



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, December 8, 2015

Day 30

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 29th Legislature

First Session

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

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Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)	McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret, Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (ND)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)	McIver, Ric, Calgary-Hays (PC), Leader of the Progressive Conservative Opposition
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)	McKitrick, Annie, Sherwood Park (ND)
Bhullar, Manmeet Singh, Calgary-Greenway (PC)	McLean, Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (ND), Deputy Government Whip
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND), Deputy Government House Leader	McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (ND)
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND)	Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)
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Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)	Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)	Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W), Official Opposition Whip
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (ND)	Notley, Hon. Rachel, Edmonton-Strathcona (ND), Premier
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)	Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W), Official Opposition House Leader	Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)
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Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W), Official Opposition Deputy Whip	Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND), Deputy Government House Leader
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (ND)	Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)	Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (Ind)	Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC), Progressive Conservative Opposition Whip	Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (ND)	Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)	Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)	Schmidt, Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND), Government Whip
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)	Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)	Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)	Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)	Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)	Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)
Gray, Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)	Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC), Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W), Official Opposition Deputy House Leader	Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (ND)	Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (ND)	Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (ND)	Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)	Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND)
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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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Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
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Carson	Hunter
Connolly	Jansen
Coolahan	Piquette
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Cortes-Vargas	Nixon
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Drysdale	Stier
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Drysdale	Sucha
Horne	Woollard
Kazim	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, December 8, 2015

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there any school groups today? The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you today a fabulous school group from Stony Plain central school. This is a group of grade 6ers who are here this week doing School at the Legislature. I had the pleasure of speaking to them yesterday for a good half-hour, and they asked very good questions. They are intelligent and thoughtful. Their teacher, Mr. Paul McCann, is sitting with them. He's obviously been a great influence on them this week. Please give them the warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I hope the students will note that the MLA has lost her voice because in this House there's an awful lot of talking in class.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: 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 AUPE's Committee on Political Action. The committee, chaired by AUPE vice-president Mike Dempsey, seeks to encourage all 89,000 AUPE members to become more engaged and involved in politics. In recent years COPA has spearheaded get-out-the-vote campaigns, reaching out to members, urging them to support the candidate and the party that best reflects their needs. Also joining us in the gallery today are Dustin Abbott, John Lomas, Bruce Macdonald, Edwin Mullin, Danielle Nadeau McMillan, Peter Snowdon, and Henry Wakoluk. I'd ask them to remain standing to receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today with great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Ms Nicole Bownes. Nicole is a good friend of mine and a tremendous asset to the people of Edmonton. For many years Nicole worked as a registered nurse. She also served in various positions with the United Nurses of Alberta, including as president and second vice-president of her local. She has also always been incredibly active in politics over the years, serving as campaign manager and official agent for the MLA for Edmonton-Strathcona, our hon. Premier. It is without a doubt that Nicole has made and continues to make a tremendous positive impact on her community. I would ask her to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House someone who is

no stranger to this House or to its members. Kerry Towle served as a member of this Assembly for the riding of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake from 2012 to 2015, and she is still a tremendous advocate for Albertans and Alberta. Kerry is a lifelong advocate for the rights of seniors and also works hard to bring awareness to Huntington's disease and those affected by it. My guest is seated in the public gallery. I would ask her to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a real pleasure for me today to introduce Bob Zaplachinski, a proud Albertan. He's risen in the visitors' gallery. In 1970 Bob, as a young 4-H'er, was named one of the top 14 4-H'ers in Alberta, and he won a trip to the royal winter fair in Toronto and also a trip to Ottawa, where he got a special certificate of citizenship at Rideau Hall. The person that gave him those awards was the hon. Robert Clark, at that time a 20-something-year-old minister of youth. It was my honour today, actually, to meet Mr. Clark again at the Public Accounts Committee. He is the chair of the board of Olds College.

After his successful trip to Ottawa and Toronto Bob Zaplachinski went on to work for Edmonton Telephones and for Telus for 38 years, and he's now enjoying a well-earned retirement. I would ask the Legislature to give him the usual warm welcome.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Are there any other guests to introduce today? Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly a number of constituents that have travelled from in and around the Nanton region. They are farm workers, farmers, and ranchers here today to witness the debate of Bill 6 and to stand with the Wildrose and MLAs of like mind to say with one voice: consultation, not information.

There are a great number of them, so I invite them to rise as I read their names and, after I'm finished, to receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly. I apologize in advance if I don't get all the names correct: Rita Reich, Pierre Catellier, Alderic Catellier, Bob Kullman, Bunny Maltais, Noel Hyslip, Murray McLean, Kevin Love, Derek Uilly, Ernie Herron, Freeman Herron, Dale Wiebe, Vern Habraken, Eric Kinserdhal, Wade Nelson, Laci Pighin, Nicole Monkman, Alan Top, Kyle Kohut, Tristan Hopper, Ben Loree, Dustyn Ryll, Bernard Lentz, Dana Brown, Bert Vleeming, Melanie Vleeming, Doug Schneider, Mike White, Sabrina Conroy, Ron Wurban, Darlene Bouchard, Romeo Bouchard, Cor de Boon, Kennedy Chaytors, Presley Chaytors, Cody Jensen, Tiffany Fehr, Jennifer Demyen, Albina Demyen, Greg Olsen, Chase Cox, Randi Tajcnar, Celeste Chaytors, Kris Chaytors, and, finally, Cheryl Nietupski. Welcome to the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Are there any other introductions today? The Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature a former Member of the Legislative Assembly, Brent Rathgeber. He's up here as well. He's also a former MP for Edmonton-St. Albert. If he could stand and receive the warm welcome of everyone.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Farm and Ranch Worker Legislation

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My riding of Strathcona-Sherwood Park is partly rural, and a lot of my constituents are farm owners or have worked on a farm. This is why I'm glad that our government is taking action on developing a system that supports the protection of farm employees in Alberta while ensuring that family farms continue to thrive. Once Bill 6 is passed, there will be thousands of additional Albertans who will have access to the protections that other workers in this province have received for decades. It will extend protections to employees on farms similar to those that exist in other provinces, where there are thriving family farms.

