



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, December 2, 2015

Day 27

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 29th Legislature

First Session

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

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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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Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)	Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)
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Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (ND)	Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND), Premier
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)	Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)
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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)	Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)
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Jean, Brian Michael, QC, Fort McMurray-Conklin (W), Leader of the Official Opposition	Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)
Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (ND)	van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)
Kleinstuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)	Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND)
Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)	Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)	Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)
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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Kazim	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, December 2, 2015

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Are there any school groups for welcoming today?
Hearing none, the hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Schreiner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today and introduce on your behalf two friends of yours who reside in my constituency of Red Deer-North. I would ask that Mr. Buzz Vander Vliet and Ms Wendy Klassen, who are seated in your gallery, rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to rise and introduce three absolutely fantastic constituents of mine, the Lewin family: Joel, Jennie, and Sapphira. They're here and have been quite excited to view the Magna Carta and have been talking about it for quite some time. We'll be enjoying that this afternoon, I would imagine. I would ask them to rise and please receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

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

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly Sharon Stevens and her daughter Jodie Stevens. Sharon is a long-time supporter of mine, and she was my community assistant when I was an alderman for the city of Calgary. She's also an arts activist and the executive director of the Alberta Media Arts Alliance Society. Sharon also works at International Avenue BRZ on 17th Avenue, helping to animate that avenue. Jodie is currently working as a customer service rep at Access Calgary, a specialized transportation service. She volunteers her time as an advocate for people with mental health challenges in Calgary. I'd ask them both to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly several members of our caucus outreach team, led by director Garett Spelliscy and joined here today by Angela Liu, Ewar Jalal, and Mustafa Ali. I'd like to welcome them. The outreach team works hard to ensure that our caucus is supported as we work to connect with our constituencies, whether it's through events, meetings, or even pancake breakfasts. I'd ask them all to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.
The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw. No guests.
How about I try Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: I'm here, Mr. Speaker. It is a tremendous honour to rise and introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly the two people who keep my constituency office ticking over. Jodi Christensen and Simone Lee are here as part of the constituency

team, winter session. It is a tremendous honour to introduce them to you. In the six months that we've worked together in our constituency office, we've developed one heck of a team. I would ask that they please now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills. No guests today?

Well, I do know, as I've got a lot of cards, that I'll start here. The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed an honour to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two farm housewives from my constituency, Tanis and Lynne Longshore. If they would please rise after I introduce my marvelous constituency assistant, Laura McDonald, who also, I believe, is in the gallery today. I'd ask that they please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you one of our constituency assistants from the Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo and Fort McMurray-Conklin constituency office, Meghan Sereda. She has a background in environmental technologies, and she was born and raised in Fort McMurray. This is her first time observing a session. I'd like her to please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

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

Mr. Malkinson: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Christopher McMillan. Christopher McMillan has contributed to numerous NDP election campaigns over the years and is also an advocate for various social justice issues in Calgary. Christopher is also one of my CAs and is a wonderful asset to my office. Those of you who have ever seen me speaking in my local riding will notice that I often speak a lot more poetically and with more enthusiastic use of a thesaurus. Part of that would be Christopher's fault. I'd like him to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome for all the work he does.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: This is regarding a tabling. Sorry, Mr. Speaker. My writing is . . .

The Speaker: Mine is absolutely perfect. They never have to . . .
[laughter]

How about we try the hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly some of the strongest advocates for health care in the great constituency of Airdrie. Please rise as I say your name. I believe you're behind me. Michelle and Jeff Bates. Michelle is first and foremost a loving mother, who has suffered a great tragedy due to the lack of an urgent health care facility in Airdrie. Mr. and Mrs. Bates lost their son Lane, an avoidable tragedy. They are joined by Michelle's mother, Lucinda de Klerk. Michelle is the chair of the Airdrie Health Foundation and is here today to urge the government to build a 24-hour emergency care facility in our community. Mackenzie Murphy. Mackenzie is Miss Teenage Airdrie, and she's an antibullying and mental health advocate. Kim and Kim Titus. The Tituses lost their

son, who also was one of my childhood friends, to suicide earlier this year. They are embarking on a campaign to remove the stigma surrounding mental health. They are also joined by other members of the Airdrie Health Foundation, Dr. Tammy Paulgaard-McKnight and Stan Grad, a member of the Alberta Order of Excellence, who is a tireless advocate for entrepreneurship, leadership, and philanthropy. She's also joined by several hard-working community advocates. I now ask all of Airdrie that is here to stand and up and please receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a great pleasure for me to rise and introduce to you and to the House a neighbour and friend, Cheryl Cortina, who comes from the beautiful hills of the northern Philippines. She's been here for several years and is now a permanent resident, working as a nursing assistant in long-term care. Nursing is her passion, and she continues to support her family and her 12-year-old back in the Philippines. Cheryl, rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

1:40

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure if I see my guests here, but I'd like to introduce them on the chance that they're behind me. It's my honour today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two guests joining us from the CNIB, John McDonald and Ben McConnell. John is the executive director and regional vice-president of the CNIB, who recently announced the My Wish Is advocacy campaign, asking Albertans to tweet their support for the visually impaired using the hash tag #mywishis. Ben is a strong advocate for his community and the CNIB who is currently finishing his articling after recently completing his law degree at the University of Victoria, and he is also a motivational speaker. John and Ben are also both constituents from my wonderful constituency of Stony Plain, and if they're here, I'd ask them to both stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

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

Ms Kazim: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Janice Fraser. Janice works as my constituency assistant at the Calgary-Glenmore office. She is a very hard-working and dynamic woman who has been performing her duties diligently to serve Calgary-Glenmore. I'm proud of her work and would like to thank her for her excellent services to the constituents of Calgary-Glenmore. I would now ask her to rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour and a privilege to introduce to all the members of this Assembly a special guest of mine in the gallery this afternoon, Miss Terri-Lynn Skinner. In grade 7 she became the vice-president in the Britannia junior high school Kiwanis group. Now in grade 9, this is her second year as president, and for all three of those years many activities for the students at Britannia have come to life and fruition through her tireless and dedicated efforts. She is an excellent ambassador for all the students in Alberta and is willing to serve in roles of leadership. I ask that she now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: West Yellowhead.

Mr. Rosendahl: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you two of my constituency staff from Hinton, my constituency manager, Kathleen Westergaard, and constituency assistant Leah Sedgwick. If they could please rise and receive the warm welcome of the House. I'm not sure that they're in the gallery behind me.

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

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three guests from the Autism Edmonton society. Since 1971 Autism Edmonton has been providing services and support to people in the community who are living with autism spectrum disorder. Autism Edmonton has become known as the go-to source for families, individuals, and professionals looking for information about autism. Joining us in the gallery today are Hendriatta Wong, the executive director of Autism Edmonton; and Susan Angus, who is a director of Autism Edmonton. Joining them is Gino Ferri, chair of Act Now for Adults with Autism. I ask them all to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I suppose this is my first introduction to the House. We know I don't like to speak here too much. I want to introduce to you and to the members of this Assembly, if they could rise, my two constituency assistants, Heather Pigott and John Hilton-O'Brien. John was a founding member of the Wildrose Party, helped to write our constitution many, actually not too many, years ago, I suppose. John is my assistant for Strathmore. Heather is my assistant for Brooks. They've been swamped by e-mails, phone calls, and petitions coming to the office over the last few weeks, and I really want to thank them and recognize them in front of the House. I'd ask this House to give them its traditional warm welcome.

The Speaker: Welcome, to all of you.

Are there any other guests to be introduced today?

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to rise today and introduce someone who is very important in my life and in the lives of the people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. She has been a faithful servant of the people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills and, in fact, Albertans through her work as a constituency assistant. This summer I had the pleasure of marrying her. That came out wrong. I had the pleasure of performing the service in which she was wed. I'm not sure, but my wife, I think, is coming today as well, so things could have got awkward quickly. Anyway, we should just move on and ask Brenda Berreth to rise and receive the traditional welcome.

The Speaker: I was wondering, hon. member, how you were going to account for the three children.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Farmers

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the eighth day God looked down on his planned paradise and said: I need a caretaker. So God made a farmer. God said: I need somebody willing to get up before dawn, milk cows, work all day in the fields, milk cows again, eat

supper, and then go to town and stay past midnight at a meeting of the school board. So God made a farmer. God said: I need somebody with arms strong enough to wrestle a calf and yet gentle enough to deliver his own grandchild, somebody to call hogs, tame cantankerous machinery, and come home hungry. So God made a farmer. God said: I need somebody willing to sit up all night with a newborn colt and watch it die then dry his eyes and say, "Maybe next year," and I need somebody who can shape an axe handle from a persimmon sprout, shoe a horse with a hunk of car tire, someone who can make harness out of haywire, feed sacks, and shoe scraps and who at planting time and harvest season will finish his 40-hour week by Tuesday at noon and then, in pain from tractor back, put in another 72 hours. So God made a farmer.

God said: I need somebody willing to ride the ruts at double speed to get the hay in ahead of the rain clouds and yet stop in midfield and race to help when he sees the first smoke from a neighbour's place. So God made a farmer. God said: I need somebody strong enough to clear trees and heave bales yet gentle enough to tame lambs and wean pigs, someone who will stop his mower for an hour to splint the broken leg of a meadowlark; it had to be somebody who'd plow deep and straight and not cut corners, somebody to seed, weed, feed, breed, and rake and disk and plow and plant and tie the fleece and strain the milk and replenish the self-feeder and finish a hard week's work with a five-mile drive to church, somebody who would bale a family together with the soft, strong bonds of sharing, who would laugh and then sigh and then reply with smiling eyes when his son says that he wants to spend his life doing what dad does. So God made a farmer.

Thank you.

1:50

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition.

Farm and Ranch Worker Legislation

Mr. Jean: I want to thank the agriculture minister for the commitment he made to farmers yesterday to work to stop Bill 6. The ag minister attended a town hall in Red Deer, and did he ever get an earful. He now knows first-hand what a mess the government has made with this. He admitted to the farmers that this is an odd way of making laws. He later told farmers that he would advise the NDP caucus to pull the bill. When is the Premier going to listen to farmers, listen to ranchers, and now listen to her agriculture minister and kill Bill 6?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. This is a prime example of the kind of miscommunication that's being spread around this issue.

I have to say that I want to thank the agriculture minister for showing leadership and coming to the meetings as well as the Minister of Municipal Affairs and the Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour. I think that they've been treating the individuals who have been raising valid concerns with the utmost respect as opposed to what's happened with the staff from the office of the MLA for Chestermere-Rocky View, who referred to one of the people who wrote in about concerns as not superliterate. I think that's disrespectful, and I hope that the Leader of the Official Opposition asks the member to apologize.

Mr. Jean: I am prepared to apologize for this government in their handling of Bill 6.

It is so clear that this government just doesn't understand farming and ranching. Family farms and ranches may be small, but they are very sophisticated operations. They pay attention to markets and commodity prices. They pay attention to taxes and organize themselves to minimize their tax bill. They put family members on the payroll and give them T4s because that's the smart thing to do. That's just one of the many reasons why this government's amendments won't work. When will this government admit that it doesn't know anything at all about farming or ranching and kill this bill?

Ms Hoffman: I know that when you make a mistake and you disrespect somebody and you call them illiterate, you should apologize, Mr. Speaker. I am shocked that the member opposite will not take responsibility for what was done and apologize to the person who's been raising valid concerns in a way that they wanted to reach out to elected officials. Apologize, and let's move on.

Mr. Jean: Right now the jobs minister will be at a Bill 6 come-and-be-told meeting in Okotoks. It won't be pretty. There will not be enough space for all of the ranchers that want to attend. Convoys of farm equipment actually started going there this morning at first light. The minister will hear that everyone involved in agriculture thinks this bill needs to be pulled. She will hear that this government just doesn't get it. Tomorrow farmers will once again rally at the Legislature. They want this NDP government to kill the bill. Why won't the minister listen to farmers and ranchers and kill Bill 6?

Ms Hoffman: The meeting is ongoing. The meeting was moved to the parking lot to accommodate all of the people who wanted to attend. I have to say that that's respectful, Mr. Speaker. When you show up, you have a dialogue, and you treat people with respect as opposed to calling them illiterate. That is the way to actually consult with people and to make sure that you find good solutions. [interjections] The members know that when people have asked us to put things in writing, we're prepared to do that. We have amendments that we'd like to propose. We need to get to the committee stage so that we can amend the bill and put in writing exactly what this bill means.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I don't know where it came from, but I've heard members' first names used. I want to remind you about refraining from that. It was on this side of the House, by the way.

The second question. The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Energy Policies

Mr. Jean: Albertans know that government should not pick winners and losers. It now appears that this is exactly what happened with the climate change panel. There is a media report that four oil companies got a side deal in exchange for endorsing the Premier's initiative. When combined with the royalty panel hinting that some segments of the energy industry will be wiped out by these royalty changes, it means that many Albertans should be very worried about their jobs. How many energy sector jobs were sold down the river by this government so that the Premier could have window dressing at her announcement?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I have to say how proud I am that this government was able to pull together two groups that have typically been on opposite sides of an issue for a very long time. That's what leadership is. You get people together who have competing interests, and you find ways to move issues forward. It didn't happen when the member opposite was in Ottawa. It didn't happen with the last

government when they were in power. We brought together environmental NGOs and industry, and we've got a plan moving forward that they're proud to support.

Mr. Jean: The cracks are showing. The oil well drillers say that the carbon tax is rotten. Several industry leaders and companies were left out of the negotiations with the NDP, and to pull it all together, Albertans are getting hammered with a \$3 billion carbon tax that's coming in the back door. It's a PST; let's face it. When governments pick winners and losers, when they dole out special favours to their friends, when they don't consult with everyone, that threatens investments and jobs in Alberta. Why is this government continuing its risky ideological experiments, that are putting so many Alberta jobs at risk?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. There is no secret here. Our plan is public, and it enjoys public support from a wide range of diverse people, groups, and companies, as you could see by the support that was on the stage with the Premier when the announcement was made about how proud we were moving forward. The only person standing alone here is the member opposite.

Mr. Jean: That's how it works when you ask questions. You stand by yourself.

The government has to be aware of the genuine anxiety of the energy industry to the comments coming from the royalty panel. The suggestion that some segments of the energy industry would not be competitive after this NDP government brings in royalty changes is alarming, to say the least. When any segment of the energy industry disappears, that means the loss of thousands and thousands of good Alberta jobs. We've already lost 65,000 jobs this year because of this government, and the government has to avoid job losses. That's your job. Will the Premier promise Albertans that nothing coming out of the royalty review . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Only the opposition thinks that Albertans should not get fair value for their resources. Only the opposition thinks that we should not work with industry to modernize our climate change strategy, to modernize our royalty system for the 21st century, for Albertans today, and for Albertans tomorrow. We are working in partnership. That's what leadership is. Opposition is doing their job in criticizing it even when we get it right. I don't know why they hate oil and gas so much.

An Hon. Member: Why do you hate oil and gas?

Mr. Jean: I don't. I just hate big, corrupt politicians.

An Hon. Member: Worst of all hate corrupt politicians. [interjections]

Mr. Jean: I didn't say that. We all hate [inaudible]. Don't we all hate [inaudible]?

Mr. Mason: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I'm sorry. Did I hear a point of order?

Mr. Mason: Yeah.

Alberta Health Services

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, the Health minister has doubled down in her support for Alberta Health Services even though the support directly contradicts the views of her colleagues the Minister of Infrastructure and the Premier herself. Perhaps the Health minister has forgotten her own words on social media before being elected. I quote: people are telling me they want strong, local representation; let's learn from the bad AHS superboard move. To the Health minister: did you suddenly change your mind on this, or did you decide that it was easier to stop listening to the people?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We made it really clear during the election that our number one commitment was providing stability to the health care system. We've talked to a lot of Albertans about how they feel moving forward. I've certainly had opportunities to review perspectives. Staff have told us that they want to show up at work in the morning knowing who they'll be reporting to in the afternoon. We're going to make sure that we continue to have systems in place to support stability within the system and not create more chaos.

Mr. Barnes: We're amassing quite an impressive list of ministers who were against AHS before they were for it. The Health minister is trying to claim that her conversion to superboard support was based on stability, but Albertans know that AHS is as stable as a house of cards. Just last week the first order of business for the new board was continuing the revolving door of CEOs and administrators. Will the Health minister agree with the colleague right beside her that this is yet another demonstration of systemic inefficiency and administrative chaos?

2:00

Ms Hoffman: I want to thank the CEO of Alberta Health Services for her service to Alberta, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank her for treating the employees, that she's been working with very closely, in an open and transparent way, and part of that is, when you've decided that it's time to move, letting everybody know. I have to say that I really appreciate the professionalism that she's brought to the position, and I wish her all the best moving forward.

Mr. Barnes: Even the outgoing CEO admitted to tensions between her and the board and ministry. For example, the office of the Privacy Commissioner has said that patient record violations are an epidemic in this province. After AHS employees were disciplined for inappropriately accessing patient data, the nursing union called on the CEO to resign, and since September Alberta Health Services has been in a bitter labour dispute with the AUPE. When will the Health minister acknowledge that it's not her calling the shots but the NDP's union handlers?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. That certainly is not the case. The buck stops with the minister's office.

