vegetables, berries. We have orchards. We have wineries right here in prairie Alberta. We have apiaries. We have the best honey anywhere. The abundance that our farms and ranchland provide feeds our province, much of our country, even many parts of the world.

There is a lesson that the other side, the members opposite, need to know: do not bite the hand that feeds you. Do not bite the hand that feeds you. They are feeling like their hand is being bitten, bitten by an insensitive government that isn't listening to the people. The hon. member – I'm sorry; Calgary-Hays, perhaps? – gave some fatherly advice. Bless you for some fatherly advice. We old guys like to do this from time to time. He gave an appropriate level of warning to the other side based on his own experience of what happens when a government is insensitive to the needs of the people. They're not government anymore. Three and a half years will go by mighty fast. Mighty fast.

There are 43,000 farms in our province, representing hundreds of thousands of farmers who, Madam Speaker, are the experts on farm safety, who have not been listened to, who have not been consulted and feel insulted instead. Much of our population in this province, though not on the farm at the moment, comes from the farm. Many children now living in the city have come from the farm, and they vote. [interjections]

**The Deputy Speaker:** We're not in committee anymore, hon. members.

My apologies. I was so engrossed in what you were saying that I didn't notice.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Oh, my goodness. I've never had such a captive audience before unless they were my students. They weren't allowed to leave, so I could bore them to death.

That said, it is important to note that farming is not even solely an aspect of rural life. We have urban citizens that are increasingly rediscovering the satisfaction of growing plants and raising critters for food, from backyard chicken coops to community gardens, and municipal governments are even encouraging this shift in some places. They are becoming farmers. The reason for that is because it's a beautiful way of life. It's not a job. This Assembly is considering a private member's bill to even encourage local food production because Albertans recognize the value of farming, the personal value of farming.

Given that farming and ranching are so very important to Albertans, it would seem self-evident, well, at least to us over here, that we should carefully consider how we can best protect the people who work so hard doing that job, and rather than legislate and not consult, we should consult and then see if the legislation is even needed in the first place.

At these rallies that we have seen, Madam Speaker, the one that was held out here on the front steps, I took note that the Member for Calgary-Northern Hills was at that rally, on the outskirts of the rally, in a safe place around a planter, not too close, I suppose. Nevertheless, I know that that hon. member heard from the farmers, and we heard from the farmers. In fact, I was walking down the steps over here, and I could hear the farmers chanting from inside the Legislature here, with the big doors closed outside. What do you suppose I heard, I know that that hon. member heard? Kill Bill 6, kill Bill 6, over and over and over again.

We have heard the hon. ministers, at least two of them, say the following phrase, "We have heard from the farmers loud and clear,"

but not one of them said what they heard. I believe that maybe they're embarrassed to say what they heard. I know that the hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills heard: kill Bill 6. I guess my question to the hon. members on the other side who have farmers in their communities would be: are you hearing "Kill Bill 6," and if you're hearing it, are you bringing that story to caucus, or are you so ideologically blinded that you refuse to speak up on behalf of the people who put you in those seats over there?

Now, I just received a message here a little bit ago, Madam Speaker, that there are a great number of people actually watching this Assembly right now. There must not be a game on or something, but they're watching. They're watching to see what's going on, and the one thing that they will notice is that there's hardly anyone speaking about this bill on the other side. [interjections] No one, yet some of them have farmers.

So for the benefit of those who might be watching, the Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose has at least 1,955 farms in his riding. You can reach him at 780.672.0000 in Camrose and 780.352.0241 in Wetaskiwin. You might want to phone him and let him know what you think about Bill 6, people.

The Minister of Energy, the Member for Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley, has 1,528 family farms in her riding. If you're watching – I wish I could do that number thing across here like they do on YouTube – just phone this number. It's 780.835.7211 or 780.837.3846, and let him know what you think about Bill 6. Their e-mail addresses are available on the legislative website.

Madam Speaker, I'm aware of the lateness of the hour. [interjections] Take it to the end? Give them some more?

Well, the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville has 1,430 family farms in her riding, and if you're watching, you can call these numbers: 780.992.6560 in Fort Saskatchewan, 780.632.6840 in Vegreville.

**An Hon. Member:** She's not standing up for farmers.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** No. The question that I would like all of you viewing tonight to ask is: are you standing up for farms; are you saying, "Kill Bill 6" in your caucus?

Well, Madam Speaker, it is now 10 o'clock, and perhaps we should move to . . . [interjections] No? Don't move? Keep going? [interjections] My colleagues want to keep going. I guess we'll keep going.

**An Hon. Member:** Just say the numbers a little slower, though, so they can write them down.

10:00

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Oh, they've got to write them down. That's true. Sorry, all you folks at home.

The Member for Leduc-Beaumont, who's here tonight: 1,255 family farms and has yet to speak up about this bill. If you're watching, you can reach him at 780.992.6560.

**An Hon. Member:** That's not the right number, actually. [laughter]

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Suffice to say, Madam Speaker, the laughter that you at home are hearing is the members on the opposite side, that seem to be mocking the serious reality of this draconian legislation, and they have not got the intestinal fortitude to stand up to this silly bill and vote it down.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will sit down.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Questions or comments for the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Would the hon. member across from me actually like the number? Because I have been talking to people. I was just responding to an e-mail as he was speaking, and I was listening. So if you would like the real number, no problem. Every second of every day I'm open to listening to my constituents, and I've been talking to them every day so far. It's 780.929.3290.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Any further questions or comments for the hon. member under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I'll recognize the hon. minister of environment.

**Ms Phillips:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd move to adjourn debate until tomorrow morning.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

**Ms Phillips:** Madam Speaker, I'd move to adjourn the House until tomorrow morning.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 10:04 p.m. to Wednesday at 9 a.m.]



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