We know that farmers take workplace safety very seriously, and it's good to see that this government is working with farmers and will continue to work with farmers to ensure that they have the tools they need to protect workers.

1:40

We know that farmers work very hard every day to ensure safety in the workplace. Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, despite best efforts, incidents still occur. Seventeen people died on farms last year. Over the past three decades more than 380 people have been killed on Alberta farms, and for every one of them, it is estimated that 25 or more have been hospitalized due to work-related farm incidents. It's clear that more must be done to ensure that our farm workers are safe.

Mr. Speaker, in 2008 an Alberta court judge who was reviewing the death of a farm worker said, "No logical explanation was given as to why paid employees on a farm are not covered by the same workplace legislation as non-farm employees." It's clear that these changes need to be made, and I'm proud to see that our government is doing so. We must also work to ensure that when farm employees are injured on the job, they have access to compensation that protects them and their families.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard from farmers that it is important that family farms are exempted from the legislation. While it was always our intention to focus on employees, when families . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Co-operation in the Legislative Assembly on Bill 6

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to speak about the principle of co-operation and about the importance of co-operation when it comes to good government and the smooth operation of this Assembly. Those of us who pay attention to history understand that the men and women who were the original pillars of this New Democratic Party spoke constantly about co-operation. Henry Wise Wood, the one-time pillar of Alberta's left, was esteemed by Albertans from all parties because he genuinely sought co-operation.

Now, due to Bill 6, Albertans have been presented with a snapshot that reveals in all its starkness the attitude gap that exists between the old CCF-UFA alliance and Alberta's modern left-of-centre representatives. Those members across the way are responsible for Bill 6.

Mr. Speaker, members across the way have demonstrated that they do not value co-operation, and now some of these same members are claiming that what they blatantly and openly stated at

an earlier time was merely a miscommunication. This government openly stated that under the provisions of Bill 6 workers, regardless of age, family, or pay status, would be covered by OHS. This would include Hutterite colonies and the children of farm and ranch families. This wasn't a miscommunication. There was no vagueness about what the government said, nor was there uncertainty in the documents that the government previously presented to the public.

Mr. Speaker, let me encourage members of this government to step away from their ideological high horse, look to their roots, cooperate, and listen to the people.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the third party.

Progressive Conservative Caucus

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize the good work done this session by the PC caucus. This is what effective opposition looks like. The Member for Calgary-North West stood up for the good work done on women's issues by the previous government while strongly and effectively advocating for awareness and action on violence against women as well as teen addictions.

The Member for Calgary-West has been relentless in urging the Health and Justice ministers to create a proactive plan to address Alberta's fentanyl crisis. He has also pushed hard on at least two ministers in the House to secure meetings for his constituents.

The Member for Calgary-South East has been a collaborative communicator, working with the ministers of Health and Environment to advocate for front-line health care workers as well as pushing for responsible, industry-partnered planning in our energy sector.

The Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster has regaled us with tales of his days as a veterinarian while also acting as a measured voice in the debate around Bill 6. Between him and the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti there are no stronger advocates for farmers and ranchers. On top of this, the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti has been a strong voice for the forest industry. From the softwood lumber agreement to the pine beetle problem, the member has raised the concerns of an industry largely forgotten by this government.

The Member for Calgary-Lougheed has repeatedly and tirelessly made sure this government takes definitive and measurable action on advanced education and aboriginal stakeholder issues with this government.

The Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, while new to the game, has proven himself more than capable in advocating for increased ASLI housing spaces across Alberta while pushing for increased market access and export opportunities for Alberta businesses.

I am proud we're speaking up for hard-working, everyday Albertans, including farmers and ranchers. I've tried to show Albertans that we are humbled and realize the mistakes of the past. Our party looks to Albertans for guidance as we seek to rebuild and come back stronger than ever.

Finally, we unfortunately had to say goodbye to our esteemed colleague from Calgary-Greenway. He advocated for small business and nonprofits while also being a strong constituency MLA. He spent his own money travelling the globe to advocate for over 2,500 religious minorities in Afghanistan who face ongoing persecution for practicing their faith.

I am proud of our PC team, Mr. Speaker.

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

Alberta Committee of Citizens with Disabilities

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This weekend I had the opportunity to join the Alberta Committee of Citizens with Disabilities, which is located in the Edmonton-Meadowlark constituency, for their celebration of International Day of Persons with Disabilities. ACCD is dedicated to educating our community about disability-related issues, and they aim to dispel the myths that hinder persons with disabilities from participating in society. Through consultation and research, the committee addresses issues facing those with disabilities and provides feedback to decision-makers like ourselves. ACCD's motto, Together We Hold the Power, reflects their commitment to developing partnerships with like-minded organizations and individuals. This organization offers many supports to its clients, including bursaries and awards for those participating in postsecondary studies. I would like to thank ACCD for their dedication to those with disabilities in my community and across the province.

Thank you.

Farm and Ranch Worker Legislation

Mr. Westhead: Mr. Speaker, farm safety legislation is one of the reasons that I ran for election. I knew the Conservatives were dragging their feet on farm worker safety for far too long, and the Wildrose was not to be trusted when it came to workers' rights. Only our hon. Premier and the NDP would provide the kind of leadership to tackle this issue in a way that is fair and reasonable for a group of workers who have been denied these rights based solely on their occupation.

When formulating my decision on whether to support this policy direction, I turned to the evidence. The evidence was overwhelming. The evidence was also heartbreaking. I learned that of the roughly 18 deaths per year, they were preventable, Mr. Speaker, and I learned that for every death that occurred, there were 25 hospital admissions and 11 trauma admissions. I've seen some of those accidents first-hand in the operating room: degloving injuries and people run over by combines. I also learned that over the last several years the agricultural sector has had the highest fatality rate among all occupations in Alberta, and it's on the rise. What's more is that injuries in this sector are underreported. We don't even know the true magnitude of this problem. After examining the evidence, the status quo is simply not acceptable to me.

A wise man once told me that history isn't just a thing of the past; it is also a thing of the present, that we are always making history right here and right now. On that note, I'd like to leave a question in the minds of my hon. colleagues. What side of history do you want to be on? I know that I want to be on the side of history where I can look back and be proud of the fact that I supported equal rights for all employees regardless of their occupation.