I have full confidence in and I've heard nothing but praise for the new Alberta Health Services board that we brought in. We have experts who were former deputy ministers for the government of Canada. We have an expert who was running the Canadian Institute for Health Information. We have an expert in harm reduction, who's been a nurse practitioner working on the front lines in Edmonton. We have experts from the University of Calgary who are coming together and making sure that we have the very best system moving forward. I think that we deserve to give them an opportunity to get

it right. They just had their first meeting yesterday, Mr. Speaker. [interjections]

The Speaker: I'll just check with the table. It was my understanding that there was some time left for the minister. [interjections] Hon. members, the Speaker decides the time here, no one else.

The hon. leader of the third party.

Farm and Ranch Worker Legislation

(continued)

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As an elected official and a former cabinet minister I know that when a minister makes a decision, tables a bill, or speaks in this Chamber, that minister is responsible for the outcome. We had the Health minister today and the jobs minister yesterday or the day before say that the buck stops there. The Premier, on the other hand, blames public service staff – official channels, as they call it – and her ministers and throws them all under the bus for errors around communicating Bill 6. To the Premier: will you show the leadership that Albertans deserve and at least two of your ministers have articulated . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. Your time has run out.

In answer to the question, the hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Premier is showing great leadership. She's showing leadership on the international stage by going to Paris and standing up for Alberta jobs and standing up for our global economy. She certainly is happy to acknowledge when a mistake was made. There were errors made in communication through official channels. We all own that, and we're getting it right moving forward.

Mr. McIver: Well, maybe the minister can send a memo to the Premier because she needs that message.

The Minister of JSTL spoke yesterday about how we are witnessing "democracy in action" while at the same time Albertans were kicked out of a consultation meeting. Given that for democracy to work, all the people need to be in the room to have their voices heard, will this minister do what is necessary to make sure that everyone that wants to be listened to on Bill 6 will actually be let into the room and then heard?

The Speaker: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Unfortunately, the room capacity at the space we were at yesterday could not accommodate everyone, which is why I went outside and stood on a bench for two and a half hours to listen to those farmers, to give them an apology for the miscommunication, and to share with them our commitment to moving an amendment forward to ensure that farm families will not be covered by that bill. We listened to every person that went there, and I'm very proud of the action we took in making that happen.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. McIver: Thank you. Now that the minister has admitted bad planning in the room size, they can do better in the future.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to agree with the agriculture minister when he remarked yesterday that it is odd to introduce a bill first and bring in the rules later. To anyone on the front bench over there: do you support Bill 6 in its current form, or do you think that maybe you should, as the agriculture minister says, acknowledge this isn't the right way to do it, talk to farmers and ranchers, and put it on pause until after that is done?

The Speaker: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. We certainly promised better protection for paid farm and ranch workers during the election, and we believe in following through on our commitments. We have heard from farmers loud and clear what their concerns are around protecting the family farm, and we are sorry for that stress. As a result, we will introduce amendments to ensure that farm families will not be covered by this bill. But everyone agrees that safety for paid workers is important, and this bill is focused on bringing those . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Affordable Housing

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Winter is upon us, and with the arrival of beautiful Christmas we also see the arrival of snow. Ice and frost may be enjoyed by many of us, especially those with a home, but it can be a matter of life and death for those with low-income families and without a home. The Alberta plan to end homelessness remained in the lurch for the past four years, and cash-strapped municipalities are all but begging for help. To the minister: at a time when cities are struggling to address the housing needs of Albertans, how can this government justify leaving them high and dry?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. We are making investments in affordable housing units. They haven't met current need. We've inherited over a billion dollars of deferred maintenance and renewal costs, and the stock itself isn't meeting the current demand. I'm proud that we're moving forward with adding more than 800 new social housing and seniors' lodge units as well as renovating and replacing more than 1,900 units across Alberta, but we do need to do more. I'm excited that there is a new federal government, who seems to share a commitment to affordable housing, and we have a new provincial government. We'll work with our municipalities as the three orders to serve the citizens, that we are all responsible to.

Dr. Swann: The province's failure to provide affordable housing is forcing cities to turn to private funders in the middle of a recession. In Calgary the Resolve initiative has brought in private investors to raise \$120 million to build affordable housing for 3,400 vulnerable and homeless Calgarians. To the minister: should municipalities now expect to depend on the private sector, and how does this really develop a sustainable housing plan?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have to commend the Albertans who roll up their sleeves and pitch in and do everything they can to make sure that they are supporting one another, and this is an example of that. I want to thank industry for stepping up. I also have to say that we are investing \$164 million in affordable housing, so that's \$25 million over the actuals from last year. We know that there's need for additional supports in the system. We're certainly moving forward on having a thoughtful plan, but this isn't something that the provincial government is going to do on its own, that the municipal government is going to do on its own, that even the federal government is going to do on

its own. We need to work collaboratively to make sure that we take responsibility and support people in their most basic human needs.

Dr. Swann: This is a fundamental responsibility of government. Given the tremendous savings that it would mean and a commitment to humanity, if housing first means anything, the government has to commit more to housing, not only badly needed infrastructure but investment over the long term, to reduce the costs of homelessness in human terms and in financial terms.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. This morning we listened to amendments that would have required us to make sure that we didn't have any deficits. This is the type of reason why we sometimes need to run deficits, because turning our back on people who are literally out in the cold is not an answer. I do look forward to bringing forward a plan in collaboration with all parties in this House that we can proudly support moving forward.

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

2:10 Renewable Energy

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's new climate leadership plan will strengthen our economy and make Alberta one of the most environmentally responsible energy producers in the world. Many constituents are proud of the government's leadership on this important issue but are worried about having a government setting high goals and not actually being able to follow through on them. To the Minister of Energy: is the recently announced 30 per cent renewables goal an achievable target?

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, absolutely. During the climate change panel, the work they did, they worked with the Alberta electrical system operator, known as AESO, to ensure that plans could be handled. The AESO is a widely regarded body within Canada and has a good core of competent people. They are very confident that this can be established in the next 15 years. So a 30 per cent target is absolutely in range.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that current renewable energy capacity, be it wind, solar, geothermal, or even biomass, all differ greatly, depending on the technology being implemented, to the same minister: what renewable technologies will be able to meet these targets?

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Well, as I mentioned, we have a competitive electricity market, and this will foster competitive forces as we green the grid. We have an abundance of natural resources here in our wind, solar, geothermal, and biomass, and we will be looking at all of those. In the short term we expect to see some action in wind and solar in competitive options, and we'll have more to report on that.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we are competing for investment for renewable energy, again to the same minister: are we confident that private companies will invest in Alberta under this new architecture?

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you for the question. Very confident. Last week I was in Calgary for three days meeting with industry. We've set out the what. Now we're looking at the how. We met with companies like Enbridge, TransCanada, Suncor, Capital

Power, TransAlta, just to name a few. With companies like these ready to invest as well as ones from around the world, we are confident there will be no shortage of companies. In fact, I was joined on Monday by ATCO, AltaLink, Enbridge, Acciona, and EDF to announce the next steps in our renewable plan.

Urgent Health Care in Airdrie

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, close your eyes and imagine it's after 10 p.m. and a loved one suddenly needs urgent care. For those of us from Airdrie, the worry and fear is that we will not make it in time: will the baby be born on the Deerfoot on our 45-minute commute, or will my child die? This government's critical lack of infrastructure care is hurting communities like Airdrie and resulting in senseless deaths. Can the Minister of Health explain to my constituents here today why a community of 60,000 people does not have access to a 24-hour health care facility?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I grew up in a community that was 30 minutes away from the closest hospital, actually 50 kilometres, so it was 30 minutes away. I have to say that when I was on that highway, I knew that there was a light at the end of the tunnel. It would be nice if it was closer to home; I need to acknowledge that. I have been in conversations with the mayor, and I will be visiting Airdrie on December 14. We have had very constructive discussions. My office has also been in touch with project proponents, and we've met with some of them in person, and we'll continue to learn more.

Mrs. Pitt: It's sad that a lot of those conversations haven't made it my way or to those involved.

Mr. Speaker, given that Alberta Health Services is cutting front-line workers and fired Dr. Kyne, one of Airdrie's leading health care advocates in our community, who was fired for standing up for our community's long overdue needs, and given that this action comes as a direct insult to the community members here today, will this minister correct the actions of Alberta Health Services, reinstate Dr. Kyne, and provide the people of Airdrie with around-the-clock health care?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, we've talked about how inappropriate it is to bring up somebody's HR situation in this House, and I stand by that.

In terms of what has happened, there was an individual fired, there was a contract that was not renewed, but I am not going to get into the specific details because it's not fair to either party, Mr. Speaker, and I think that the members opposite owe due respect to the individuals involved not to bring up personal matters with regard to HR in this House.

Mrs. Pitt: It's inappropriate this the Health minister will not take responsibility for her own department.

Mr. Speaker, given that this government created the 2015 budget and given that the Minister of Infrastructure emphasized during question period yesterday that spending \$1 billion was not as important as keeping Albertans safe, again to the minister: why has your government ignored the people of Airdrie and their safety by keeping us out of your capital plan?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let me be crystal clear. I had nothing to do with the HR situation. The HR

situation is between an employer and an employee, so I want to be very clear about that.

In terms of the questions that have been asked around the capital plan and specifically a facility for Airdrie, I need to work with evidence for all communities. I understand that there is a clearly expressed case for why the proponents believe they should be the top priority. I also need to weigh the evidence from all communities throughout Alberta. But no matter where you live, you should be assured that you have the right care in the right place at the right time by the right health professional, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Farm and Ranch Worker Legislation (continued)

Dr. Starke: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. While opinions on Bill 6 differ, members on both sides of the Assembly, up to and including the Premier, are in agreement that the communication has been an unmitigated disaster. We have the Premier blaming unnamed government officials and information sheets, that I will table, with what is now misinformation appearing and then disappearing off the government website. To the minister of labour: the buck stops with you. Given the level of confusion that you have created surrounding Bill 6, why are you still forging ahead with this clearly flawed piece of legislation?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know we don't typically talk about that somebody is not in the House, but I want to say in this circumstance that the minister of labour is meeting front line with farmers to ensure that she understands their concerns.

Mr. Jean: Point of order.

Ms Hoffman: I'm happy to make sure that I pass along the feedback that's been raised.

In terms of moving forward, we're absolutely willing to bring forward amendments to ensure clarity on this matter, Mr. Speaker, and we hope to do so later today in committee.

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the minister for that because given that we've been assured by the ministers of agriculture and labour that Bill 6 was written only after extensive consultation and with widespread agreement from farmers and given that now the government admits that the bill needs to be amended, to the minister: exactly whom did you consult with while you were hastily preparing the amendments?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, I believe that consultation was going on for about 10 years while that party was in government, and one of the reasons why the consultation happened is because there was a tragic farm incident, the Chandler incident. A father was lost. There have been calls for years to do something to offer the same protections to farm workers in Alberta that they have in every other province. So the consultations continue to happen with hands-on farmers today. It's been with industry so far under this government, but past government consulted as well.

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that many newly elected members of this Legislature are bewildered by the legislate first and draw up regulations later and given that one the most baffled by this process is the minister, who is the self-proclaimed champion for Alberta's farmers and ranchers, who said yesterday that, and I

quote, it is an odd way of doing things, to the minister of agriculture: if you aren't comfortable with how you're proceeding and given the overwhelming opposition from the very people for whom you are supposed to be champion, why are you ramming Bill 6 through?

Ms Hoffman: Since the tragic death of Kevan Chandler in June 2006, Mr. Speaker, 122 others have died in work-related incidents on farms and ranches in Alberta, and they're the people that deserve to have these protections and the safety moving forward.

Just to be very crystal clear, this is about farm and ranch employees. This is not about family members. This is not about friends. It's not about volunteers. We're going to make sure that we have a crystal clear explanation of that in the amendments that we plan to bring forward.

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

2:20 Rural Health Care

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Currently rural hospitals have high numbers of ER visits from patients who cannot get an appointment with a regular family physician. Many physicians are not even taking on new patients because their caseloads are full. As you full well know, ER visits have a far greater cost to the system than clinic visits. To the Minister of Health: can you explain to me and, in fact, all rural Albertans what you are doing to help them with their medical needs in this regard?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for this question. We've appointed what I have to say is a top-notch board for Alberta Health Services, and I couldn't be prouder of the expertise they're going to bring to that organization. As members know, Alberta Health Services oversees hospital operations. Ensuring that they have a stable budget, that they have predictable funding, and that we're not laying off thousands of people by bringing in billion-dollar cuts every year will certainly help this situation.

Mr. Loewen: Yeah. A superboard that you didn't support before. Minister, it's not working, obviously.

Given that the Valleyview community found a doctor willing to come and work in a local clinic and given that this doctor had specialized training in traditional and aboriginal medicine and was uniquely qualified to work with the rural and aboriginal patients in this area, will the minister tell us here today why, even though this doctor made numerous attempts to contact AHS, his calls were not returned and he was allowed to slip through the cracks and was forced to go elsewhere?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Of course, we want to make sure that we have the right care in the right place at the right time by the right health professional. The system that we have right now has flexibility around where people can offer their practice. I am getting used to doing these late-night phone calls. If the member has specific details that he needs to share, he can certainly contact my office at any time, not just in the late hours of the night. We certainly would be happy to have somebody follow up and provide some clarity if it's required.

Mr. Loewen: That's really interesting since this was all spelled out clearly in a letter that the minister received and I was CCed on.

Given that this doctor had practised medicine in Alberta for 11 years, is a Canadian citizen, had practised in the rural locum program in the hospital that he wished to join, and had full hospital privileges in another Alberta hospital, can you tell us, Minister: why does the government have to make things so difficult? Why did he have to apply again for hospital privileges when, in fact, in doing so, his application was forgotten about and caused this community to lose an opportunity to have the health care it deserves?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll be happy to follow up with regard to this specific matter.

In terms of some of the questions that have been asked by that party, there was a question about a 0.2 employee, a 0.4 employee, and misinformation shared around the situation of a hospital where there was water and members opposite said that it was feces. I will be happy to ensure that there's clarity, but there are ways, certainly, to do this. Trying to blow up situations in this House is not the most respectful way to treat health professionals.

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

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Back in June I let the Minister of Health know what was going on with the dialysis bus in Lac La Biche. I was encouraged that she visited and seemed to care about the community. Since then, though, nothing has happened. This wheel-less treatment centre would be an embarrassment in a third-world country. No bones about it; the people of Lac La Biche have lost their trust that the minister will do the right thing. To the Health minister: why not cut the \$700,000 carbon tax propaganda budget and fix this problem?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker and to the member for his hospitality this summer when I did come to see first-hand the situation he was speaking of. I have to say that growing up in a rural community, there were a lot of times we had to be on the highway to go to Edmonton and other municipalities for service. Being able to have service in your own community is certainly an asset. I want to acknowledge that I don't think that it's the ideal situation, but I'm certainly happy that individuals living in Lac La Biche do not have to be on the highway, particularly in the winter, three times a week.

Mr. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, given that when the minister was in Lac La Biche, we discussed the glaring bathtub issue, which is still not installed, by the way, and given that since June there has been plenty of time for the minister to spout hot air on the issue but not hot water for showers and tubs and whereas the minister should know that the showers have now broken down in that hospital, resulting in a temporary set-up in a patient service room, when can we expect her to live up to her title of Minister of Health and actually deliver real results for real Albertans?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the question. In terms of the specific bathtub sometimes there are specifics that are hard to recall because, of course, we have a significant system here in Alberta. In terms of the specific bathtub, when I did ask the question, I was told that it was operational and had been hooked up.

I will confirm that that is indeed the case because that is inconsistent with what I was informed of by the hospital staff.

Mr. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, there seems to be a real disconnect between this government and rural Albertans. Since July the northeast region of Alberta has been feeling the acute and tragic loss of a great pathologist, and to date AHS has not even advertised for a replacement. Given that the constituents in northeastern Alberta deserve the same level of care as all other Albertans, to the minister: when is your ministry and AHS going to stop dragging your feet on rural health care issues?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. This government is actually investing in infrastructure moving forward as opposed to what the Official Opposition proposed during the election, which was cutting lower priority infrastructure projects, including \$9 billion worth of infrastructure. I find it very shocking that they would say that we're dragging our feet when they're actually the ones who are proposing significant cuts to infrastructure spending in Alberta. We're going to move forward and make sure that we continue to have the right supports for Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-North West.

Sexual Health Education in Schools

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday we saw a historic moment in this Legislature with the vote on Bill 7. I felt particularly compelled by the conversation around educating people about LGBTQ identities. An excellent place to include this is with comprehensive sexual health education. Comprehensive sexual health education is an important tool for Alberta students and an important tool in helping to create an inclusive atmosphere in our schools. To the Minister of Education: can you tell me how you plan to make sure these issues are included in the curriculum?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. Certainly, we know that sexual consent is the law, and we need to reflect that in our curriculum throughout K to 12 and beyond. It's very important, for example, when we have these LGBTQ issues and GSAs, to not just impose laws from above, from Edmonton, but to have it permeate through the education system because that's, after all, the way people internalize values and the way that they act on them and are responsible for them as well. You can make laws, but unless people actually have it in their hearts, then they're not very meaningful at all.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, education and dialogue are the key to understanding. Given that as elected officials we should be aiming to enhance the conversation with actual consultation, will the Minister of Education commit to bringing this issue to the Families and Communities Committee to allow all parties to work with interested people and groups to develop a policy that can be embraced by every school board in the province?

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thanks, Mr. Speaker, and thanks for the question. Certainly, I think it's important that we use all avenues available. As I said before, it's an educative moment not just for our children and parents but for all of us as well. The debate that we had on the Human Rights Act over the last few days I think was an edifying

and educative moment for all of us and for the general public as well. I'm very interested in speaking to the Families and Communities Committee to see if they are able and willing to help me on this because, quite frankly, it's a very big effort, but the results and the gravity of the situation are just as large.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the Education minister. I know there are certain people who worry about the risks of legislating social policy in Alberta, but if we're going to work on these issues and be effective, we need to do just that. Can the minister assure the House that there will be real consultation on comprehensive sexual health education that would be available to all Alberta students?

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Yes. Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I know that, certainly, the MLA asking is very involved in working with these issues. As I said before, I need all hands on deck to ensure that we do have a comprehensive sexual health education program embedded into the curriculum and then also infused throughout all of the things that we do here through the Legislature. Certainly, I am interested in working through this. It'll be a process that involves moving ideas along a little bit, perhaps bumping up against some established values, but at the end it's worth it for our children.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

2:30 Services for Francophone Albertans

Ms McKittrick: Merci, M. le Président. Je suis vraiment fière des députés dans cette Assemblée, où il y a au moins 15 députés qui sont francophones ou qui parlent français.

[Translation] Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to be an MLA in this Assembly, where at least 15 MLAs speak French or are francophone.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta has a long history of contributions made by the francophone community. Twelve per cent of Albertans have French ethnic or cultural ancestor origins. [interjections] According to the 2011 . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, do you have a question?

If you don't have a question, is there a response from the front bench?

Your time is up. Do you have a question?

Ms McKittrick: Yeah, I have a question. [interjections] To the minister of culture: what is your department doing to support francophone and minority language rights throughout the province?

The Speaker: Hon. member, you've got to get more brief with your comments.

Speaker's Ruling Timing in Question Period

The Speaker: There are choices that I have. I can be flexible or be arbitrary. On both sides of the House it's practised, and that's what I intend to do. I also appreciate that these are not always the simplest decisions to make. If I make a choice to allow it, it may be the same on the other side. The question is whether or not I apply it fairly. I intend to do so, and I believe the record says that I have.

Hon. members, when you are asking, making your point, I talked yesterday about your preambles on both sides of the House. They are consuming the very time that you want and need.

Services for Francophone Albertans (continued)

The Speaker: Can I go to your first supplemental question? Do you have it?

Ms McKittrick: Sure.

The Speaker: Quickly, please.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that francophone schools have seen rapid increases in enrolment over the last few years, I'm wondering what supports are available to francophone school boards across Alberta.

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. Certainly, we see our francophone community growing exponentially here in the province of Alberta; thus, we are making decisions about expanding our francophone education system to match that. For example, we've been working to expand our francophone capacity in Sherwood Park, in Edmonton, and in Calgary as well, and we're very proud to do so. Our government stands to enrich and expand our capacity and the services that we provide to our francophone community.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we need to support our francophone community, can the minister detail some of the community efforts and services that are already offered not because of the law but because the government wants to do so?

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, I think we're seeing a great flowering in the capacity for us to offer services in French, not just in terms of education but in regard to health, employment, settlement, legal assistance, early childhood development. You know, the francophone community here in the province, in fact, leads in many ways with their early childhood provisions that they put in their schools. We could learn a lot to do so in our own English public schools here across the province. We're very proud of how we're working together. People are looking to bonjour.alberta.ca as a mechanism by which they can see all of the services that we provide en français.

Government Policies

Mr. MacIntyre: Mr. Speaker, recently the Premier cited that all of the problems that have surrounded Bill 6 have been due to bureaucrats miscommunicating the message around Bill 6. Now, let's forget for a moment that this was a directive from her and her ministers, and let's gloss over the fact that the Premier has no problem throwing her underlings under a bus. To the Premier: since you've singled out your bureaucrats for creating the hot water you're in, have you fired any or asked any of them to resign, or are you simply saying: let them eat cake?

Ms Hoffman: Let me add to the pile. I think that members opposite have certainly embraced the opportunity to spread misinformation.

In terms of HR matters we will certainly be addressing them appropriately, but in this House is not the way that we plan on doing that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. MacIntyre: Given that both bills 202 and 6 need broad government amendments and the ministers of labour and Agriculture and Forestry have a combined communication budget of \$1.8 million and since all this government seems to be able to communicate are propaganda pieces and misinformation, apparently, does the Premier think that this is an effective use of her politburo's resources if they can't effectively convey a concept to the very people these bills impact?

The Speaker: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have certainly made it clear that our government apologizes to the farmers for the stress and anxiety that it caused them to believe that the family farm wouldn't be addressed. That's why we're introducing an amendment just to introduce language to ensure those families can rest assured that families will not be covered by that bill. We will move forward to ensure paid workers are safe, but we do recognize that farming is not just a business but a way of life, and we will respect and protect that way of life.

Mr. MacIntyre: Mr. Speaker, given her own railing against the ineffectiveness of the WCB while she was in opposition – quote, Alberta has the most miserable compensation board in the country, and Alberta workers suffer for it; end quote – why is the Premier now forcing this apparently miserable system upon 45,000 farmers?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This bill is about establishing a minimum standard of protection for paid workers, and it is important that those workers are protected. This bill is focused on bringing protection for paid employees in line with other Alberta workers. Within that, though, we understand that farm and ranch families are a cornerstone of this economy, and we will work with them to ensure that they can still enjoy and protect the way of life to which they are entitled.

Carbon Tax Revenue Utilization

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, we have heard this government sing the praises of their carbon tax both here and abroad. However, what we have not heard are details around how this tax will be indeed revenue neutral. To the minister of environment: given that British Columbia has legislated to return every single dollar it collects from their carbon tax, which is true revenue neutrality, and on your own website returning money from the carbon tax to Albertans is listed last when detailing how the revenue will be spent, why won't you come clean and admit that your carbon tax is not revenue neutral?

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: I think that in the announcement it was made fairly clear that there are going to be two buckets, one to entice industry for technology and one to help consumers who find some of the prices difficult.

Mr. Gotfried: To the minister of the environment, Alberta's own Robin Hood: given that when asked if the money from the carbon tax would be used to reduce other taxes, exactly what B.C. does, this Premier stated that that would not necessarily lead to the kind of change we are trying to generate here while also stating that some people may actually benefit financially from measures within this plan through direct rebates, will you admit that the lack of revenue

neutrality in your plan makes this carbon tax more about wealth redistribution than about tackling climate change?

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. We're proud of the message that we are sending in cleaning up our environment and changing the behaviour of all of us for our future and for our children's. Every dollar will be put back here in Alberta, building our economy, creating jobs, reducing pollution, and opening up those new conversations for pipelines to be built.

2:40

Mr. Gotfried: Also to the minister of environment: given that this government does not intend to reduce taxes with money obtained through the carbon tax and given that middle-income Albertans now fear that commuting to work, driving their kids to sports, and heating their homes will now place an undue financial burden upon them with no rebates or tax reductions in sight, why does your government think that tax slapping the everyday lives of hard-working Alberta families – again, kicking them while they are down – is the best way to address climate change?

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. Again, our climate change is going to strengthen our economy and make Alberta the most environmentally responsible energy producer in the world. This is important because if we can get those pipelines built, that brings tons more jobs to Alberta and it strengthens everybody and it brings money into our coffers.

Members' Statements

(continued)

Anniversary of l'École Polytechnique Shootings

Ms Payne: Mr. Speaker, on Wednesday, December 6, 1989, 26 years ago, 14 women were murdered in the halls of their engineering school at l'École Polytechnique in Montreal. Fourteen women lost their lives for the simple reason that they were women studying in a nontraditional field. Before opening fire, their killer said: you're women; you're going to be engineers; you're all a bunch of feminists; I hate feminists. Yet in the weeks and months following the massacre the media downplayed the gender-based violence in this attack, saying that it wasn't about women and it wasn't about feminism. We know that this isn't true.

December 6 marks the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women. On campuses across the country students' unions and women's centres will hold vigils honouring the victims of the Montreal massacre and honouring all of the women who have lost their lives to domestic violence.

Twenty-six years have come and gone. In those years we've seen some steps forward and some steps back. Domestic violence is no longer considered just a private marital issue. Governments across the country, including our own, provide financial support for women's shelters. Yet those same shelters turn away nearly twice as women as they are able to help. Social media has become a tool for misogynists to spew hateful invectives and threats against women in power, including many women in this Chamber and our Premier. Sadly, it is still considered okay in some circles to say: I hate feminists.

Today I rise to honour the 14 women who were murdered in their classrooms in Montreal. I rise in honour of every woman who has faced violence and hatred simply because she is a woman. I add my

voice to the many who call for an end to gender-based violence and an end to social and systemic gender equality. I rise to say that I am a proud feminist.

Economic Development

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, limited government, regulatory efficiency, open markets, a world-class financial centre, a highly educated and motivated workforce: no, this is not today's Alberta. Perhaps it could, should, and will be in the decades ahead, but not on our current course. Many have said that this is Canada's millennium of the Pacific, so perhaps we need to learn something from our friends and trading partners in Asia.

Hong Kong, my second home, has a population of just over 7 million, negligible natural resources, and a GDP per capita almost \$10,000 U.S. higher than Canada. Foreign direct investment is \$15 billion higher than Canada. It has been recognized as the world's freest economy for 21 consecutive years. What drives this bastion of economic success? An entrepreneurial can-do attitude, an unparalleled work ethic, low taxes, robust foreign investment, low unemployment, limited government, regulatory efficiency, and leveraging of human capital against global opportunities.

Does this sound familiar? Yes, this is the Alberta I grew up in, that allowed Albertans and newcomers from across Canada and around the world to strive and thrive, to know and feel what the Alberta advantage meant to them and their families, and to have hope for the success of their children, grandchildren, and for generations to come. Yes, this is the dreaded 44 years that we often hear maligned in this House, and, yes, the Alberta advantage was real. I'm here to tell you that it and Albertans are worth fighting for, and I intend to do just that. Let's do the right thing to protect our planet, but let's do it with the innovative, problem-solving, can-do, entrepreneurial work ethic that we are famous for across this country and around the world.

Alberta, let's take our rightful place as a responsible, resource-rich leader in the global economy, but let us not kill the Alberta advantage in getting there. Most certainly, that is not the Alberta way.

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

Autism Spectrum Disorder

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak about a neurological disorder affecting 1 in 68 Albertans. Autism spectrum disorder is a neurological condition that affects the ability of an individual to form relationships, communicate with others, and deal with abstract concepts.

The province of Alberta has long been considered a leader in children's services for those living with autism and other developmental disabilities; however, when autism is present, it changes the lives not only of children but of whole families. Parents with affected children find their lives turned upside down with worry for their children's well-being, the effect on their other children, or the strain on their marriage.

It is estimated that the costs associated with raising a child with autism is over \$3 million over a lifetime. Given these high demands on the family, the services of community partners are vital. One such partner is right here in Edmonton. Since 1971 Autism Edmonton, previously known as autism society of Edmonton area, has been providing services with support to people in the community who are living with autism spectrum disorder. Autism Edmonton has become known as a go-to source for families, individuals, and professionals looking for information about

autism. Autism Edmonton helps families and individuals navigate their options for services, find vital information, and develop skills and peer support through facilitated activity and discussion groups.

On October 23 I had the great fortune to attend Opening Doors for Autism, a gala held biannually to raise funds for Autism Edmonton, where the total for a single evening of fundraising exceeded \$500,000. This significant generosity will help to provide families with much-needed support, information, and advocacy services.

I would like to extend thanks to the many sponsors and say congratulations to Autism Edmonton, who, like so many Albertans, has decided after 44 years to make a significant change. Congratulations on your new name, Autism Edmonton, and thank you for your service and support to Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Women Parliamentarians

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 1917 Louise McKinney and Roberta MacAdams became the first women elected to this Legislature. Since that time, there have been almost 1,000 MLAs elected to this House. Only 99 have been women.

A significant move forward occurred on May 5, when I was proud to join 24 of my female colleagues in the NDP caucus, bringing us the closest any government party has ever come to achieving gender parity. Much work remains to be done, however. There are numerous barriers and reasons women hesitate to put themselves forward to run for public office. Breaking the glass ceiling of a traditionally male-dominated environment, discrimination, intrusive public scrutiny, and the expectations around women's roles in child care and child rearing are just a few.

As Deputy Speaker I'm the Alberta steering committee rep for Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians, a nonpartisan organization that is dedicated to achieving more equal representation of women in government across the Commonwealth. CWP engages in a number of activities such as outreach to young women, mentorship, raising awareness, proposing supportive legislation, and, perhaps most importantly, peer support so we can become more effective in our roles.

I believe we're well positioned here in this Legislature to take some real steps forward in removing barriers and enhancing the ability of women to be successful in the political arena. I'm looking forward to working with CWP, with our new Ministry of Status of Women, and all the women in this House to make some significant gains in that regard and to find better ways to support and encourage each other.

Yesterday we celebrated the inclusion of gender identity language in the human rights legislation during second reading of Bill 7. This is an important and significant step forward for Alberta, but we have a long way to go when it comes to basic human rights for half the population. By working to ensure that women are represented more fairly in our government institutions, we are leading the way towards having a more equal and equitable representation among our legislators, one that better reflects the true makeup of our province and the people we serve.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

2:50

Bo Cooper

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to talk about one of my constituents, Bo Cooper. Bo is only 26 years old and has been

diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia for the third time since 2011. He has used up a lifetime worth of chemotherapy and has exhausted all known therapies in Canada. His current treatment of this medication therapy is in the final days of funding. As of December 10 it will expire, and he will have nothing left to keep this leukemia at bay. His most likely prognosis at this stage is death at 26 years old.

However, there is one last hope. There is one therapy that is available only in the United States. There is a specialist that has been providing a different type of cellular therapy, and in her study she has a 90 per cent success rate for leukemia. She has cured cancer. Unfortunately, it is not approved in Canada. Thus, Alberta Health Services will not pay for this treatment, and this family cannot afford a treatment that runs over half a million dollars. The bureaucracy has lost sight of its mandate to help Albertans and simply sees a paper with a name on it and looks at the associated costs before making its decision. Patients are not statistics; they are people. Denying Bo this opportunity to receive this life-saving treatment is an indictment to our broken health care system. It's a system that's supposed to mean that those who need access to health care will receive access to health care. It's clearly not, and it's not for Bo.

Almost \$20 billion is spent on health care every year by this government, yet Bo can't get a life-saving treatment that he needs from this government. We spend more on health care than any other province in this country, and still people are left behind. It's a broken system funded by a government that thinks spending \$700,000 on a budget public relations campaign is appropriate, the same government that spends another \$700,000 on a PR campaign for a carbon tax. If spending on ad campaigns is fine, then this Health minister needs to tell her department that spending a fraction of that to save the life of a 26-year-old man is the right thing to do.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The Minister of Education and Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to table the appropriate number of copies of a document that I referred to yesterday during second reading of Bill 8, talking about school board consultations. It just gives an itemization of what we had been doing in our consultations during September and October.

The Speaker: The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the requisite number of copies that were referenced by the Health minister with regard to the e-mail that was in reaction to Bill 6.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce two tablings to you this afternoon, and I'd like to go back to the words of the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo just a few minutes ago. He talked about how statistics are not just numbers; they're people. These articles that I'll be tabling today are about people who could be potentially affected by Bill 6. The first article is titled Kevan Chandler Killed in Grain Elevator: Alberta Family Gets Compensation Six Years Later. Some of the text reads: "Lorna Chandler's husband, Kevan, died on Father's Day in 2006."

The Speaker: Hon. member, can you just indicate in a generic sense what options you have and put them to the table.

Mr. Westhead: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. The second article, sir, is: Alberta Farm Worker Fights to Change Labour Laws.

The Speaker: Are there any others?

Mr. Westhead: No, those are the two, and I'd encourage the members opposite to read these to put a face to the bill.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Hon. members, I rise today to table five copies of the page biographies for the First Session of the 29th Legislature, fall 2015, and I know that I speak for all of the House that we do very much appreciate these quiet young people who tolerate us. I would ask that you all give them applause.

Mr. Yao: I have one more tabling, sir.

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Yao: I rise today to table the requisite number of copies of a GoFundMe page for Bo Cooper. I ask that all members review the story and consider spreading it on your public media. I know you all have access to such things. It's a sad day in Canada when we have to fund raise for someone's health.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Dr. Starke: Mr. Speaker, thank you. I now would rise to table the requisite number of copies of an 11-page document entitled Cultivating Safe, Fair & Healthy Workplaces for Alberta's Farms & Ranches. This is the informational document that was on the website, that has now mysteriously disappeared, but we're very glad to be able to provide a hard copy for anyone who wishes to read it.

The Speaker: The leader of the third party.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a letter here that a farmer and rancher named Coral Robinson read on the steps of the Legislature. I read it last night in the House, and I promised to table it today, and so it is.

The Speaker: The Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the requisite number of copies of a mother's plea to the Health minister.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings. One is a petition from an organization called Dying With Dignity, with over 400 signatures from people who are calling on the Legislative Assembly to investigate, make public, provide some venues for discussing assisted dying. I'll table those.

Following that, an article from the *Edmonton Journal* entitled Edmonton Affordable Housing Projects Left to Die on the Order Paper.

Thank you.