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

Government Policies

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For the past seven months this out-of-touch NDP government has done just about everything in its power to break the spirit of Albertans. They've attacked taxpayers; families; the energy sector; businesses, large and small; and now the very fabric of our identity, farmers and ranchers. They call our oil dirty.

The Finance minister doesn't think there's a single penny of waste to cut from the most expensive government in Canada. When we ask him about cutting taxes, he just laughs.

The Energy minister says that unemployed energy workers looking to our government for solutions should go take a hike and get a job in B.C.

The government backbench jeers and taunts when the Leader of the Official Opposition talks about job losses and families getting hurt in the chaos of this government's risky policies.

The NDP said that they'd be different, but they've broken that trust. They're not even acting the same as past governments. They're acting worse.

All is not lost, however. Wildrose is here to stand up for Albertans every step of the way. Even though this out-of-touch government has caused unthinkable economic damage, their mess can and will be cleaned up with common-sense conservative values and ideas. We will fight their regressive carbon tax, we will defend the energy sector, and we will stand against this NDP government's relentless attack on family farms and ranches.

1:50

We will be here when the NDP is just a bad memory, like in Saskatchewan, B.C., and Ontario. We are devoted to Alberta. We will do it because, unlike the members opposite, we came to work for Albertans, not ourselves. We will fight their spending, we will fight their taxes, and at the end of the day we will hold our heads high knowing we did right by the people of this province: past, present, and future.

Wildrose believes in cutting waste and shrinking government, low taxes, trust, and democracy. If the days are starting to feel long, I advise the members opposite to buckle up. We're only getting started. The spirit of the Wildrose is stronger than ever. It is the spirit of Alberta. It is something the members opposite will never understand, and it's something they cannot break.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

Government Policies

Mr. Jean: Alberta's economy is in crisis. Financial experts are calling yesterday's markets one of the worst days in 25 years for the energy sector. The NDP's ideological push to implement their risky economic experiments are only making things much, much worse, and here's the social cost for families. Alberta's suicide rate has increased 30 per cent, homeless shelter usage is up 130 per cent, and food bank use is at a crisis level. Why won't the Premier hit the pause button on her radical policies and focus on policies that will actually help vulnerable Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I've said many times before, we are fully aware of the hurt in this province as a result of the drop in the price of oil. We're aware of the problems that occur with so many families when jobs are lost. That's why we were the only party in the last election to run with a job-creation plan, and we are the party that has introduced an infrastructure plan that yesterday the Conference Board of Canada said was the right thing to do and today the RBC said is the right thing to do. Last night these guys voted against a budget bill that supported that infrastructure plan. We are going to stand up for Albertans.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Jean: One hundred thousand Albertans' jobs lost and counting with this government. In neighbourhoods across Alberta accountants, administration staff, engineers, rig workers, truck drivers, and hard-working men and women are sitting at home wondering what's next. They are becoming gripped with self-doubt and a sense of hopelessness. Others are now finding themselves on the streets, fentanyl use is rising, and charities are being overloaded with work. Everyone is looking at the NDP, struggling to understand their stubbornness, pushing forward policies that are hurting Albertans. When will the Premier start listening to these Albertans, who want to get back to work?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Unlike the opposition, we in this government know that the government does not control the world price of oil, but we can act as a shock absorber – absorber – as the economy slows down. That is why we have introduced a plan that (a) stabilizes those important front-line services that work with people that are struggling with the situation, just like the member opposite has talked about. That is why we are investing in infrastructure. That is why we have freed up over a billion dollars in capital. That is why we are moving forward with the job creation incentive plan. These are all things that we are doing in order to ameliorate the very important issues that the member . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Jean: The Premier is right. She is shock observing.

Here's the NDP record on the economy: higher business taxes, higher personal taxes, and higher gas taxes for exporters. Royalty rates are going up, and the review has scared investment right out of Alberta. To top it all off, the NDP are bringing in a punishing \$3 billion carbon tax, which is going to cost every Albertan. Albertans are very worried. They're right to be anxious. Their government is more interested in toying around with the economy instead of doing what's right for Albertans. Does the Premier understand the damage her policies are doing, or is she just not interested?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What I understand is that the platform that the member opposite ran on, to take billions and billions of dollars away from important front-line services that support the families that he claims to be standing up for, is not the way forward and is not what Albertans voted for. What we are doing is that we are stabilizing public services, we are investing \$2.1 billion in making capital available to businesses to diversify the economy, we're investing in technology, we've got a job creation incentive program, and we are putting an extra 4 and a half billion dollars for an unprecedented investment in capital, all of which . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Second main question.

Mr. Jean: One hundred thousand Albertans' jobs lost, and this government has done absolutely nothing. Albertans are worried about jobs and the economy. Unemployment is the highest it's been in decades, and home prices are down and falling. What's the Premier worried about? Attacking farms, introducing a \$3 billion carbon tax, and jet-setting to Paris. Surely the Premier understands the terrible optics that while Albertans are suffering, taxes are going up and life in the government has never been so good. To the

Premier: what is the government going to do to show Albertans that they're sharing in the same pain that Albertans have?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, I know the member opposite would like us to show we're sharing the pain by laying off teachers and laying off nurses, laying people off and pulling services back from Albertans, but we are not going to do that because we know that will not help the economy and that will not help Alberta families. That's what Albertans voted for in the last election because they know that we've got to come together as we go through these tough times, not pull back the way these guys over there want to.

Mr. Jean: Alberta is facing the highest personal debt loads in the country. Bankruptcies are on the increase. But it seems the only policy the NDP have for those suffering is to raise everyone's taxes, taxes that will be taken from families and put into an NDP slush fund. Now critics are more determined than ever in their resolve to shut down our energy sector. It's these types of short-sighted policies that are doing damage to families right across Alberta. The Premier did not campaign on this. Will she admit she has broken the trust of Albertans, who are suffering so badly?