Speaker's Ruling Timing in Question Period

The Speaker: Hon. members, first of all, a comment from myself. When I made the comment earlier about the 35 seconds and my efforts to try and give the opportunity for all members to include their comments within that period, I in fact, after that, read the

points of order. As I move forward, I want you all to be aware that the 35 seconds will simply apply in very black-and-white terms. If you're not finished, we will use the standing orders which we have in place. That was a mistake on my part.

We also had three points of order today. I will call on the Government House Leader, I think, for the first one.

Point of Order Parliamentary Language

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise under Standing Order 23(h), (i), and (j). At 1:53 today the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre referred to members on this side as corrupt politicians. At 492 of *Beauchesne's*, page 149, the term "corrupt" is listed as an unparliamentary word.

Mr. Speaker, It's unfortunate that some members opposite would turn a legitimate difference on policy and a legitimate difference of opinion into accusations of corruption on any side. That is beneath the dignity of the hon. member opposite and lowers the tone of the House and, in my view, is unnecessary and unacceptable. We can disagree most strongly about the direction that we want to go on this and other matters, but that does not suggest in any way that politicians on either side are corrupt, merely that they disagree.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to address the point of order this afternoon. Without the benefit of the Blues, I'm not entirely sure what may have been said or wasn't said. I was aware of some banter going back and forth across the aisle. I don't think it was spoken in this House because the hon. member is a hundred per cent correct that it would be wildly unparliamentary to call members of the other side of the House corrupt. Some of the off-the-sheet banter I heard was a statement around not liking corrupt politicians.

3:00

Again, I'll have to see if it's in the Blues, but at no point, that I heard, was there an accusation made against that side, just that we don't like corrupt politicians. I think that the other side also agrees with that statement. We have not, would not, and will not make an accusation that there is a corrupt politician on that side of the House in this place. That didn't happen today, barring seeing the Blues. That didn't happen today, and it won't happen in the future.

The Speaker: Hon. Opposition House Leader, you're suggesting that we wait for the Blues. If it was said, do I interpret that this would be an apology from you?

Mr. Cooper: Oh, certainly. If it was said that someone on this side of the House made an accusation that said that that side of the House was corrupt, one hundred per cent, unequivocally, I would withdraw that statement. I don't believe that took place today, but if it did, I will certainly withdraw it.

The Speaker: Unfortunately, I did not hear the remark myself, so I would use this opportunity to remind the House that what is called banter, particularly today, is simply not the stature that this group of people ought to set for themselves. It is far too low. I would therefore, I think, need to simply ask that you be more cautious of those comments, and please avoid them at all cost.

There was a second point of order raised by the Official Opposition, I believe.

Point of Order Referring to the Absence of a Member

Mr. Cooper: Yes. We have two separate points of order. For the first one the reference can be found in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, chapter 4, attendance. If you are looking at the second edition, 2009, it's on page 213. Earlier in question period the Health minister made a statement very similar to: I'm not going to refer to the absence of a member. Something to that effect. I'm without the Blues, but some sort of statement that was very close to: I wouldn't want to refer to the absence of a member; however, in this case they are out of the House discussing this bill. I just think that we have practices, procedures, guidelines, rules in the Assembly for a reason, and to get right up next to a rule and tell everybody, "I'm about to break a rule" doesn't give permission for that to take place.

I just think that we need to try to stay within the confines. Listen, this side of the House has been guilty, and we've stepped outside of those confines from time to time. But I think it is imperative that we honour the traditions of the Assembly. It's my opinion that that wasn't honoured today.

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Yeah. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think the hon. Opposition House Leader has a good point. We will avoid skating close to the edge of the rules in the future.

The Speaker: Thank you.

I'd remind all members of the House to be cognizant of that. I think there was also a point of order 3.

Mr. Cooper: Yeah. You know, I will withdraw that point of order.

The Speaker: What an excellent idea, hon. member. Folks, you ought to laugh more and yell less.

Point of Order Parliamentary Language

The Speaker: Hon. members, yesterday afternoon I reserved ruling on a point of order raised by the Official Opposition House Leader. The point of order arose from the following remarks by the Minister of Environment and Parks and Status of Women in response to a question by the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, which can be found at page 712 of yesterday's *Alberta Hansard*. "Had the Official Opposition bothered to engage in the climate process at all, given that they were so busy denying the science of climate change . . ." The Official Opposition House Leader rose under Standing Order 23(j), stating that the minister's comments constituted "insulting language . . . likely to create disorder."

The hon. Government House Leader spoke to the veracity of the minister's statement.

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster touched on something that caused me to delay a ruling when he mentioned a ruling by former Speaker Zwodzesky concerning the use of the term "climate change deniers." That ruling can be found at page 1719 of *Alberta Hansard* for April 8, 2013. The former Speaker's ruling that the expression "climate change deniers" was presumptively out of order was based on circumstances that existed at the time and what was occurring in the Assembly at the time.

I am not inclined to rule out of order a particular phrase at this time. As members should be aware, whether a word or a phrase is unparliamentary depends on the context in which it is used. As stated in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, page 619:

Thus, language deemed unparliamentary one day may not necessarily be deemed unparliamentary the following day. The codification of unparliamentary language has proven impractical . . .

And I have a book that thick.

. . . as it is in the context in which words or phrases are used that the Chair must consider when deciding whether or not they should be withdrawn.

To be clear, I'm not sanctioning the use of expressions that deliberately incite members of the Assembly and violate Standing Order 23(h), (i), or (j). On this point of order I'm finding it to be a dispute between members on facts – indeed as *Beauchesne's*, sixth edition, paragraph 494, put it – but want to caution members about using inflammatory language. We all realize that this is a place of sometimes heated discussion and debate. I would continue to ask all of the members to respect this institution and its rules.

I would rule that there was no point of order.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

The Chair: I'd like to call the committee to order.

3:10

Bill 5

Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act

The Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 5, the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act. Bill 5 significantly expands Alberta's existing public-sector compensation disclosure. It is encouraging to see that many members voiced their overall support for the initiative during first and second readings.

I will be introducing a government amendment at the conclusion of my speech, and I look forward to and anticipate amendments being brought forward by the opposition parties as well.

These bodies will have to disclose the names and compensation of employees who earn more than \$125,000 in compensation, including overtime, severance, and bonuses. The threshold is intended to focus disclosure on higher income earners and managers rather than front-line staff. There will be no threshold for board members in the entities covered by the bill. As members have mentioned, these positions have sometimes been criticized or perceived as being patronage appointments. We have also considered that the vast majority of board members do not receive a salary. Instead, they often receive per diem rates for meetings. Therefore, if this bill is passed, all compensation paid to board members of these agencies, boards, and commissions covered under the act will be required to be disclosed. Requiring the disclosure of compensation paid to these positions is in keeping with the principles of open government.

Payments to Alberta's physicians and health practitioners total in the billions of dollars a year. As a result, requiring the disclosure of compensation paid to physicians and other medical professionals also contributes significantly to our goal of informing the public on how their tax dollars are spent. Several physicians raised concerns, as have members of this House, that disclosure of fee-for-service payments would not reflect the actual take-home income of physicians and other medical professionals because of the way the offices are run.

We recognize that physician compensation is complex, and we understand that unique rules will need to apply to the health-sector group. These rules will be developed in consultation with Alberta Health Services and other health entities, physicians, groups like the Alberta Medical Association, other medical practitioners as well as other stakeholder groups. We will take the time necessary to ensure that the regulations are comprehensive, that they accomplish what we're setting out to do, and that stakeholder concerns are heard.

In addition, Madam Chair, the bill enables municipalities and school boards to disclose the names and compensation paid to employees if they wish to do so. Teachers as well as several hon. members have expressed concern with the bill and its effects on school boards and teachers. Specifically, concerns have been raised over the lack of an imposed threshold by government that mirrors the rest of the public sector.

It's important to emphasize that this bill does not mandate disclosure of a single teacher or municipal employee in its present form. Municipalities and school boards are governed by individuals that are elected by the public, and we wanted to respect their autonomy. However, having heard from stakeholders, our government has been working with, I'm pleased to say, all of the opposition parties, including the Wildrose, the Alberta Party, the Progressive Conservatives, and the Alberta Liberal Party, and while we may not agree on all issues, we're working together to improve transparency here in Alberta.

I'd like to introduce an amendment to address concerns raised by the offices of the Legislature. I have what I believe to be the correct number of copies.

Shall I wait while it is distributed, or will I continue?

The Chair: This will be known as amendment A1.

Please continue, hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Madam Chair. The Legislative Assembly offices raised concerns that given their oversight role, reporting or being subject to an audit by the minister could interfere with that mandate. We fully respect and are committed to ensuring the integrity and independence of the legislative offices. These offices also confirmed their commitment to the principles of transparency in public service, including transparency in the legislative offices. Legislative offices will still be required to publicly disclose compensation information in a manner consistent with other public-sector bodies subject to this amendment.

The amendment adds to section 6 of the act subsection (5), which exempts legislative offices from the requirement to disclose or advise the minister of their disclosure. Public-sector bodies, which the offices are considered under the act, are required to make this disclosure both publicly and to the minister. Again, the office will still be required to publicly disclose. They simply will not have to report that disclosure to the minister responsible for the act.

The subsection also removes the responsible minister's compliance and auditing powers. Instead, the amendment provides auditing powers to the office of the Auditor General through a new section, 9.1. The Auditor General will have the discretion to conduct an audit where the Auditor General considers it appropriate. In regard to auditing the Auditor General's compliance with the act, the amendment provides the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices the authority to appoint an auditor. This is consistent with the auditing scheme contained in the current Auditor General Act.

Finally, under the amendment offices are required to co-operate fully with an audit. The results of the audit will be presented to the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices or in one case the

Members' Services Committee. The committee can make the audit results – sorry. It's the Auditor General in another.

With this amendment, Bill 5 is consistent with the existing oversight structure for legislative offices. Any possible perception of lack of independence from government is avoided. Importantly, the requirement to publicly disclose is maintained. I urge all members to support the amendment.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any hon. members wish to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. I thank the hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General for participating in the debate on Bill 5. I've spoken broadly to Bill 5 and expressed the strong support of the Official Opposition for this bill. It is a huge step forward. My questions here are genuinely now to solicit a bit of information about these amendments. No technical briefing was provided that I'm aware of. Am I incorrect?

Ms Ganley: If that is correct, then I apologize for that.

Mr. Fildebrandt: I'm not aware of there being a technical briefing, but perhaps there was. It is the first I've heard of these amendments. The Official Opposition often doesn't provide technical briefings to government because we don't expect ours to pass most of the time, but if we do think that there's a chance, we sometimes consult with members opposite to ensure that they're aware of what's coming down the pipe.

I'm going to ask perhaps a series of questions here, not to delay the process in any way but to genuinely find out if these are amenable to our caucus, so if the minister can bear with us. If I'm understanding correctly, the intent of the amendment here is to ensure that the ministries do not obtain any direct authority over officers of the Legislature, which would be, obviously, something that all members here would want to avoid for the independence as officers of the Legislature report to this House and not to ministries. If the minister could take some time to explain that that is the intent of this but that those offices will still somehow be required to comply with the sunshine list or the Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act. How will they still be compelled to comply with the act but not be subject to the authority of ministers' offices? If the minister could speak to that, please.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Justice.

3:20

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Madam Chair. What the first part, part A, does is that it adds subsection (5) to section 6. Essentially, in the act, when people are disclosing, there are two requirements. One is that they disclose publicly, and the second is that they report to the minister responsible for the act that they have done the disclosing. In this case, they will still be required to report publicly, but they won't be required to tell the minister because they felt – and we agreed that they were correct – that having them report to the minister in that way was probably a little bit inappropriate. That's one piece of it.

The other piece is that with respect to agencies, boards, and commissions the responsible minister will have auditing capacity. If an agency, board, or commission discloses salaries or says, "We don't have any at \$125,000, so we're not going to disclose," the minister's office is able to bring someone in to audit that to make sure that that is, in fact, correct. They also felt that it would be inappropriate for the minister's office to be auditing the offices of the Legislative Assembly, so instead the Auditor General will

perform that function except in the case of the Auditor General's office itself, in which case the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices can also appoint an auditor to conduct an audit to determine whether the legislative office of the Auditor General is compliant with the act. In that case, it goes to the committee instead.

In terms of the enforcement mechanism and the auditor appointed under subsection (2), if it's an auditor appointed by the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices, that report will go to the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices. If the Auditor General does the report, then that report will also go to the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices. That will be the oversight body in those cases.

We actually just made one small correction to this, and I just want to make sure that I'm absolutely correct on it. The results can be made public in a "form and manner determined by the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices or, in the case of an audit in respect of the Legislative Assembly Office, by the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services."

Those are sort of the oversight bodies. We've delegated to a committee because they are, we think, with respect to Legislative Assembly offices a more appropriate place.

The Chair: The hon. member.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you to the minister for her thorough rundown through this. I have two questions. I just want to summarize this.

My first question. If it would be appropriate – maybe the chair could rule on whether this would be – perhaps a single copy of any further government amendments could be disclosed to the various opposition parties so that we could kind of take a brief look at it while the rest of the debate is transpiring to try to get some idea of it. I'm incredibly nervous about looking at legislation and voting on it in a matter of minutes. It makes me a bit nervous even if I do believe the honest intent of the legislation. If one copy could perhaps be distributed to each of the different caucuses so that we could look at it. If there are further government amendments to come forward, if that would be appropriate, I think that would be helpful for the flow of debate here.

My second is perhaps my final follow-up question on this. Correct me if I'm wrong. These offices of the Legislature will be reporting to the public, but instead of reporting to ministries, they will instead be responsible to legislative committees rather than to offices of ministers. Am I correct in the assertion that while different agencies, boards, and commissions and other government entities will report to the public and report to ministers' offices, the difference for offices of the Legislature is that they will report to the public but that their responsibility will be to legislative committees as opposed to ministers' offices directly? Am I correct in that assertion or summary of what you've said?

Ms Ganley: Yes, I would say that that is a correct summary of the thing.

Now, in terms of their disclosure, they just disclose publicly, and then if either the Auditor General, in the case of offices that obviously aren't the Auditor General's, or the committee, in cases of all offices, feels that an audit is required, then they'll be the body to do that. They're the oversight body.

We can on a go-forward basis, I think, maybe do a better job of providing some things up front, and I apologize for that. We don't intend to propose any further amendments. Assuming that the amendments from the other side play out the way we have anticipated, then we shouldn't need to make any further amendments – I guess I shouldn't presuppose that – or probably not.

In terms of the amendment currently under consideration, is there a way to move to another amendment? No, there is not. Okay. We're happy with that.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Yeah. The amendment has to be dealt with and passed before we can move on to the next one.

In terms of your request, that's something that you would arrange between the minister's office and the Official Opposition.

Mr. Fildebrandt: I'll just thank the minister for her comments.

I do believe that this is done in the best spirit. Perhaps we'll just work on a bit of communication, moving forward, for amendments. Again, this not being exactly my file, perhaps there was a technical briefing and I was not made aware of it. But seeing this as it is now, I cannot see any reason the Official Opposition would not support it, and I would encourage members of the House to support the amendment.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just for clarity, it looks like we're just dealing with offices reporting to the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices, so those six offices. Is that correct? Essentially – I'm not real good with all the verbiage; I'm kind of from the business side and cut through the gobbledygook – we're looking at all six offices being required to report to the committee, and the committee would make the determination on whether or not to make that public. Is that what this is essentially doing?

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

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Madam Chair and to the member for the question. I'll just read out the definition because it'll make it a little bit easier.

- (j) "Office of the Legislature" means
 - (i) the Legislative Assembly Office,
 - (ii) the Office of the Auditor General,
 - (iii) the Office of the Ombudsman,
 - (iv) the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer,
 - (v) the Office of the Ethics Commissioner,
 - (vi) the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner,
 - (vii) the Office of the Child and Youth Advocate, and
 - (viii) the Office of the Public Interest Commissioner.

Those are the ones that we're talking about when we say, "Office of the Legislature," so those are the ones that will be covered. Those offices will still be required to disclose publicly, and they will be responsible to the Auditor General, except for the Auditor General, and also to the committee. The intention is that they will disclose publicly automatically, and then if the Auditor General or that committee were to perceive some problem, they could perform an audit. They are intended to disclose publicly. They just don't report to the minister that that disclosure has happened.

I see you shaking your head, so I will let you get up and ask the question.

Mr. van Dijken: May I?

The Chair: Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. van Dijken: I guess that when we look at 9.1(4), "to the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices" and then we move into 9.1(6), "in the form and manner determined by the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices or, in the case of an audit in

respect of the Legislative Assembly Office, by the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services," what I'm seeing here is essentially that they're being required to report to the committee, and then the committee is determining whether or not to make that public. It looks to me like they're looking for an exemption in reporting to the committee and the committee determining.

3:30

Ms Ganley: I can answer that one, too. Subsection (6) is dealing with the results of an audit in the instance when an audit is performed by the Auditor General and that audit says that, you know, you need to include further or corrected disclosure relating to a statement of remuneration previously disclosed through the audit. So if the previously disclosed statement is questioned in some way either by the Auditor General or by the committee and the committee performs an audit, then this is the procedure for determining whether that new and further disclosure is made public. It's not referring to the original disclosure; it's referring to further and better disclosure as a result of an audit. If that's helpful.

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

Seeing none, I'll call the vote.