Ms Notley: You know, the Official Opposition's approach, for instance, to the issue of climate change is to pretend that it isn't there and to carry on with the same policies that have been in place for over a decade that haven't gotten a single foot of pipeline built and that have done nothing to expand our access to markets or to diversify the economy. That is not the way forward. That is why we are so vulnerable to the drop in prices now. But that's not the way we are going to go forward under our leadership. We're going to change that. We're going to make this economy stronger. We're going to diversify our economy. We're going to diversify our energy sector. We're going to diversify our markets. By doing that, we will be much stronger economically.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Jean: Critics of our energy sector have never been more determined than today to shut us down, and the Premier just doesn't get it. ForestEthics, who the Premier proudly shared the stage with last month, said yesterday, and I quote, there's no way we're going to stop working to prevent projects like Kinder Morgan's from being built. End quote. They bragged later that they had a direct hand in developing the carbon tax and climate strategy. How reassuring. Will the Premier admit that her carbon tax will only do damage to our economy and it won't help Albertans in any way whatsoever?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. What I will say is that our plan to deal with climate change, something that all Albertans know we have to do our part on, enjoyed the consensus support of key industry leaders, of small-business leaders, of civil society, of environmental groups because they know that is the right thing to do. The members opposite want to continue to pretend it's 1950. They don't want to change anything. They don't want to move forward. They think that that's somehow going to make things better, but it's not. It's 2015. We've got to move forward.

The Speaker: Third main question.

Mr. Jean: It's 2015, and Albertans are definitely against your carbon tax.

Farm and Ranch Worker Legislation

Mr. Jean: Yesterday was a day filled with misinformation about Bill 6. The Premier said that we had to pass the bill so that the government could write the regulations. That's simply not true. Bill 6 is a weird law. Six of its 10 sections actually amend regulations and not laws. That means that cabinet can change or cancel 60 per cent of the bill through a closed-door cabinet order, and there is nothing anyone can do about it. This includes undoing all the amendments about family farms and the WCB. Why has the Premier . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, I'm very surprised to hear that coming from a lawyer, but anyway. At this point, as a result of that less than professional opinion, the only confusion that is coming on this issue after we had brought forward our amendment is that that is coming from the Official Opposition.

Speaking of confusion, Mr. Speaker, in this week alone the Official Opposition has said that Bill 6 should be killed, then they've said that they agree with parts of Bill 6, and then yesterday their critic of accountability told the media that he has no position on Bill 6. Quite frankly, they sound very confused and not . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

2:00

Mr. Jean: Again there was more misinformation from the jobs minister. She said that it was never the intent of the government to cover family farms or neighbours volunteering in Bill 6. Not true. The government's original briefing for the media made it absolutely clear that the bill applied to unpaid labour from neighbours and family members. The NDP produced flyers, websites, and Power-Point presentations and circulated them to us and everyone else that all confirm this. Either this government didn't read its own documents on Bill 6 or they are willfully deceiving Albertans. Which one is it?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I have already taken personal responsibility for the fact that the wrong information went out. As a result of that, we have introduced an amendment to make it very clear – very clear – that farmers' family members, unpaid volunteers, and paid family members are exempted from the application of this bill. It's now in the act. These guys know it. They won't admit it. They're continuing to sow misinformation and confusion because this is about politics for them now; it's not about doing the right thing.

Mr. Jean: The jobs minister had even more misinformation yesterday. She said that the government-proposed changes to Bill 6 would only allow OH and S farm inspectors to enter a farm if there is an injury or death. That is not true either. Nothing in this bill says that. Nothing in the amendments say that. The minister made it up. The NDP keep deceiving Albertans about their intentions on Bill 6, about what is in Bill 6, and about what is in their amendments on Bill 6 because it keeps changing every day, yet this Premier wants farmers and ranchers to trust her. How can they possibly trust you, Premier?

Ms Notley: Well, as I didn't get a chance to finish this in my last answer, let me be clear. In the last week the Official Opposition wanted to kill the bill, agreed with part of the bill, and then were unwilling to take a position on the bill just yesterday when asked

about it by the media. So the Official Opposition, I would suggest, should take some time to figure out what their position is, and in the meantime we are going to move forward on protecting paid farm workers in Alberta, as should have been done a very long time ago.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the third party.

Carbon Tax

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to open by saying that the average retail electricity price for major providers in December in 2015 is 5.31 cents per kilowatt hour. Write that down because we need it to compare it to the price of electricity after the NDP climate change policies take effect. To the Premier: since the PC Party will be reminding you how much electricity prices are in the future, what do you say to low-income Albertans who are already struggling to make ends meet even before your carbon tax price increases?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, I will say two things. First of all, as we have said repeatedly, when the carbon price comes into effect, we have every intention of rebating completely to low-income and middle-income families. As well, though, the member opposite should be a little nervous about this issue because as a result of their actions with respect to transmission upgrades, we do have some concerns about the price of electricity going forward, and that will be as a result of decisions taken by that government over the objection of Albertans and the rest of the Legislature.

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, the NDP will artificially raise energy costs, and then they're going to ask Albertans to thank them for paying a little bit back. Some Albertans may think those rebates look like vote buying. Increased utility bills and energy costs will hurt business, agriculture, nonprofits, recreational facilities, community halls, arenas, and individual Albertans. To the Premier: what will your government be doing to make sure these important public services and businesses do not close due to the fallout of this and all your other new taxes?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We will be looking forward to working with impacted businesses, trade-affected businesses, low-income families, middle-income families, to make sure that every single cent of the carbon price is reinvested into the economy to help diversify the economy, to support technological development so that we can move towards more renewable energy, so that we can ensure that technology is invested in the oil sands so that they can produce a lower emission product so that they can expand their markets. This is all about economic diversification. This is all about growing the ability of . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.
Second supplemental.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 6 has demonstrated that repeating nonsense does not make it fact. This government is trying the same tactic with their carbon tax, stating again and again that it's revenue neutral when it is not. To the Premier. You say that you will distribute 60 per cent to low-income Albertans. After that what percentages will go to administration, general government revenue, and what percentage, if any, will be left over for your undetermined climate change efforts? I don't see anything revenue neutral here.