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

The Chair: Back to the bill, Bill 5. Are there any comments, questions, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Chair. Wildrose believes in public discourse, that it is an important step for openness and transparency towards taxpayer-funded salaries. Indeed, our party campaigned on that, as did the NDP, the idea of a sunshine list. We're pleased to see that this legislation would extend the sunshine list to include Alberta Health Services, most postsecondary institutions, the independent offices of the Legislature, physicians, and other health service providers, including the Alberta Medical Association and other health care entities.

We've had this conversation, but we believe it's important for Albertans to know and have confidence that remuneration provided to those who serve on government-funded agencies, boards, and commissions is fair, that this compensation is determined by merit. The expanded sunshine list will provide the people of Alberta with more confidence in that matter. A sunshine list is designed to shed light on spending that may be deemed as being excessive. It is designed to protect the taxpaying citizens to ensure good stewardship of public finances.

We've had these conversations, and that's why we on this side of the House and I personally can support the threshold of disclosure in this bill. It's been set at \$125,000, and this seems to be a reasonable number.

This bill as it's presently written enables school boards to disclose names and salaries. This is a concern to me personally and to many teachers. Wildrose does not want teachers to be concerned about their salaries being disclosed as an indirect consequence of this legislation. Teachers are the backbone of our education system, and their focus should be on ensuring that students reach their full potential, not on whether their names and their salaries are being disclosed on the sunshine list. When it comes to educators, any disclosures that boards decide on should not go below the threshold of \$125,000 proposed in the bill for agencies, boards, and commissions.

I'm supportive of this bill, but I do think that it could be strengthened to ensure that it meets the intended purpose, to ensure

that taxpayers have the information they need to know where their tax dollars are being spent and also that they are receiving good value for those tax dollars.

After consultation and feedback with stakeholders affected by Bill 5, I would like to introduce an amendment to ensure that teachers are provided with the same threshold limits of \$125,000 as the rest of the public employees in Alberta. I would like to table a notice of amendment through the House. I'll wait until it's passed out, Madam Chair.

The Chair: This will be amendment A2.

You can go ahead, hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Chair. The amendment reads: Mr. Smith to move that Bill 5, Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act, be amended as follows. Section 1(o)(ii) is amended by adding "or by an education body" after "public sector body." Section 10(1)(a) is struck out, and the following is substituted: "(a) the names of those employees of the education body whose total compensation and severance during the previous calendar year is greater than the threshold referred to in section 1(o)(ii)."

The Wildrose Party, as we have said, understands and I think this House now understands that when we're looking at a sunshine list, it is for excessive amounts. Teachers and most employees, wage-earners, don't necessarily need to have their names on a sunshine list. At \$125,000 we agree with the government that this is a reasonable threshold, and we believe that it should be applied to all teachers.

I would ask you to support this amendment.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Just for the education of committee members, even when you are reading a notice of amendment, it would be inappropriate to use your own name in reading that, so just as we go forward.

Mr. Smith: Oh. Okay. Thank you.

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

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise also in support of this amendment. I sincerely hope this is a good example of how we can all work together as opposition and with the government to truly improve a bill. Bill 5 as originally presented did an awful lot of enabling of potential – it created a very open possibility for school boards in this case but also other bodies to do some pretty broad things when it came to sunshine lists. What this amendment does is really narrow down that focus to a more appropriate number.

I have some general concerns with sunshine lists as a concept. I'm not quite as enthusiastic about them as our friends in Wildrose. Perhaps I will elaborate on those specific concerns when we get to third reading, but I rise and will speak here in favour of this amendment. Later this afternoon I will be presenting a similar amendment for a different section to close another loophole along the same lines.

Really, I just wanted to rise and thank the members for the opportunity to collaborate and work together on this with members of the Official Opposition as well as the members of the government to do what I think opposition is meant to do, and that's to ask good questions and close loopholes in legislation to make it as strong as it possibly can be for the benefit of all Albertans and, in this particular case, to ensure that we have assuaged the fears of teachers, I think the very legitimate fears of teachers especially, and of others in public education and all education systems that their information will not be shared unnecessarily. There are other ways

of ensuring transparency in education, pay grids and public negotiations being chief among them.

With that, I'll take my place and look forward to hearing from the government. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I would like to thank the members opposite, both the Wildrose Party and the Alberta Party, for working with us on this amendment. We did hear a number of concerns from the ATA and from individual teachers with respect to this bill, and we are happy to support this amendment that they have brought forward to assuage the fears of those teachers and to make sure that they feel that they are properly protected and that their incomes will not be disclosed unnecessarily by this legislation.

I think this has been an excellent example of co-operation on all sides of the House. I would like to thank the House for working with us on this and for the overall commitment, I think, on all sides to transparency in government. I would urge all members to support this amendment.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other speakers to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

3:40

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the minister for the work that the government is doing to improve the transparency act. I rise to support the amendment to Bill 5. Wildrose has advocated for all agencies, boards, and commissions to be included on the salary disclosure sunshine list. Albertans have a right to know where their tax dollars are being spent. Transparency in government is essential. Only with transparency can citizens fully understand their government's operations.

When the bill was introduced, I did all of a sudden start to get e-mails from teachers with concerns, so I think the work that's being done here is good, and we can support this amendment. That being said, Madam Chair, teachers are unique when it comes to salary disclosure. School boards have negotiated a salary grid with the teachers' union. If you know the name of the teacher and their years of experience teaching, you will already have some idea about their salary. Our educators in our classrooms should not be distracted by the possibility of being on a sunshine list. Feedback received from teachers all around the province shows that teachers are very concerned. The Alberta Teachers' Association opposes this provision of Bill 5, and I do not think there is any need for lists of teachers' names and salaries to be published.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A2?

If not, I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A2 carried]

The Chair: We're back on the bill. Are there any further speakers? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I rise to present an amendment to this bill, section 11. I'll hand around the appropriate number of copies, and with the chair's indulgence and in the interests of moving things along expeditiously this afternoon, I will speak to the amendment while it's being handed out if no one minds.

I'm presenting an amendment to section 11, and I've given away all my copies, so I can't tell you exactly what it says.

The Chair: Hon. member, if you could just wait for a moment until I get a copy of the amendment, and then we can go ahead.

Mr. Clark: Yes.

The Chair: Thank you. Do you have the original?

Mr. Clark: I was given the original, unfortunately.

The Chair: Yeah. That's what I need, the original, please. All right. Go ahead.

Mr. Clark: Shall we try again?

The Chair: Yes.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much. We live and we learn.

This amendment is very similar to the amendment we just passed on section 10, this one applying, however, to section 11, which refers to municipal bodies, municipal authorities. The amendment reads that Bill 5, Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act, be amended as follows: section 1(o)(ii) is amended by adding "or by a municipal authority" after "public sector body," and that section 11(1) is amended by striking out clause (a) and substituting the following: "(b) the names of those employees of the municipal authority whose total compensation and severance during the previous calendar year is greater than the threshold referred to in section 1(o)(ii)."

All of the same arguments that applied in section 10 apply here. It puts a floor under what municipal authorities are able to disclose in the same way that we just did in section 10 for educational bodies.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any hon. members wishing to speak? This will be amendment A3. The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Once again, I'd like to thank the members of the House for working together on these amendments.

The initial intent of the bill had been to provide municipalities and school boards with sort of the discretion to choose what the limits were. We think that it's important that if we're going to impose limits on those entities, the limits are the same for both entities. We know that, certainly with respect to teachers, concerns have been heard, I think, by all members in the House, and I suspect that similar concerns probably could have been echoed by municipal employees about what might ultimately be done with those salaries.

I think this is a great example of co-operation. I'm really happy to support this amendment as well, and I would encourage all members of this House to vote for it.

Thanks.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. MacIntyre: Thank you, Madam Chair. I really just have a question here regarding the consultation, perhaps, that went on specific to this particular amendment. We just had AUMA and AAMDC meetings, and I'm wondering if there was any consultation with the municipal districts regarding this kind of thing and

what their input might have been. I don't know, so I'm asking the question.

The Chair: Any hon. member wishing to respond to that question?

Ms Ganley: I'll apologize because I don't have the information directly off the top of my head in terms of how that went forward. I certainly know that initially, I believe, there were some initial conversations with municipalities, particularly with respect to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, but I'd want to confirm that. I mean, in terms of the amendments I understand that they were brought forward by members of the House on the basis of information that they received from third, outside parties. Certainly, those same third parties contacted my offices. It's difficult for me, when we're talking about amendments being made by other parties, to speak to whether or not consultation was done.

The Chair: Any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A3?

If not, then, I will call the question.

[Motion on amendment A3 carried]

The Chair: We are back on the bill. Any further comments, questions, amendments to Bill 5? The hon. Member for Calgary-North West.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Chair. I have in my hand the required number of copies for an amendment to Bill 5. I'll give them a chance to be distributed, and then I'll speak to it.

Thank you.

The Chair: This will be amendment A4.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Ms Jansen: Okay. Thank you, Chair. We propose the following amendment to Bill 5 by adding the following after 7(7) to make this 7(8): the minister shall receive a report from the appropriate standing legislative committee about the continued effectiveness of compensation disclosure by no later than January 1, 2019, and every four years after that. A review every four years, we think, is an important part of making sure that this legislation is as effective as possible. As responsible legislators we want to make sure that we regularly review the legislation to ensure that it has the continued beneficial effects in the context of all our legislation, and then we have the opportunity to improve it if we need to.

3:50

I'm explicitly referring this legislation to committee for review. We think this is necessary because in the broader context of over a century of Alberta legislation we have had only one public salary disclosure since 1998. That was by the Treasury Board directive 12/98, and that required disclosure of compensation for the top-rung staff at GOA organizations. As we continue to build on Alberta's public-sector compensation framework, we think it's appropriate for the House to review the effectiveness of the steps we take and just to consider whether the legislation remains current and whether it remains relevant. If we have the opportunity to periodically consider the effects of this act, to evaluate new research and evidence about the entire range of effects and impacts of compensation disclosure, we stay on the cutting edge of this, which I think is important.

We also want members of the public to have the explicit opportunity to pose their own questions and their own comments about how well this system of disclosure fulfills or doesn't fulfill their expectations, which is pretty important, to make sure that it's

doing exactly what it needs to do and that members of the public feel that it does as well. This Legislature takes the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund Standing Committee on the road every year. They do that in order to gather information from the public, and that is an important thing.

Future legislators should not have to appeal to political whims in order to review this legislation. This is about openness and transparency. They could still review it sooner if they wish, but we think that four years is a pretty good amount that we settled on. I would certainly hope that you would consider this amendment.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak in support of this amendment. I think it's very important that any legislation that's about transparency be reviewed by the people of Alberta on a regular basis. As we know, in the Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee I've made a very similar motion to take it on the road. As the Member for Calgary-North West has indicated, the Heritage Savings Trust Fund Committee travels the province and talks to Albertans. I think that's a very, very important thing for us to do, and I think that when we have a bill that's about transparency, it's important that we take the opportunity and put that into this bill, that we will come back and ask Albertans again what they think. It also gives this Legislature and future Legislatures some accountability to make sure that the bill doesn't have any unintended consequences.

One of the concerns that I have in general with sunshine lists is that when we look at other jurisdictions, there's a wage inflation problem. If I find out that my salary is \$2,000 less than the person sitting in the desk next to me, it's pretty unlikely that the person in the desk next to me is going to ask for a pay cut. It's pretty likely that I'm going to ask for a raise. So there's some risk with sunshine lists.

I think it's very important that as we go down the path of expanding Alberta's sunshine list, we make sure that there are some brakes in legislation and look down the road to say: "Are there unintended consequences? If so, let's deal with them." Let's make sure that we put some formal process in place to ensure that that happens.

I'm speaking and voting in favour of this amendment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. I won't speak long to this, but I want to thank the Member for Calgary-North West for her thoughtful amendment to the bill. I think it's prudent for us to regularly review legislation, regularly review the things we do in this House. I'm not sure if we would do this for everything we do, but I think that this is prudent. I've long been an advocate for sunshine lists, and I think that even things that we support we should be always willing to question and review and make sure that they are still a good idea after we've passed them into law. I'd encourage all members of the House to support the amendment.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Madam Chair. I actually have a question for the hon. member with respect to this. I, too, feel that this is an excellent idea. I think that, certainly, in this particular case it's important to have some review and oversight of the act to make sure that it's working in the way that we want it to work and that it's having the effects that we want it to have. So I think that that's a

great idea. I just wanted to ask specifically about the committee. I apologize; this may just be my newness to the House. Would this cause a committee to be created? If there's a special committee, does this go to a pre-existing committee, or will the government come forward and work with the opposition to create a new committee?

Thank you.

Ms Jansen: Thank you to the minister. I believe that it wouldn't cause a committee to be created. I think we could give this to one of our committees that we currently have in existence, and it could be handled that way.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Chair. I also have a question. I support in general the intent of the amendment. I'm just wondering if she has any description, as she's put in here "a comprehensive review of this Act" as opposed to just a review of the act, of what's envisioned in a comprehensive review as opposed to just a review.

Ms Jansen: I thank the member for the question. You know, because it's an amendment, I haven't been prescriptive here, so I haven't exactly outlined where we want to go, but I think that's certainly a discussion that we can have going forward. I think certainly that we want input from the public. We want to make sure that the information we're asking the government of Alberta and public bodies to go to the effect of compiling: is it appropriate? Is it sufficient information? We need to be checking that as we go forward. I believe that sort of the idea behind this is that we make sure that we're doing that. The information that we ask to be disclosed, the purpose of it, really, is to help Albertans better understand how we compensate our public servants. We want to make sure going forward that we have that. When we talk about comprehensive, that's the discussion we can certainly have at the committee level.

The Chair: Any other hon. members wishing to speak? The hon. leader of the third party.

Mr. McIver: Yeah. Madam Chair, I'm glad to hear that the minister is interested in this and thinks it's a good idea. A hundred years ago, when we were over on that side, one of the pieces of advice that we got . . .

Mr. Cooper: How about six months?

Mr. McIver: It was six months. I know. It seems like a hundred years.

One of the pieces of advice that we got from legislative experts was that most or perhaps all legislation should be reviewed on some schedule to make sure that it remains current – I think the phrase we used for it was evergreening – just looked at once in a while to make sure that it still makes sense. I think that's what this amendment says, and I'm highly suspicious – if the government checks with experts, they'll talk to probably the same people or similar people that we did and probably get the same advice. We think this is genuinely good advice for government and hope that they choose to listen.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. MacIntyre: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak in support of this amendment. I especially like that we have this four-year anniversary for a review, and I would like to see that actually attached to almost every piece of legislation that a government ever

puts forward. I think it's a great idea. I'm not all that familiar with some of the language used in these things, but it does say, "a special committee," and I understand, hon. member, that you're amending it now to a legislative committee?

Ms Jansen: I think we're going to strike that out.

Mr. MacIntyre: Okay. Great. Then my question becomes redundant, and we can just throw this to a committee, which is kind of where I was going to go with that.

I'm very much in favour of this. As you all know, we have been – how shall we say? – adamant about referring things to committee. That's sort of an understatement. We have been doggedly adamant to refer things to committee, and I would very much like to see this bill follow that routing. Ultimately, I hope every member in this Legislature will support this bill, that makes good use of the parliamentary processes that we have in this Legislature with regard to standing committees, which are there to do this very good work, that involves each one of us that is perhaps not on the front line of this Legislature. But it involves us backbenchers, and it gives us direct input into the development of good, sound legislation, which is a valuable contribution that each and every one of us who has been elected here can make to legislation.

I'm very pleased to see this amendment, and I enthusiastically support it. Thank you.

4:00

The Chair: The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. I think that we'll find support for a friendly subamendment to strike "special" from the amendment. Perhaps I'm mistaken, but I believe we'll find general support, if not unanimous support, to do so as a friendly subamendment.

Ms Jansen: And we concur.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you. I'd just like to ask the member a few questions for my own understanding of the timing of these things. You indicate that you would be asking that a review of the act begin on January 1, but I don't understand what that means in terms of when a review would need to be tabled, if there is any limitation on the amount of time that review could take.

Secondly, under section (b) it refers to: "every 4 years after the date on which the . . . committee submits its final report." Is that, again, the beginning of the review, or do they need to submit the next report at the deadline of four years from the date of the initial report?

Thank you.

Ms Jansen: I thank the member for the question. We're prepared to give the government some flexibility on this.

Mr. Feehan: I'm sorry. I missed the answer.

Ms Jansen: All right. We're prepared to give the government some flexibility on this.

Mr. MacIntyre: Just regarding the timing of this and not understanding fully the whole procedures of these things, is the timing of the delivery of the report something that is subject to the government's wishes or the committee's wishes? In the timing of these reports' delivery, in the amount of time that a committee has

to study this legislation, for example every four years, is that window of study determined by government or by the committee?

Mr. Mason: Well, in the hon. member's amendment, unless I'm misunderstanding you, sir, it says that it will begin on January 1, 2019, and that it will "submit a final report . . . within 6 months" of beginning the review.

Mr. MacIntyre: Within six months of that date?

Mr. Mason: Yes.

Mr. MacIntyre: Okay.

Mr. Mason: So that would be instruction to the committee. If they can get it done in four months, great.

Mr. MacIntyre: Okay. Thank you.