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, what Albertans got on climate change from the former government was action neutral and results neutral. We were the only province in the country without an energy efficiency plan, so that's one of the key things that we will be ensuring that that money goes to. We will support Albertans who want to move towards renewable energy on their farms, in their towns, in their community leagues, in their businesses. All those things will be done so that together Albertans can get support to reduce their emissions and ultimately reduce the cost of their energy.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.
The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

Traffic Accidents Involving Pedestrians

Ms Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In August of 2014 the mother and future sister-in-law of one of my constituents were struck by an SUV in Calgary. Tragically, her mother died a week later due to the injuries she sustained. However, if that weren't enough, an unfortunate miscommunication between the Calgary Crown prosecutor's office and the Calgary Police Service traffic unit resulted in the case ending up in the wrong court, and the driver only received a fine of \$690 and a loss of eight demerit points. To the Minister of Justice: what is this government doing to ensure that this situation and others like it ...

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

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the critical question. Well, of course, the circumstances surrounding this case were absolutely tragic, and our hearts go out to the victim and to the family of the victim. No one should have to suffer such a loss as this. In the wake of that incident, while I can't comment on specifics because of the case, Crown prosecution service is working with the Calgary Police Service traffic unit to ensure that the terms of a memorandum of understanding are used so that a criminal prosecutor is always informed when there is a death in a traffic incident.

Thank you.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Transportation: given that in 2014 in Calgary alone 411 pedestrians were struck and injured, more than one a day, and that's not including incidents where pedestrians were struck and walked away or collisions with cyclists, what changes are this government considering with regard to amending the Traffic Safety Act to better protect pedestrians?

The Speaker: The Minister of Infrastructure.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Our government is committed to ensuring safety for everyone who uses our roads and sidewalks, including cyclists, drivers, and pedestrians. In conjunction with the Ministry of Justice we're reviewing the Traffic Safety Act. It's currently under way, and it addresses pedestrian safety, and we're looking at fines, demerit points for a variety of traffic violations, including those which involve pedestrians.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the minister: how is this government engaging with municipalities to better ensure traffic safety, especially in regard to pedestrians?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, we're always looking for ways to listen to Albertans and to collaborate with them on ways that we can improve safety for the people of Alberta. As we review the act, we'll be seeking input from within the government but also from our stakeholders, our municipal partners, and members of the public. It affects us all, it's crucial, and we need to make sure that all voices are heard as we go forward with the review of the act.

Thank you.

Economic Development

Ms Payne: Mr. Speaker, oil prices have continued to fall this week, and I'm hearing from families and businesses in Calgary-Acadia that they are worried. To the Minister of Finance: what is the government doing to strengthen our economy in this situation?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government has a responsible plan that will diversify the economy and better protect Albertan families from the boom-and-bust cycles of oil. We're investing \$4.4 billion in new infrastructure for our communities and to get people working again. We're mobilizing \$2.1 billion so that economic growth through entrepreneurship and diversification can occur. Finally, by getting it right on climate change, we're building strong support for new market access for our energy products.

Thank you.

2:10

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that families and businesses are experiencing challenges because of the dramatic drop in global oil prices, to the same minister: when will the province get back on its feet, and when will we see a return to positive growth?

The Speaker: The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our government has a sound and stable plan that will see a return to growth next year. In fact, the Conference Board of Canada agrees with our plan and projections. Yesterday they said that the provincial government will be spending billions on infrastructure projects, including schools, hospitals, and roads. Over the next few years that will help meet the needs of a growing population. These measures along with the strength in the bitumen exports will help lift the real GDP.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that global oil prices are projected to remain low for a longer period of time, will the minister revise his revenue projections and economic forecasts?

Mr. Ceci: You know, everybody knows that the price of oil is volatile. They also know that we consult with industry, expert economists, banks to develop our own forecasts and that our own forecasts are more conservative than theirs. That's why we keep our

projections conservative, and that's why we revise our estimates quarterly.

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

Job Creation and Retention

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government talks all the time about how important it is to diversify the economy. What they don't seem to realize is that their actions and risky ideological experiments are killing multiple related industries. Today I would like to put a face to those job loss numbers, not to tell them to move to B.C. I would like to ask the minister of economic diversification and trade, the superminister: what do you have to say to the more than 500 people out of work at PHX Energy, a Calgary-based drilling company?

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

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've said before, we are very concerned about the fact that we're seeing a drop in energy prices and the implications that that has for job creation and economic stimulus in Alberta. As part of the royalty review – interestingly, the member opposite suggested that we already had conclusions and that we already had outcomes. That's interesting because that's not true. One of the things that we are doing is working with industry to talk about how we deal with the current challenges that they are facing in terms of profitability and continuing their economic viability, and you'll see more . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, those in the Wildrose caucus here understand that when work in the energy industry dries up, it has a ripple effect. Given that tens of thousands of Albertans have lost their jobs in the energy sector and also that that trickles down to the support service sectors as well and since we all know that thousands of Albertans are facing this cruel reality, what does this minister have to say to Stephen Scott, who lost his engineering job at Cenovus Energy in Calgary during an October wave of layoffs?

Ms Notley: As I've said, Mr. Speaker, we have a multifaceted program that our budget introduced, that was just passed two weeks ago, that is focused on economic stimulation and job creation. One example of things that we'll be doing is that we have \$2.2 billion of capital that we are freeing up so that small business and innovators and medium enterprisers can get access to capital to help them through the downturn, and indeed some of these drilling companies were exactly who we had in mind when we introduced that project and that process. We've also, of course, as I've said, through our investment in capital . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, the Premier should know full well that the economic downturn our province is facing spreads well beyond the oil patch. Given that I'm very worried about the thousands of families that are sitting around their kitchen tables trying to figure out how to make ends meet and given that we already have seen the impact of some of the NDP government's economic policies, will the Premier commit to killing the risky, job-killing carbon tax at a time when Albertans simply can't afford it?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, what I will commit to doing is not moving forward on some of the ideas that the opposition has put forward

that would have involved laying off nurses, teachers, front-line service providers, and taking job loss and making it worse, which was absolutely the plan that they had wanted to go forward on. [interjections] What we will be doing is working with industry, working with stakeholders, working with economic partners to ensure that we can move forward with diversifying the economy and providing a broader range of job opportunities for Albertans as we move forward.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks, would you keep your volume down a bit, please.
Calgary-Lougheed.