The Chair: Any other speakers to the amendment? Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to say that, you know, there are many times in this House when, sometimes, it gets heated and we're not necessarily seeing eye to eye on things and where we're often at odds with each other and our vision for where we want to go in this province, but it is very refreshing to be able to stand here today and to see the kind of co-operation that's going on here. I know that I would love to speak to this amendment and say that I can support it wholeheartedly.

I don't know. I mean, I'm so brand new to this House that most of the things that go on here tend to go right over my head, and I really appreciate it when the members from the other side of the House sometimes remind me that, no, I can't use a person's name or I can't refer to somebody that's not in the House. You do it gently, and you forgive me for that.

But when I can stand up and I can see the House co-operating, as it is today – I don't know. I mean, I've not been aware of: has there ever been a day in the House when every party has submitted an amendment to a bill that's been accepted in one day? I don't know.

You know, when I stood in front of my kids in my class, I said: please don't judge the House and its effectiveness based on question period, and please realize that when we go into things like the Committee of the Whole, there are often times when they will actually listen to each other and they will talk to each other, and sometimes good amendments and good ideas can come to the forefront.

I think that we can be very proud of what we've done today, and I would just commend the House and ask you to support this subamendment to the amendment to the bill. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. I believe you will find unanimous consent that I move that amendment A4 to Bill 5, Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act, be amended by striking out "special" wherever it occurs.

The Chair: I believe that I can accept the subamendment as long as all members of the committee are okay with waiving the requirement that everybody receive a copy of the subamendment. Agreed? All right.

So it will be SA1, which is a subamendment to strike the word "special" from amendment A4.

[Motion on subamendment SA1 carried]

The Chair: So we are back to amendment A4 as amended. Any further speakers to that? The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Chair, I just wanted to rise one last time and try to be brief, just to thank all members for their co-operation here today. I think we've done some really good work, and I would urge all members to support this amendment. In particular, I'd like to thank the Member for Calgary-North West for her contribution.

The Chair: This is on amendment A4. Any further speakers to amendment A4 as amended?

If not, we'll call the vote.

[Motion on amendment A4 as amended carried]

The Chair: We're back on the bill. The hon. leader of the third party.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have an amendment to put forward. With your permission, I'll start reading it while it gets distributed.

The Chair: If you could just wait, hon. member, until I get a copy, please.

Mr. McIver: Okay. Thanks.

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. McIver: Okay. Thank you, Madam Chair. The amendment is to move that Bill 5, Public Sector Compensation Transparency Act, be amended in section 7 by striking out subsection (2) and submitting the following:

The Minister shall aggregate and republish all of the information disclosed in accordance with this Act and such information shall be made available to the public including on the public website of the Minister's department.

Madam Chair, I'm hoping that this will be received kindly. Clearly, it's a sunshine bill, so the government has every intention of shining sunshine on the information that they've collected. They've actually committed to do that. Why would they go forward with this in the first place? All this says is something that I hope the government will see as common sense and transparent. Put it in one place where the public can find it. Clearly, the government has said that it's important to collect this information. Clearly, the government has said that it's important to make this available to the public. I just think it would be a nice service to the public if the government would put it all on one website where the public could find it since the whole point is making it so the public can find it anyway.

On that basis, I am ever hopeful. We live in hope. I'm ever hopeful that the government will consider this. They may be intending to do this anyway. I think it's good to make that clear to the public, and I'm, again, hopeful that the government will look kindly upon this amendment.

Thank you.

4:10

The Chair: The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to strongly support this amendment. It's a common-sense amendment. Again, the government may have been intending to do so in any case, but I think it's important to write it into the legislation. The original sunshine list, which was done through order in council, created an excellent website, which serves as a resource for those who want to access the information. This would require by law that all of the

different entities coming under the act would bring the information together in aggregate so that Albertans do not have to check 200-odd websites or 200-odd different sources to find the information.

We can look for an example like the B.C. sunshine list, which is technically only accessed through freedom of information, and then I believe that the *Vancouver Sun* has created its own strange website for it. It's a bizarre spectacle, that when people want to access public information, they have to go to a newspaper to sort through for the sunshine list in that province.

I think that this would be a very useful tool. Again, the government may have been intending to do it anyway, but I think that it would be important to put it into the legislation so that all of the different entities that would now fall under it would all have that information aggregated together.

I thank the leader of the third party for the productive amendment.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Madam Chair. And we were on such a roll. I rise to speak against the amendment, and the reason for that is that – we are absolutely committed to ensuring that this sort of information is available out there and is available to the public. We did do some cost estimates on what this sort of amalgamating and creating a searchable database would be, and there was a substantial administrative cost involved as a result. We feel that it is not appropriate, given the shortage of public funds currently available, to direct them in this particular way. You know, we feel that administrative cost is maybe not a thing that we should be increasing substantially at this time, so I would not support the amendment, and I would encourage all members not to support the amendment.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Madam Chair. We were so close. So close. It has been a pretty remarkable afternoon, actually. It is pretty remarkable when this Legislative Assembly can work in the way it does, passing amendments that perhaps the government wasn't expecting, but with thoughtful consideration on the part of the government we have in fact passed those amendments. So I give the government a tremendous amount of credit for their flexibility, for their willingness to accommodate and to listen to what the opposition has to say, and I'd encourage them to do the same on this amendment.

You know, as you read the amendment, "be made available to the public including on the public website of the Minister's department," that doesn't need to be a highly interactive, very expensive, searchable database that you can carve up in a bunch of different ways. It could conceivably be an electronic PDF document. Just put it on there. Here it is. That costs virtually nothing, and it takes about five minutes to do that.

I think that in 2015 and forward it is what Albertans expect. How do I find out what the sunshine list says? I go to the government website. That's what Albertans will do, and to think that they need to file a request to get a physical document – that PDF could be searchable, just by control F, find information, that way. It doesn't need to be a big, expensive process. In fact, it may be an object lesson for the government in finding ways of doing things like this very cost-effectively. It could be essentially zero cost to the government. There are ways, just sitting here at my desk, that I thought of doing that.

I would encourage the government to reconsider their position on this and to vote in favour of this amendment. Thank you.

The Chair: I'll recognize Strathmore-Brooks, followed by Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair, and I'll thank the Member for Calgary-Elbow for his comments. As he said, we were so close. Since we're having a productive discussion, I would ask the government to reconsider its views on this.

Most of the costs for this are sunken. These institutions report to ministers' offices, in any case. The information is already being compiled. It is merely putting it into a single spreadsheet. Now, I'm not volunteering to do the cutting and pasting myself, but I don't think that it would be particularly difficult for ministries who are receiving this information. This information is being reported to the ministries, in any case. They will have it in their hands. It would not be very difficult to aggregate it together in the existing website. A website already exists, created in I believe early 2013 if memory serves me correct. It is an excellent, easily accessible website, that this information could be easily plugged into.

Other jurisdictions in our own country that have sunshine lists do this. You could go to the Ontario sunshine list website and search for both the salaries of a minister's chief of staff and a TTC toll booth attendant in the same search. It's pretty easily done. It's done elsewhere.

I like to think that I'm one of the members more concerned with costs in this House. If there are significant administrative costs that are not sunken but are above and beyond current administrative costs, then I would ask the Minister of Justice to table the documents indicating what those costs are. But I would be skeptical of there being significant administrative costs that are not already buried. The ministries have this – we'll have this information, in any case, and the idea is that we merely put it onto the website, compiling it in a single, accessible spot for Albertans to access. I hate to see another third-party organization or news organizations have to do what they've done in British Columbia and have people of our province go to somebody else's website, where someone has hired a computer programmer to aggregate the data for them. Albertans should be able to go to their government's website to find out how much government employees are making.

I would strongly encourage the minister and the government to reconsider the position here in light of the *Kumbaya* atmosphere we seem to have built over the last hour or so.

Thank you.

The Chair: Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you very much. If the minister prefers to stay with 7(2) as it's currently written, I just wonder if you could tell us, please: what is the intent of how you would distribute the information? Quite frankly, a sunshine list that either can't be found or isn't made public isn't really a sunshine list. As it's currently written, it says, "in the form and manner determined by the Minister." So what does that actually look like, please, if you could tell us?

Ms Ganley: Sorry?

Mr. Orr: My point was that 7(2) as it's actually written says that it's entirely at your discretion, which is fine. But my question is: how do you plan to make it public? A sunshine list that is not public or can't be found isn't really a sunshine list. It's at your discretion, but what is your discretion? What's your intent on the manner determined to make it public?

The Chair: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Madam Chairperson. The intention was to have the individual agencies publish their list themselves, so those would be made available on their website or in whatever manner they sort of saw fit to publish that information. I mean, if what we're being asked to do is to essentially take the sheets of information and reprint them online, that's fine. If what we're being asked to do is to recombine all the information by last name and create a searchable database, the costs initially in terms of administrative burden in going forward are substantial and, we think, sort of not worth the additional cost given that someone can simply go to that particular board's website or go to that particular board and get the information that way.

I mean, the intention had been that at some point a website would be developed with links to these other various sites. But in terms of this, which I can only assume is suggesting that we need to bring all the information together and create a searchable database, the cost of that is considerable.

4:20

The Chair: Lacombe-Ponoka, go ahead.

Mr. Orr: Yeah. I do appreciate the sensitivity to costs. I commend you on that. I guess my only question would be: if every board and agency and department is allowed to publish it on their own, do you anticipate any issues of compliance or checking or making sure that they actually do? I have some concerns, I guess, about that.

Thank you.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Madam Chair. I mean, obviously there are methods to ensure compliance within the act itself. In addition to disclosing publicly, the individual agencies, boards, and commissions or municipalities and school boards, as the case may be, are required to disclose publicly and also to the minister, so the minister will know that that disclosure has been made or be told that that disclosure isn't made. If they're not compliant, there are compliance mechanisms in the act with respect to auditing or with respect to ensuring the disclosure occurs. With respect to the Legislative Assembly offices, obviously, we've just amended those compliance mechanisms today. Other than that, I would suggest that it's already in the act.

Thank you.

Mr. Gotfried: Madam Chairman, I just wanted to speak. I understand some of the issues addressed here, one of those being cost. I'm not an expert on websites or anything of that sort, but I've certainly been involved with development of many websites over the years. It would seem to me that if cost is an issue, one website with a standardized template, with a standardized request for information for input so that the information that is being developed by the various organizations, bodies is done in a standard format would then allow for an easy upload into a single website, which could be compartmentalized to allow that to occur.

Instead of having three or five or seven or 10 different organizations loading up information all in different formats, you send the format out to everybody, tell them to use this, push a button, it automatically uploads, and all you have to do is have one administrator ensure that it is uploading correctly. I think the cost argument here doesn't hold for anybody who's ever developed any kind of websites or uploaded information. In fact, a single website would be more cost-effective, easier for people to access, easier for government to administrate, and all that is required is some front-end work to achieve that.

Mr. McIver: Listen. I'm, in fairness, happy the minister is concerned about costs. Thank you. But, Madam Chair, I will also

say that the amendment as it's written isn't really prescriptive. This would leave the ministry the flexibility of scanning the reports and plunking them up there. I appreciate that that's not as good as a searchable, mashable database, but our duty here isn't to information mashers; our duty is to Albertans that want to know what the government has said they ought to be able to know. You know, if the mashers want to take off with the scan sheets, print it, and pay somebody to put in some searchable database for themselves, then that's not the government's expense. It's not the government's problem.

All I'm saying is that hopefully the minister will reconsider what she said because I don't see anything in my amendment that requires a fully searchable database in any particular format. Obviously, if the government found a way to do that, that would be best, but the fact is that I would consider the amendment honoured if the government just said: once a year, when we get this stuff in, we'll scan it and post it.

One of my colleagues said that there are apps you can get for your smart phone for \$5, where you can take a picture of something, and it pops up on the website once you get that automated. I appreciate that the government will probably want to do things slightly more sophisticated than that because it's a pretty big machine.

Anyway, I hope the minister will reconsider what she said when she stood, particularly in light of what we're saying. We won't be criticizing if it's not in the most searchable, most sophisticated database. We're actually kind of trying to save the government from criticism, that people will say: now we have to have sunshine on the sunshine list. It's probably best if people don't have to say that. I hope that the government can see their way clear to accepting what I think is intended to be helpful and I certainly hope a reasonable amendment.

Mr. Clark: A fairly simple and straightforward question for the minister. In the year 2015 and in subsequent years if this information is not already electronic, I'd be very surprised. If you don't anticipate distributing this information via a website, how do you anticipate distributing this information? And what's the hesitation here given the different options that have been presented, which seem pretty reasonably in terms of simplicity and getting this information out there?

Ms Ganley: Well, I think the hesitation in this case is not to publish the information online; we're happy to publish the information online. In fact, we have every intention of making sure that it is as available as possible. The exact mechanism of that hasn't been determined.

I mean, to me, the way this is worded, "aggregate and republish," looks like we're having to aggregate and republish, which I would assume means putting all the information together. I think that I find it overly restrictive in terms of what we have to do going forward, you know, ensuring that that information is widely available and ensuring that the cost is as reasonable as possible. Like I say, I have cost estimates from our technical experts. I was never a person who programmed databases or who was a technical person in that way, so I can only assume that the cost estimates that I have received are accurate cost estimates, and those cost estimates were fairly high.

Certainly, we can commit to having a website where everyone can access the information. I'm just a little bit concerned that this is overly restrictive to the government. I mean, I appreciate the points that you're all making, and perhaps you know things about computers. Certainly, my experience has been that when you're dealing with things of this nature, and I think specifically of the university transitioning – I shouldn't mention specific examples. But specifically when you're dealing with databases of this nature,

they are often much more costly and much more onerous than you expect that they're going to be, or at least that has been my experience. I can but rely on the advice of my technical experts, which is that that sort of thing would be very expensive, and I feel that this is unnecessarily restrictive to the government's ability to pick how to do that.

The Chair: Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to repeat something I said earlier. Again, I pride myself as being sort of the penny-pincher in the House. So, you know, if there was a strong argument that this was not cost-effective, I'd certainly be willing to hear it. Can the minister tell us what that estimated cost is, provided to her by her department, before we could vote on this amendment? If it is unduly expensive or burdensome and a cost figure has been provided to the minister, I would love to hear it.

The Chair: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I just want to indicate to the members that having just seen this now for the first time, there are some considerations that the government needs to take into account. For example, in fact, is the best way to make the information public to aggregate it on the website of the minister's department? That is an assumption that's contained in this motion. It's not necessarily something that relates to what the actual best use or desire of potential users is as to where they want to find this information. So that's an unknown question. It's simply an assumption that this is the best way to do it, and there needs to be some additional work done in order to determine what costs are and so on.

The simple fact of the matter is, Madam Chair, that the government is not prepared to support this amendment at this time. At some future date this, in fact, may well be what we do, but we're not prepared to support this amendment at this time.

4:30

The Chair: Calgary-Elbow, followed by Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just want to point out something in the bill itself. Section 7(2) currently reads, "The Minister may aggregate or republish." So the words "aggregate or republish" are actually in the section as it stands now. We're not quibbling on "aggregate"; we're quibbling on "shall" and "may." And far be it from me to cast aspersions or suggest that your government would ever do such a thing, but what if you choose not to? What's the point of this law, of this bill? Given that you "may" aggregate or republish, really, this is perhaps the ultimate loophole in this legislation. You may choose not to publish any information at any point.

As this bill is written, if I'm to interpret this section literally, you "may aggregate or republish any part ... of the information disclosed in accordance." So you may choose to publish the last period at the end of the disclosure. The number 6: you may choose to simply disclose that. I'm not suggesting that you will. I think that there's a lot of goodwill here this afternoon. This bill, for those who feel strongly about sunshine lists – if we're going to have a sunshine list bill, you know, I think that there are a lot of great things in here.

I have some questions and concerns. I guess, you know, as we dig and unpack this section, I think it makes the amendment presented before us all that much more important because, frankly, this could be the ultimate loophole to publishing absolutely no information at all.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Well, I don't think anything could be further from the truth, notwithstanding the fact that it's the government that brought forward the bill in order to extend transparency with respect to this, and that is the intention of the government.

If you look at section 3(1), it says:

Commencing in 2016, on or before June 30 in each year, every public sector body shall disclose to the public and the Minister, in the form and manner determined by the Minister, a statement of remuneration in relation to the previous calendar year in accordance with subsection (2).

Subsection 2 lays out exactly what the information that has to be disclosed is. So there is a legal requirement for the disclosure of this information in the act, and it is not a loophole.

The Chair: Go ahead, Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Madam Chair. The minister spoke of estimates for the cost of this aggregate disclosure and publishing, and I was just wondering if she could table those documents. I pray that there's more than one estimate.

The Chair: Any further comments or questions to amendment A5? Did you have a further comment?

Mr. McIver: Just that I hope the government will take the last 15 or 20 seconds before I close and reconsider. This was genuinely intended to be helpful, and I think that the government is putting themselves at risk of needing to put sunshine on their sunshine list, and I would hate to see that. I think that you've got a chance. You brought forward a piece of legislation, I think, with good intention. You've got what I think is a pretty easy opportunity here to solidify that good intention, and I'd hate to see you lose that opportunity.

Thank you.

Mr. Cooper: Madam Chair, I might just ask for unanimous consent of the House to go to one-minute bells until 6 o'clock.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Chair: On amendment A5, are there any further speakers?

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A5 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:35 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Fraser	Rodney
Anderson, W.	Gotfried	Smith
Clark	Hanson	Starke
Cooper	Jansen	Swann
Cyr	MacIntyre	van Dijken
Drysdale	McIver	Yao
Fildebrandt	Orr	

4:40

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Horne	Nielsen
Ceci	Kazim	Payne
Connolly	Larivee	Piquette
Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Renaud

Dach	Loyola	Rosendahl
Drever	Luff	Sabir
Feehan	Malkinson	Schmidt
Fitzpatrick	Mason	Schreiner
Ganley	McKitrick	Shepherd
Goehring	McLean	Sweet
Gray	McPherson	Turner
Hinkley	Miller	Westhead
Hoffman	Miranda	Woollard
Totals:	For – 20	Against – 39

[Motion on amendment A5 lost]

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have an amendment to put forward, and I'll give the appropriate copies here.

While it's circulating, I'll just say a few words about it. I think everyone wants to ensure with those agencies and commissions and boards and publicly funded organizations that we have access to information around how they're paid and what role they perform in our public system. That's part of why a sunshine list has been discussed and, in many cases, supported.

I think there are some sensitivities around individualizing the incomes of people. Professionals, especially private professionals, have certainly got concerns about how it will be interpreted, who will use it, whether it can be used by some individuals for purposes that are really to attack or to diminish or to embarrass without full knowledge. Certainly, some of those would be the physicians who have been in touch with me.

This amendment is an attempt to recognize that if you're being publicly funded, there needs to be public awareness of what that public funding is, but it's less important to know who's getting what. In fact, some of the results that I've seen around previous sunshine lists are that when someone notices someone else is getting more, they usually lobby to get equal. So it actually ends up raising the income and the salaries of many of the people, when the goal of this is to try and keep a lid on increases.

This amendment, I think, is an attempt to anonymize, make anonymous, the incomes of individuals but still identify what that professional group as a median income might make. For example, in the case of physicians, if a general practitioner median income is \$250,000 a year, that would become the important information that the public needs to know. We don't need to know that John Man received \$260,000 this year and that Joe Btfsplk got only \$125,000 last year. [interjections] Who is Btfsplk? It came from some cartoon.

An Hon. Member: *Li'l Abner*.

Dr. Swann: *Li'l Abner*, was it? Thank you.

Are we getting off topic here? [interjections] I dated myself. Hands up: how many know who Joe Btfsplk is? About 10 people here. It was a test. I've lost a lot of people. Wow.

Could you bring us back to order, Madam Chair? Where was I?

The Chair: A reminder that the hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View has the floor, and we are debating amendment A6.

Dr. Swann: So it may well be that we want to know what GPs in Alberta get. We could see every individual GP and their income for the past year but without a name associated with it, and we could see a median income for all GPs to get an idea of what the standard GP income is, recognizing that we have no idea what their overhead is – how many staff they have, how much in office expenses and so

on – which puts it into a bigger context. We will not know that, and that's part of, I think, what physicians have contacted me about, concerns about a gross number as opposed to a net number and having an individual name attached to an individual salary. Who gains benefit from that?

I think that what we as a public want to know is: are GPs being paid, on average, too much? Are cardiovascular surgeons being paid too much? Do we need to know what this particular cardiovascular surgeon makes compared to this cardiovascular surgeon? I don't think that's the purpose of this, but we do need to know why we're paying so much for cardiovascular surgeons and so little for GPs. That's the important thing. Why aren't we valuing general practitioners more in this culture than the cardiovascular surgeon? That's relevant information. I think that we need to know the median. We do not need to know individual names attached to it, which creates very significant sensitivities in the community, not only doctors but other professional groups as well that are receiving public funds.

I'm recommending that it be anonymized, that we have a median income for that particular category of practitioner, and that indeed it could be the same in some of the other organizations that we're concerned about. We identify the position, executive director, and in this line of work executive directors have a median income of this. We don't need to know the individual name attached to that, but we need to know: on average, what's the median income of the executive directors of these agencies, boards, and commissions, and is it within reason or not? Then we start to make some systematic changes if they seem to be out of line with the rest of the public service.

The Chair: Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. I thank the Member for Calgary-Mountain View for his contribution to the debate. I must now follow the bad habits of the Minister of Justice and be the naysayer. I will speak against the proposed amendment.

I understand what the member is trying to achieve. In probably 99 per cent of the cases we don't particularly care about attaching a name to things, but it is important for reasons of transparency. In the original fight for the sunshine list in the winter of 2012-2013 one of the reasons compelling the government of the day to do it was so that we could find patronage appointments scattered throughout the government. Now, someone appointed to a position paid for by taxpayers: we would not be able to necessarily find out where that person has been plunked down in the bureaucracy or plunked down into different posts. You know, I won't get into too many specific examples here, but a former member of this House, defeated in the 2012 election, found himself a plum patronage appointment in the government. Now, the sunshine list did not appear at that time. We found that information out through other channels. But for the sunshine list to be of use in identifying those kinds of patronage appointments, a name must be attached.

Now, we've had a sunshine list for the core public service of the government since the winter of 2012-13 or the spring of 2013. I cannot recall a single news story from the *Edmonton Journal* or the *Calgary Herald* saying how much John Doe makes working as a policy analyst in the department of agriculture. It's just not of particular public interest. But it's important that we have the information because those capers will exist, hidden throughout the government.

This amendment, unfortunately, takes the sunshine out of the sunshine list. It destroys, largely, the purpose of the sunshine list. There are multiple purposes to sunshine lists. The reason that people want to use it is up to the taxpayers paying the bills of the

people listed in the sunshine lists. It's well intended but, I think, misplaced. The evidence does not support the idea that putting names on a sunshine list will inflate salaries. Quite the contrary. The jurisdictions in Canada that have sunshine lists tend to have, on average, I've seen, slightly lesser increases in public-sector compensation. It's been a few years since I did the study, but I think it was over a five-year period or a 10-year period that I did a study myself a few years ago. I don't believe that wiping the names is going to change that in any way, both pro or con.

4:50

The member is well intentioned, I think. I think he's also intending to protect doctors here, which is admirable, although I do trust the Minister of Justice when she says that a suitable – don't quote me on that. It's in *Hansard*. Don't quote me, *Hansard*.

I do trust the Minister of Justice when she says that suitable regulations will be drawn up to ensure that fee for payment for doctors is not listed as the salaries for those doctors. That would not be an accurate reflection of how much money they are taking home. I believe that is a suitable nuance that can be decided in regulation. Many things should not be decided in regulation but should be directly in legislation, but I think that is enough of a minutia that it could be trusted to be dealt with in regulation, and I think that the Minister of Justice has the best of intentions in that.

While I thank the Member for Calgary-Mountain View for his contribution to debate and while I hate to be now the second person to speak against any amendment in our new-found spirit of co-operation in here, which I suspect will be quickly dissolved in discussions on Bill 4 and Bill 6, I must unfortunately speak against it.

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

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I rise to speak in favour of this amendment for a couple of reasons. Like with teachers and nurses, for doctors, which I know is part of the intent of this amendment, there is a pay grid. Albertans know what overall and particular physician compensation is, and I see, really, no good purpose served by naming names in this particular case.

I'll start by challenging or questioning one of the assertions made by the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks, that there is no evidence that disclosure of salaries increases compensation and overall salary costs. In fact, there is, and I have two studies here that my crack research team has unearthed for us, which I'm happy to table tomorrow at an appropriate moment. These are academic papers. The first, *Increased Compensation Costs: an Externality of Mandatory Executive Compensation Disclosure*, evidence from Canada; and the second being *The Impact of Mandated Disclosure on Performance-based CEO Compensation*. Probably these papers are just as exciting and interesting as their titles promise. Most relevant is: "With the imposition of mandated disclosure . . . cash compensation increases more." I will table these at the appropriate time.

I think that the purpose of a sunshine list ought to be to see broadly what the compensation is, but I see no clear benefit in naming names specifically, and I'm sure our friends in the public service would agree with me on this point.

I do want to bring up a serious issue which has been attempted to be addressed in the bill. We've had some discussion, some very important and very moving and very powerful discussion, in this House about domestic violence. I know this is something the government takes very seriously, that I take very seriously. For those people who are at risk, primarily women, I think it must be said, although not exclusively, who may be putting away some of

their money to escape a domestic violence situation, there is a provision in this bill which allows for anyone who's subject to the bill to request to the minister that their name not be disclosed. If their spouse knows their name and specifically what they make, it can be part of what the spouse uses to keep them in a violent situation. Now, for someone to be required to apply to the minister to be excluded from the sunshine list – and in no way am I suggesting that the minister would not grant such an application expeditiously – is one more hurdle, one more barrier, and I think that's important for us to consider in this House as we think about the impact of sunshine lists. It's one more tool that an abuser can use to control that person.

In that vein, in that context, then, Madam Chair, I speak in favour of this amendment, and I encourage the government to please consider passing it. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, sadly, I rise to speak against the amendment as well. Hopefully, the Member for Strathmore-Brooks and I can go back to being friends at least temporarily.

The Member for Calgary-Mountain View has raised, you know, an interesting point with respect to physicians. We're certainly aware and we have been hearing from physicians that their fee-for-service compensation, when it comes in, sort of goes to cover office costs in addition to salaries and that that's not necessarily the same. We are certainly aware of that problem. I myself very recently worked in a situation where the hours I billed – my office overhead costs and library costs were deducted from that. So I'm aware of how people can misinterpret what that means, and certainly we will be working very closely with physicians. I will be working with my colleague the Minister of Health to work out with physicians what is a more appropriate way to do that going forward. So we will certainly be looking into this issue.

In terms of names specifically, I think the Member for Strathmore-Brooks really made the main point here, which is that, you know, we need Albertans to have faith in their public service not just in terms of how their tax dollars are being spent but also in terms of the fact that appointments and hiring are being done on an appropriate basis, on the basis of skills and experience and not on the basis of being a patronage appointment. We do know that those criticisms are out there. There's a substantial number of criticisms with respect to agencies, boards, and commissions in specific, which is exactly what this list covers, so we think it is important for the public to have that information.

I think I would reiterate that the reason we chose the disclosure limit that we did choose is because we are aiming at higher income earners. We're not looking to disclose the salaries of everyone. We're looking to disclose the salaries of those who are in the top bracket, I suppose. I mean, certainly, I'm a person who has her salary disclosed online, and I don't think that that's a particular problem. I think that in order to maintain the confidence of the public not only in how their tax dollars are being spent but in how people are being hired, too, and how people are being appointed to agencies, boards, and commissions, it is appropriate to proceed forward in the way that the bill proceeds.

I do thank the Member for Calgary-Mountain View for bringing forward this point for discussion, but unfortunately I am not able to support it at this time. I would encourage all members not to support it.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd just like to follow up a little bit on the comments that the Minister of Justice made and respond to some of the concerns that the Member for Calgary-Mountain View has raised. Certainly, I have also received many e-mails to my constituency office asking the same question that the Member for Calgary-Mountain View has addressed: why do we need to publish names? It seems to a lot of people in my constituency that this act is more about shaming people for how much they make than actually providing transparency in how much people in the public service and other public agencies make. I just want to respond to those concerns with my own personal experience.

For those of you who are keen observers of the existing sunshine list, you will know that my name appears on the sunshine list for 2013 and 2014. As a hydrogeologist who used to be an employee of the department of environment and sustainable resource development, I made the princely sum of \$103,000 a year. All of that information is now publicly available to anybody who cares to look for it.

5:00

The publication of the sunshine list came at a time when tension between the public service and the government of the day was high. There were many in the public service that felt that there would be serious ramifications to us when our names were published. Then the day came when our names were published with our salaries attached to them, and – guess what? – none of those things that we feared would come to pass actually came to pass. I didn't ask for a raise. Nobody that I knew of in the office asked for a raise based on what other people saw on the sunshine list. With the way the public service salaries work, there is a strict grid system. It's not based on how much the boss likes you, right? You move up according to the grid at the appointed time. So those fears are inflated.

In fact, there were no other serious consequences. My family didn't ask me for more expensive Christmas or birthday presents even though they knew how much money I made. The political party that I'm proud to be a member of couldn't possibly ask me for more donations, because they already phone me six times a day and send me . . . [interjection] Yeah. Exactly. You know, none of those things that we feared would happen as a result of having our names published on the sunshine list came to pass.

The second thing that the Member for Calgary-Mountain View raised was the lack of context. I'd like to just let the Member for Calgary-Mountain View know that everybody who has their name published on the sunshine list already has a lack of context. You know, in my case the salary of \$103,000 is out there without any other context. It doesn't really speak to how much I would get paid in a similar position if I were hired by the private sector or by another public agency. In fact, in many cases, if I were to go and be a hydrogeologist in any of those other agencies or in the private sector, my salary would be much higher. So there's that context piece that's missing.

It also speaks to, you know, how my own personal expenses aren't reflected in that as well. In fact, there is one entertaining story, an interaction that I had with a staff member. I know that she's an avid viewer of the proceedings here at the Assembly, so I'm sure that she'll catch wind of this eventually. She worked in the same office that I did. She made substantially less than I did and refused to share the candies on her desk with me because she knew how much money I earned. She said: you can well afford to buy your own candies. The piece of context that was missing there was that she was a single person who had no children and still lived with the support of her parents – so her personal expenses were much lower than mine – whereas I had a wife in school and three children to support and a house to pay for.

You know, all of those contextual pieces around salary are missing for everybody that's published on the sunshine list. I don't think doctors have a particular concern that doesn't apply to anybody else who's included on the sunshine list.

Just to conclude by reiterating my points, I think people's fears are unfounded. There aren't going to be serious consequences for having their names published on a sunshine list, and those contextual pieces are always missing no matter what information we put on the sunshine list. I think that we need to go forward with the sunshine list as proposed and defeat this amendment.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to be brief. I want to thank the Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar for his comments. I'm ashamed that an NDP-er has put the case for a sunshine list better than a Wildroser has. I think he very eloquently put forward some very good arguments for this and for why folks should not be concerned.

I wanted to point this out to the Member for Calgary-Elbow, who has raised concerns about government-sector salary inflation as a result of sunshine lists. A few years ago, during the original fight for the sunshine list, I did a lot of research around it, and I wanted to read some very important statistics very quickly. Between 2008 and 2012, if we divide provincial governments into two categories, those with sunshine lists and those without, those without sunshine lists were Alberta, Quebec, Newfoundland, and Prince Edward Island, and those with sunshine lists were B.C., Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick. Those with sunshine lists saw increases in government-sector compensation of 12.3 per cent. Those in provinces without sunshine lists saw increases of 13.7 per cent. This is data from Statistics Canada.

Now, there's a lot more to the context. There's a lot more behind the context of sunshine lists driving it up or down. But I think that fears around sunshine lists being a major driver of government-sector costs going up are exaggerated if not outright incorrect. If they were correct, I'd probably be the biggest opponent of government-sector sunshine lists, but I don't believe that they have the inflationary record expected. When Ontario sees its costs go up by significant amounts, it probably has more to do with the government and the political climate and those kinds of factors rather than if there is a sunshine list or not.

I wanted to just share that data from Statistics Canada with members of the House concerned about that issue. It's obviously an issue that is very, very serious to me, around the sustainability of the cost of our government, and it's not one that I think will be affected by the sunshine list.

The Chair: Any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A6?

If not, we'll call the vote.

[Motion on amendment A6 lost]

The Chair: We're back on Bill 5. Are there any further comments, questions, or amendments with respect to this bill?

If not, then we will call the question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 5 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Bill 4

An Act to Implement Various Tax Measures and to Enact the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act

The Chair: We are on amendment A5, as proposed by the hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks. Are there any further speakers to amendment A5?

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Madam Chair. I expect that we will be able to move forward through the House this afternoon with a little bit of speed, but I just wanted to remind the House where we were prior to the break, because I know that there are a number of new members that have joined us here in the Assembly this afternoon that were unable to be a part of the debate. Given that we're just mere minutes away from voting, I wanted to make sure that everybody had the opportunity to know where we're at.

5:10

It's important to keep in mind that the things that we're doing here aren't just for today, but they're also for tomorrow and tomorrow's tomorrow. No one member of this Assembly is bigger than this Assembly. So it's important that everything we do has an eye on that tomorrow as we move forward and plan for the future of the province. I think that this is a good opportunity for us to maybe pause and look beyond, beyond just ourselves and beyond the challenges of today, to some of the risks of tomorrow. Madam Chair, we have seen all over the world in many jurisdictions that as governments grow and spending increases and as we move from crisis to crisis, many politicians in the past have this sense that today's problems are always the most important problems and they don't look for tomorrow.

We've seen the government propose in Bill 4 a debt limit of 15 per cent, which at the end of their plan will include \$50 billion of debt, a level of debt that I don't believe Albertans are comfortable with, a level of debt that we have not seen in generations in Alberta. Those core conservative values of living within your means have been essentially thrown away and discarded for a big-spending, big-government, high-tax plan. So as we look forward to this new debt limit of 15 per cent that's been set by the new government, I think it's wise that there is some preplanning that's done around this 15 per cent. I can only imagine that the House will have the will of the governing party, and as a result we will set a debt limit in this place of exactly 15 per cent, and that will equate to \$50 billion in debt by the end of the government's current fiscal plan.

What the amendment proposes is that in order for the government in a number of years from now to just say: oh, man, the price of oil has been lower for longer, the current economic conditions aren't nearly as good as we'd hoped, or perhaps our revenue projections haven't been quite what we expected – the government of the day can just come and pass another bill to raise the debt limit. Maybe it goes to 20 per cent next time. Maybe it goes 30, 40 per cent. Who knows where it stops?