Lower Athabasca Regional Land-use Plan

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since the Aboriginal Relations minister could not assist in this regard last week, I'll ask this question again in a slightly different way. A review panel was struck in June 2014 by the former minister of the environment after six First Nations applied for a review of the way in which the lower Athabasca regional plan was affecting their way of life. The review panel was to have submitted its finding by June 2015. To the Premier: did you receive this report, and if so, when?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, again, cabinet has not been in receipt of such a report. However, we will commit to getting back to the member when we can determine what's going on. Certainly, we have been working with our First Nation partners in terms of the lower Athabasca regional plan. They have identified for us that there are some concerns around the way the previous government proceeded with respect to the lower Athabasca plan, and we are working with them to address those concerns.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Rodney: That's alarming.

Again to the Premier: given that section 45(c) of the Land Stewardship Act requires that the government of Alberta publish the review panel report on its Land Use Secretariat website and given that the minister's own rules require the ministry to post the report within 60 days after it was submitted, which means that it is over 100 days late, and given that as of today at 1 p.m. the report is still not public, when are you planning to release the report, and why did the ministry contravene its own law for over three and a half months?

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, I'm not really sure why we're going over this territory again, but I'm happy to repeat the same answer. You know, no report has been brought forward to cabinet.

In terms of the lower Athabasca regional plan, we are proceeding forward with our First Nations partners. We are listening to their concerns, which they feel the last government didn't listen to, and we are working with them to develop a way to go forward so that we can respect their traditional territory rights as well as the environment.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Rodney: Given that six First Nations went to the trouble of seeking a ruling by a review panel and that after one and a half years they deserve to learn the panel's findings and given that aboriginal

groups have told us they're at a loss to understand why your government has not shared this information with them as per your own rules and given that your government has been vowing that it's forging a new relationship with Alberta's indigenous peoples, what possible reason could you have for withholding the review panel's report on LARP, and what kind of message are you sending to our First Nations friends when you're blatantly failing to consult with them on issues that are vital to their way of life?

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, in my consultations with First Nations on a number of issues, including issues related to the previous government's action on the lower Athabasca regional plan, I haven't heard any particular complaints that we're failing to consult on that issue. But you know what? I am happy to hear voices from First Nations. I've had many meetings with many First Nations and many other indigenous groups, but I'm happy to have more. So if the hon. member would like to bring that to my attention, then I am happy to take that meeting.

Thank you.

2:20 Emergency Medical Services in Southern Alberta

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, as unbelievable as it may seem, Alberta Health Services has spent half a million dollars this year on an unnecessary, unoccupied facility in Calgary. Space has been rented, and staff has been hired, at a cost of over \$60,000 per month. Over half the year and hundreds of thousands of dollars spent and no work done: I thought you had to be an NDP backbencher to get that gig. Will the Health minister immediately put an end to this thoughtless waste of tax dollars on an empty building?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We want to build an EMS system that's there when people need it. We need to make sure that they get the right care in the right place at the right time for the right investment, and that's why we are taking our time to make sure that we get it right in working with Calgarians. I've met with the mayor, I've reviewed the original Health Quality Council report, I've reviewed operational data from Alberta Health Services and the ministry, and I want to make sure that we get this right for the long term. I'm not going to rush into a decision today if it's not the right one.

Mr. Barnes: There are so many higher priorities. Centralization of emergency services under AHS has been shaky at best and a serious burden for communities at worst. Given that in our own city of Medicine Hat response times worsened once dispatch was centralized under AHS and seeing that Mayor Nenshi and the city of Calgary have said that they don't want to be forced into a top-down, centralized system either, will you commit right now to scrapping this AHS project and listening to the local decision-makers in Calgary?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm absolutely working in collaboration with local leaders in Calgary as well as reviewing comprehensive data from throughout the province to make sure that we get this right moving forward.

I also want to add that I'm offended that the member said that the staff who were working at the facility aren't doing work. They're

doing valuable work. They're doing transfers from southern Alberta, making sure that patients who need support in transfers are getting the support they need. They're taking calls from the central and north zones. I think that the staff who are working there are doing a great service for Albertans, and they deserve our respect, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, I think pretty much everyone on that side of the House was against AHS and the superboard before they flip-flopped.

Given that the waste continues to pile sky-high, it's no wonder that the communities want no part of AHS centralization. To the Health minister. Waste, inefficiency, decreased service, zero accountability of our finances: is this what Calgarians can look forward to once they are forced into this broken, centralized system?

Ms Hoffman: The government that Albertans elected, Mr. Speaker, is there to make sure that they're using evidence to drive solid decision-making, and we're going to be acting in the best interests of Albertans. We're not going to be proposing billions of dollars in cuts, as are being proposed by members opposite. That's not in the best interests of Albertans. That's not in the best interests of comprehensive health care. We're going to make sure we put patients first, and I wish the members opposite would do the same.

The Speaker: The Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Farm and Ranch Worker Legislation (continued)

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Several open letters on behalf of members of the agriculture community – the Alberta wheat, barley, canola, and elk commissions, associations like the Alberta Pulse Growers, landscape and nursery trades, Alberta greenhouse growers, and the Alberta Oat Growers – have all said: stop, consult, and start over on Bill 6. Will the Premier admit our farming community was not properly consulted while her friends at the Alberta Federation of Labour got special consideration?

The Speaker: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Limbs are lost, bodies are crushed, and there are fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles – family members – who don't come home, and that's the point. The workers, the farm and ranch employees, should be safe at work. They should know that we are all doing our very best to ensure that they can be compensated if they are injured or hurt. [interjections]

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

The Speaker: Point of order noted.

First supplemental.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the Alberta Beef Producers, the Alberta Beekeepers Commission, the Alberta Cattle Feeders, the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties are all encouraging the Premier to stop Bill 6 and start over, will the Premier accept these groups' advice to stand down and send Bill 6 to committee?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Bill 6 proceeds with protecting the very basic, core rights of employees to be protected, to

ensure that if they are injured or they are killed, they have compensation, to ensure that they have the right to refuse unsafe work without punishment, to ensure that if there is an injury, there's investigation on it. We will proceed with the very basic rights and move forward with very full and open and transparent consultation on any other details regarding that.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. This government stood in this House and promised fulsome consultations with farmers and ranchers. When they demanded more, several ministers proclaimed loudly that there will be more information sessions. As of 2:20 today this government's own website has added no information sessions. Will the Premier admit that they misled farmers, and will she rectify the situation by personally attending one this Friday in Hanna?