But time and time again we've seen across many jurisdictions that politicians often have very little gumption to actually look at the spending side of the ledger, put the brakes on, and say: when is enough enough? I think that what this amendment does do is that it provides a little forced gumption [interjections] That's right, not to be confused with *Forrest Gump* but forced gumption.

It puts into place a pressure to look at the spending side of the ledger. It puts into place a stop, a pause that would require the government of the day to go to Albertans, to go to the ones who will actually be picking up the tab, and say: are you okay with us going

past a 15 per cent debt ratio? I think that what we have before us in an amendment that will provide certainty and clarity for the Alberta public that this government isn't just going to continue to raise the debt limit all willy-nilly but that they will only ever do that with the backing of Albertans.

We've seen DBRS – and I know that the government likes to roll this out – predict that we will run right up against our debt limit that they're currently setting without a change in course. What we've seen is that this government is planning to not change course and is planning to run up massive amounts of debt, which will put us right back in the exact same place as we are today, which is unacceptable to Albertans. It's unacceptable to the people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. I can tell you that none of them have come into my office and said: thank goodness that at the end of this plan we're going to have \$50 billion of debt. Not one. Many have come in with concerns about \$50 billion of debt at the end of the plan, but not one has come in with praise for this type of spending and this type of debt.

I think it would be wise of the government to put in some checks and balances, some ramifications that would exist in the future so that we can't just turn our backs on the hard work that's been done in the past and turn our backs on the values of Albertans, of living within our means, and that we would turn this over to the voice of reason, and that's Albertans.

That's why I stand in this place fully supporting the amendment proposed by my hon. colleague.

The Chair: Are there any further speakers to the amendment? The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much. I stand to speak against the amendment.

DBRS also talked about the strong financial position and low debt of this government. We have a 4 per cent debt-to-GDP at this point in time, the lowest of all provinces and territories. Even at 15 per cent, Alberta's debt-to-GDP would be half the weighted average of other provinces in this country.

We have a prudent plan to look at bending the curve on expenditures and spending. We have a plan to invest in capital development throughout this province to stimulate our economy. We are going to stick to 15 per cent of GDP. That is sound. That is the lowest in the country. That is a debt cap that is calculated to help us get to where we need to go, which is to build the economy, to protect services, and to move on to build an Alberta that everybody believes will get us back to a positive GDP.

So I hope we are all united in saying that, no, we don't need this amendment. We are going to work hard to stick to the program and go forward. Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you to the minister for joining us in debate, although I don't feel that his remarks actually spoke to the substance of the amendment. The amendment was not: should the debt-to-GDP ratio be 15 per cent? The amendment was not: is it a good idea to have 15 per cent of GDP? The amendment was not: comment on other provinces. The amendment is to assure taxpayers that the government will not break its word of 15 per cent of GDP without going back to Albertans first for approval.

5:20

The minister's statements were confused in their facts about having the lowest debt-to-GDP. By the time Alberta has a 15 per cent debt-to-GDP, Saskatchewan's debt will nearly be paid off.

Saskatchewan will nearly be paid in full. Saskatchewan is the new Alberta advantage, unfortunately. By the time we reach 15 per cent debt-to-GDP, which I fear will be even sooner than the minister believes, we will not have the lowest debt-to-GDP in the country.

I'd ask that the minister rise not to speak about if we should have a 15 per cent debt-to-GDP, if that's a good thing or if it's a bad thing, but that he would address the substance of the amendment that is before for us, which is: does he have confidence in his own statement and documents that our debt will not exceed 15 per cent? If he has confidence in his own budget documents and statements, he will support the amendment so that the debt ceiling cannot be easily exceeded and broken by mere legislation. If he has confidence in his own budget documents and his own debt ceiling, the minister will support the amendment.

The Chair: I'll recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Currie, followed by Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to speak against this amendment. You know, often we talk in this House about the will of Albertans and that we should bring their various points of view to this House. What I see in this amendment sort of seems contradictory to some of the things that we've talked about previously, especially coming from the other side and especially in areas of spending Albertans' money in ways that make sense.

Now, it would seem to me that if we needed to go to a referendum, that would be adding extra expense in the form that we would have to then have either a referendum or have it be in addition to an election. In reality, that is already happening, and they are called elections. It's very similar to the one we had quite recently. You know, the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills actually said that we have no gumption to talk to Albertans about this and our plan. In fact, we do, and we did it in the last election. Albertans chose a plan forward, and we plan to go forward with that.

For those reasons I think that this amendment is unnecessary, and I will not be voting for it. Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Go ahead, Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. MacIntyre: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a couple of things regarding the statements that were just made by the hon. member. Yes, elections are the referendum, but I would remind the hon. member that you don't have a mandate for a \$50 billion debt load on our province. You were never campaigning, going around your riding, with a great big placard saying: I'm going to put you \$50 billion in debt; vote for me. Not one of you did that. So to stand up in this House and say that you have some kind of a mandate to put the good people of Alberta, including me, my children, my grandchildren, in this kind of a debt scenario is an absolute fabrication and a misrepresentation of the truth. That argument doesn't hold water.

Now to the hon. Minister of Finance's argument here regarding this issue before the House. I want the hon. members in the House to understand something about this debt-to-GDP ratio that we keep hearing thrown around in the press and in this House. It is a fool's paradise to use debt-to-GDP as the only measuring stick. The reason for that is that in this province, this incredible province, the per capita GDP output of the people of Alberta cruises around \$80,000 or so. It's the highest in the land.

So when you have a province like Ontario, that has about half the GDP per person that we do here, a 15 per cent debt-to-GDP ratio in our province is equal to a 30 per cent debt-to-GDP ratio in Ontario. Do you understand that? That means that a 15 per cent ceiling here would have the same impact upon our people as a 30 per cent ceiling in Ontario. So the problem with having a 15 per cent cap is

that we're realistically – oh, and comparing that cap to Ontario, that has a 30 per cent cap, and saying, "Well, we're only half of what Ontario is," that is absolutely an inappropriate comparator. Fifteen per cent here is every bit as problematic as 30 per cent there. What you're doing is comparing, then, our beloved province with the most indebted subsovereign jurisdiction on the planet. I do not want my province to be another Ontario.

Hon. members, at all cost we must never have that kind of fame. To be the most indebted subsovereign jurisdiction in the world? Good grief. Right now, today, the impact of Ontario's debt is resulting in an absolute migration of investment and manufacturing out of the province, along with their skyrocketing electricity costs. They are losing investment and losing jobs and losing manufacturing on account of that. To mimic them in any way, whether it be their debt-to-GDP, whether it be their energy policies, whether it be – I don't care what policy, do not mimic Ontario. It would be death to our province.

You are putting Alberta at risk, not just a little but in every facet of this province's economy and way of life. You put it at risk by trying to mimic anything in Ontario. Please do not do this. Do not vote against this very sound measure.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any further speakers to amendment A5?

If not, we'll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A5 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:29 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Fildebrandt	Rodney
Clark	Fraser	van Dijken
Cooper	Gotfried	Yao
Cyr	MacIntyre	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Horne	Nielsen
Babcock	Kazim	Payne
Ceci	Larivee	Piquette
Connolly	Littlewood	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Rosendahl
Dach	Luff	Sabir
Drever	Malkinson	Schmidt
Eggen	Mason	Schreiner
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Shepherd
Fitzpatrick	McKittrick	Sweet
Goehring	McLean	Turner
Gray	McPherson	Westhead
Hinkley	Miller	Woollard
Hoffman	Miranda	

Totals: For – 11 Against – 41

[Motion on amendment A5 lost]

The Chair: Back on the bill. Are there any comments, questions, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Hooray. Thank you, Madam Chair, for giving me the opportunity to speak, with another amendment to make Bill

4 less horrible. I will introduce the amendment before I speak to it. Would you like me to begin reading it out while it's distributed?

The Chair: Go ahead.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that Bill 4, An Act to Implement Various Tax Measures and to Enact the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act, be amended in schedule 1 in section 3(2) by striking out "subsection (1)" and substituting "subsections (1) and (3)" and by adding the following after subsection (2):

(3) In any month that the Crown debt exceeds 15 per cent of GDP for Alberta, no member of Executive Council shall receive any salary prescribed under section 43(1)(a) of the Legislative Assembly Act.

Judging by the looks on the faces of members of Executive Council, I'm not expecting the consent of Executive Council. Madam Chair, I see that the Government House Leader is having a violently ill reaction to the prospect of having his cabinet pay docked if they cannot abide by the law.

Now, let's go back just to yesterday. Yesterday we found that the Minister of Finance was – how should we put it politely? – not strictly adhering to the legislation, some might say in severe breach of the legislation. The Fiscal Management Act required the Minister of Finance to produce a quarterly update, every three months, to this House, and while they had introduced the bill, Bill 4, which we're debating now, which would exempt the minister from doing so, this bill has not passed. Therefore, the minister was, as we'll say politely, not sticking to the intent of the legislation. I'm being careful as the Government House Leader looks at me ponderously.

This amendment seeks to put teeth in legislation so that if politicians break the law, there are consequences. This is so that if Executive Council, the cabinet, exceeds the debt limit, breaking their own laws, there will be consequences for breaking those laws. Cabinet must be accountable for their spending, and those responsible for spending beyond their means should face consequences. If any members of this House drive home and they get caught speeding, they don't get pulled over by the police and questioned in question period and then get to go home. They get a ticket, and they must pay a fine. If a member of this House parks somewhere they shouldn't and they don't happen to have an MLA universal Edmonton parking pass and they get a ticket, they don't go to question period and get questioned by a peace officer. They have to pay a ticket. But for some reason politicians can come to this place, pass laws, break them, but they don't have to pay a ticket. There are no consequences for their actions.

We are proposing an amendment to this legislation which has precedent in several other provinces, namely British Columbia, where when members of Executive Council, cabinet, in that province break, I believe, the taxpayer protection act – forgive me if I'm misquoting the exact name of that legislation – members of Executive Council in that province have their cabinet pay docked. It means that if members of that cabinet cannot follow the laws that they themselves have passed, there is a financial penalty attached to doing so until they're back in compliance with the act.

5:40

This amendment will mean that if this government cannot follow its own debt ceiling, they will get a ticket. Taxpayers will give them a ticket, and while they'll still receive their pay as an MLA, they'll no longer get their stipend as a minister. They'll still get to keep their vehicle allowance, they'll still get to keep their housing allowance, they'll still get paid as MLAs, but because they're not doing their jobs properly in Executive Council, that will get docked.

This amendment will still allow the government to exceed its 15 per cent debt ceiling legally so long as the government has to face a consequence for it. It is a minor consequence instead of the effect that it'll actually have on Albertans. Albertans will already under the budget proposed be paying \$1.3 billion a year in interest in just a few years, \$1.3 billion in interest that will be wasted, money put on a pile and burned. While Albertans will see their tax dollars wasted and their own tax rates go up to pay for it, cabinet ministers have no consequences right now for that.

You're proposing to this House a 15 per cent debt limit. Well, you've voted against any attempt for us to lower that limit or to put limits on your ability to increase it. Now we're proposing that if you want to exceed a 15 per cent debt limit, there'll be some consequences. If the Minister of Finance and members of the cabinet are confident that they will not exceed a 15 per cent debt limit, then surely they should have no qualms whatsoever about voting for a few financial consequences for themselves if they exceed that limit. I believe this is reasonable, it has precedent in other jurisdictions in our country, and it provides a real incentive. If the Minister of Finance takes us over the 15 per cent debt limit and he sees his cabinet pay clawed back, perhaps he'll be a little more motivated to get us back under that 15 per cent limit.

When I was a kid, I got \$10 a week in allowance for doing chores around the house. I got \$10 a week. With inflation . . .

The Chair: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, as much as we'd like to hear the story about when you were a kid. However, it is approaching 5:45 p.m., and pursuant to Government Motion 17 the Assembly must vote on the motion for consideration of Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor's speech. Accordingly, the committee must rise and report.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 5. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 4. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

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

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

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

[Motion carried]

Government Motions

Address in Reply to Speech from the Throne

18. **Mr. Mason moved:**
Be it resolved that the Address in Reply to the Speech from the Throne be engrossed and presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor by such members of the Assembly as are members of Executive Council.

The Deputy Speaker: This is a debatable motion if anyone has any comments they wish to make to the motion by the hon. Government House Leader.

[Government Motion 18 carried]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Well, Madam Speaker, I hesitate to give up 15 minutes of Assembly time, but I think it's important, so I would move that we return to Committee of the Whole.

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

Bill 4

An Act to Implement Various Tax Measures and to Enact the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act (continued)

The Chair: Hon. members, we are back on Bill 4, amendment A6. Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Well, I was just saying, Madam Chair – where was I? I think I'll start over.
I will conclude . . .

An Hon. Member: Start from the beginning.

Mr. Fildebrandt: I'm being egged on to start from the beginning. I will spare the hon. members across from that. [interjections]
Thank you very much.

When I was a kid, if I did all my chores, I'd get 10 bucks a week, but if I didn't cut the grass or shovel the driveway or do whatever we needed to do, that got clawed back. One of the earliest lessons we learn as kids is that if you don't do your job, you don't get paid.

Some of that should apply in here, I think. If we're not doing our job for taxpayers, why should taxpayers pay us? If the cabinet cannot do its job and abide by its own law, in the act it is proposing, of a 15 per cent debt limit, then there need to be some penalties. This is in line with what other jurisdictions in Canada have that seek to protect taxpayers. It is something that would serve us well, and I would encourage the Minister of Finance, if he is confident in his own proposals for a 15 per cent debt ceiling and does not feel that he will ever exceed that, that he would vote for this and show confidence in his own budget.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Yes. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Just in response to this, the hon. Member for Strathcona-Brooks . . .

Some Hon. Members: Strathmore.

Mr. Fildebrandt: That would be a really big riding.

Mr. Mason: That would be really big, yeah. Thanks very much. . . . Strathmore-Brooks – sorry – you know, has made some comments. He suggested that I was horrified, but actually, Madam Chair, it was more sort of a puzzled amusement, I would guess, at this because it's clearly just a bit of a stunt. It's a for-show kind of a motion. I can assure you and all members that this government has no intention of exceeding that debt limit. There are many responsibilities of the government, that it's obligated to fulfill, and it does that. Particular financial penalties for something that just happens to be a poster child for the opposition's issue are unnecessary. It's clearly just something for show, and for the hon. member to suggest that voting against this indicates some nefarious intention by the government to violate the debt ceiling is just simply unfair and untrue, and I would urge all hon. members to vote against the amendment.

5:50

The Chair: The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. To say that this is for show: I think that's not the intention. I mean, if this is something that's not going to happen, it should be an easy vote to hold the House accountable. That's what we all campaigned on, accountability and transparency. If we have the opportunity to show our province and Albertans that we are capable of following through on the promises that we make, I think, and when we do it in the House together like this, it goes that extra bit of distance to show that we are actually capable of doing those things. Deficit spending is a poor economic policy, and I truly believe that it will erode the services that are so important in the long run. Contrary to the government's claims, these are real numbers and real people and real dollars that are being diverted for what? So the government doesn't have to look inward and cut inefficiencies? Any other business has to cut inefficiencies.

An Hon. Member: Or nurses.

Mrs. Aheer: We're not talking about people or nurses. We're talking about looking at inefficiencies. We're talking about looking at the bloat, at what can be cut inwardly, not about people. For a taxpayer, it's an abuse of taxpayer money if you're not improving your operational efficiency in the manner that any other private sector would be responsible to do and, as they would be, held responsible to their stakeholders.

If you're meeting or exceeding that debt limit, there are very real consequences for that. I mean, Albertans are being forced to contribute billions of dollars to servicing debt. Billions. That's getting ripped out of the economic cycle, and these are Albertans' hard-earned dollars, all of ours. The money won't be invested in industry or families or local economies even though it's their money, our money. Nothing new can be produced when these funds

are allocated to debt servicing. There's nothing more that can go into building infrastructure like a road, something that everybody gets to use to get to work, to move product, to be industrious. These are things that influence the economy positively, and they're investments that create a means to work, to be paid, to become a contributing member of society, and that debt servicing interrupts that. It interrupts an important economic driver, and it's a disrespectful management of the funds.

It undermines the proper use of taxpayer dollars. I mean, think about that. We're accountable to all of the Albertans in our province for their money, and we're asking them to just contribute to this, not understanding that we're taking away from the ability to actually create something for them for the long term. This could happen even before reaching the limit, I mean, if the world sees us as an unreliable borrower and an unrestrained spender. We are a resource-dependent economy, and as you know, there are ebbs and flows to this economy that are unique to Alberta. It requires finesse to handle the fluctuations of this cyclical nature of this province and to deal with the volatility of products that we depend on for our revenue.

That 15 per cent debt-to-GDP ratio has typically been used as a benchmark figure, which jurisdictions must stay below in order to qualify for that triple-A credit rating. Alberta, however, being a resource-dependent economy, has a much higher risk classification. Therefore, it's absolutely necessary to stay well below that ceiling of 15 per cent.

The Chair: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(3) the committee must now rise and report.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Ms Woollard: Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill: Bill 4. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 4. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.
The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Well, I think that we're a lot closer to 6 now than we were before, Madam Speaker. I'll move that we call it 6 and adjourn until 7:30 this evening.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:56 p.m.]

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