The Speaker: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have been listening to the concerns of the farmers and ranchers who've been speaking to us, and as a result of addressing their concerns, we have moved forward the amendment to ensure that it is protected, that families are . . .

Mr. Mason: Order. Mr. Speaker, these goons over here are . . . [interjections]

Mr. Fildebrandt: Point of order. [interjections]

The Speaker: Quiet, please.

Mr. Mason: A bunch of gangsters.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Point of order.

The Speaker: I noted it, hon. member. Don't yell, please.

Hon. member, your point of order is taken. However, the phraseology that you used was inappropriate for the House.

Mr. Mason: I apologize, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you very much.

Speaker's Ruling Decorum

The Speaker: Hon. members, we're back at it again today. I thought we went fairly well. Today I can't hear the ministers. I also find it somewhat inappropriate on both sides of the House to be pointing to people in the Assembly. I find it inappropriate. I think you should keep that discussion within this House. They are there as observers. Please do that practice into the future.

Now, you have to decide, folks, if you want to have this time for discussion or not. It's up to you.

Calgary-West.

Alberta Law Enforcement Response Teams

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta law enforcement response teams, otherwise known as ALERT, have been fighting organized crime, weapons trafficking, biker gangs, and child sexual exploitation for 10 years, but funds are running so short that ALERT will have to cut 70 of its 268 officers next year. To the Justice minister: given that organized crime is embedded in communities in ways that would shock Albertans and given that

ALERT has a successful record of making our communities safer, what are you doing to ensure ALERT can continue its invaluable work protecting Albertans?

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the critical question. Of course, ALERT performs a number of critical functions. With both the support of ALERT and the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police we have undertaken an audit of ALERT, and that has come up with several findings. We are moving forward with a strategy that will ensure that there is no loss in front-line services or those critical functions which ALERT performs.

Thank you.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you. Again to the Justice minister: given that the loss of ALERT would impact rural communities the hardest and given that the government has spoken proudly of the work ALERT is performing to keep Alberta communities safe from drug traffickers, child predators, drug cartels, and bikers and given that ALERT is our front-line defence for fentanyl and that this government promised not to affect front-line workers, what consultation have you had with the law enforcement agencies in communities in rural Alberta about the potential eruption of drugs and organized crime because ALERT is about to lose one-quarter of its resources?

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice.

2:30

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, as I've just said, we have received an audit of ALERT. We are working on a strategy going forward to ensure that they lose none of their front-line resources. We are looking at restructuring a number of things so they are better placed. We have been working with our law enforcement partners across the province, including the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police and the ALERT board itself, to ensure that none of those functions are lost and that they all continue to be performed.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that fentanyl has become ALERT's priority this past year, with communities such as Bonnyville-Cold Lake and the Blood Tribe all desperately asking for help, and given that since the fentanyl crisis began a year ago, ALERT has seized 26,000 pills, 70 per cent of them in 2015 alone, and given that popping just one pill can be the equivalent of putting a bullet into your head and given that ALERT is running out of money, will you commit today, Minister, to fully funding ALERT to ensure that it can continue to save lives?

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, as I've said twice now, we are working with ALERT and with the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police to ensure that those front-line functions are still being performed. When it comes to fentanyl, of course, this is a critical issue. ALERT has been enormously helpful in this area, and we will ensure that that work continues. In addition, I think that the important piece is to realize that we must work with our partners also in health care

and in education to ensure that we are addressing the underlying drivers of these sorts of addictions.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Condominium Property Act Regulations

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Edmonton-Centre is one of the densest parts of Edmonton, with thousands of existing condominium units and, as of this past January, another 2,600 in development. Now, I've heard from condo owners and organizations like the Alberta Real Estate Association about changes to the Condominium Property Act, with concerns about protecting new condo owners. Service Alberta recently publicized the first draft-regulation phase for public feedback this fall. To the Minister of Service Alberta: can you update the House and myself on the responses that have been received and your progress on these important regulations for condo property owners?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. We are committed to strengthening consumer protection for the condo market for Albertans, which is why we're proposing stronger disclosure and clear options for new buyers when their condos are not completed on time or as promised. We are an open government that values the thoughts and opinions of condo owners, and I'm proud that we've made those regulations available for all to see and provide input on, just as we will proudly provide the regulations to the farm and ranch industry to provide input on. We received nearly 300 responses.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, given that some stakeholders expressed some concerns about this legislation when it was first introduced by the previous government, though I have heard from stakeholders that they have been very happy with the adoption of many of the things they've brought forward in the past months, how is the minister ensuring that all voices will continue to be heard as we continue this review?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I understand that there were concerns with the previous government's handling of this legislation, but that's why we're here, to move Alberta forward and correct the mistakes of the past. We took the unprecedented step of putting those draft regulations online for all to see and comment on. My ministry continues to meet with both critics and supporters of the bill. All voices are being heard on Bill 9 regulations, and we will continue to take an open, public, and consumer rights based approach to completing these important regulations.

Mr. Shepherd: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that I've spoken with many constituents and, again, stakeholders like AREA, who are eager to participate and certainly have indicated their happiness with their ability to so far, can the minister tell us what further opportunities are going to be available for these people to participate as we proceed?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. More regulations are needed to complete Bill 9, including those that will regulate the

condominium property management sector and create a condominium dispute tribunal, another situation in which regulations come after the bill. As mentioned, we will continue to take an open, public, consumer rights based approach on all phases of regulations to complete Bill 9. That includes opening up future draft regulations to the public and stakeholders for their valued input, and we will get it right because we will take the time to listen and deliver to Albertans on all issues before this House.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Workers' Compensation for Farm and Ranch Workers

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This NDP government is still lost in the wilderness when it comes to Bill 6. The NDP is still committed to making farmers join the WCB, but I want to enlighten the House on the Premier's very own views of this dysfunctional government board. On November 26, 2014, she said, "WCB does not function as an objective, neutral arbiter or judge between workers and employers." To the Premier. Farmers want choice for disability insurance. Clearly, the broken WCB isn't good enough for you. Why do you think it's good enough for our farmers and ranchers?

The Speaker: The Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I answered that question yesterday, it is true that the WCB needs to be improved, and I won't back down on that fact. In the speech that people keep quoting, what I was referring to was the fact that I think that there could be improvement with respect to how the WCB handles occupational disease, how it handles repetitive strain injuries, and how it handles mental health claims. None of those really are the primary kinds of injuries that we're talking about, that occur on farms and that devastate the families of farm employees, who do not otherwise receive income should they be injured or killed. That's why we think . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Schneider: Mr. Speaker, the Premier isn't the only one who called the WCB broken. Given that the Education minister said, "It's really important that we show . . . solidarity with the workers who actually are compelled to make claims to the WCB because . . . they are in a compromised situation to begin with," does the Education minister think farmers are good enough for his solidarity, or does he want to throw them under the bus, too? Can the government look at private disability insurance as an option for Bill 6?

Ms Notley: Well, first of all, the member opposite keeps referring to farmers, and to be perfectly clear again, this applies to the paid employees of farmers who are not related to them – okay? – just those people, not to the farmers. That being said, farmers can opt in or opt out of WCB unless they have paid employees, and then those employees need to be covered because, quite frankly, the private options the member has referred to are not as good as what the workers would get through WCB. There's a significant difference in how they're administered. It would create huge hardship to make those injured paid farm workers subject themselves to the private system you're proposing.

Mr. Schneider: Mr. Speaker, given that many farmers and ranchers already have private, superior, and lower cost disability insurance and they just want to be able to choose and given that this NDP

government is changing Bill 6 by the day and adding amendment after amendment to correct their incompetence, to the point where the Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose described Bill 6 as quicksand, will the Premier just do the right thing, back down on her plan to force WCB membership on farmers and ranchers and give them the choice of private disability insurance?

Ms Notley: First of all, Mr. Speaker, our government has introduced one amendment, one amendment to clarify that farmers . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks, for the second time, please don't yell.

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, first of all, one amendment to clarify what was the intention all along.

Secondly, let us be very clear. The private options that the member talks about are not the same. They're not as good. There is a delay, they are not no-fault, you have to hand off a whole bunch of money to lawyers, and there is a significant difference in the benefit that accrues to either the injured paid farm workers or their family. That is why we will not go that way. It's very, very different.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.
The Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Farm and Ranch Worker Legislation (continued)

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Fifteen different ag focus groups previously mentioned by the Member for Drumheller-Stettler, some oddly applauding this government's apparent efforts to enhance farm safety, have all indicated that the process has sadly been more of a monologue than a dialogue. To the minister of jobs: given the hasty, nonconsultative attempt to remedy the shortcomings of Bill 6, will this government do the right thing and hit the pause button on this legislation to reassure Albertans that safety truly is a priority here and not a hidden big-labour agenda?

The Speaker: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.
2:40

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to emphasize again that this bill is about introducing the most basic protections for paid nonfamily farm and ranch workers. It is the right thing to do, to consult on all the other details, and we will consult on all the other details. I look forward to doing that very intently with the farm and ranch workers to ensure that those details are common sense and meet the needs of those farm and ranch workers moving forward.

Mr. Gotfried: Again to the minister of jobs: given that we now know how many Alberta farmers and ranchers it takes to stand up for their livelihoods and given that they were waiting on the Leg. steps again today to begin the process of true consultation, will you commit to a dialogue around meaningful and appropriate measures to enhance farm and ranch safety across Alberta, or will you continue ramming this legislation down the throats of rural Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We are committed to moving forward with the most basic protections for farm and ranch workers in this province, but we have fully committed to a very

extensive consultation process in terms of the regulations, which will add those details to ensure the safety of farm and ranch workers in this province. We will work with farmers to ensure that employment standards, occupational health and safety standards meet the needs of those Albertans, and we will have that conversation with those farmers and ranchers over the next one to two years to ensure that we come up with the best Alberta-made solution.

Mr. Gotfried: I think the term is a day late and a dollar short.

To the Minister of Agriculture: given your own laudable personal efforts at real consultation over the past few weeks, including the admission of your government's shortcomings, and given the passionate voices of many hard-working, dedicated, experienced, and safety-conscious rural Albertans, can you honestly say that this government has gotten this bill right? Please tell us what you think about the need for further consultation.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to say that I have been at many of those sessions. I've been at the rally out on the steps, and I have been listening to the farmers and ranchers who spoke with me about their questions and concerns, and I brought them forward. Those very basic protections we will move forward on with Bill 6 because they're very basic and a small piece of the big picture moving forward, but we will consult extensively. We have very openly committed to ensuring, both before they're drafted and after they're drafted, that those regulations reflect the needs of farmers and ranchers in this province.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: Hon. Government House Leader, do you have a motion?

Mr. Mason: I do, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. I have three notices of motions. First,

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 6, Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in second reading, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage will be put forthwith.

Second,

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 6, Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in Committee of the Whole, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

Third,

Be it resolved that when further consideration of Bill 6, Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act, is resumed, not more than one hour shall be allotted to any further consideration of the bill in third reading, at which time every question necessary for the disposal of the bill at this stage shall be put forthwith.

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Jean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do have a notice of motion today, and I thank you for recognizing me. I rise today to give notice of the following motion pursuant to Standing Order 30.

Be it resolved that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to discuss a matter of urgent public importance, namely the devastating human, health, and social costs of the economic downturn, the resulting employment losses, and the bleak fiscal picture many Albertans are facing.

I have the appropriate paperwork in order, sir.
Thank you.

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of a news release, which I referred to last night, from the Alberta Small Brewers Association.

Mr. Hanson: I'd like to table five copies of the letters I referred to in my speech to Bill 6.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have tabled the appropriate number of copies of questions that were put forward to me during Committee of Supply for Education.

The Speaker: Any other members?

Hon. members, I believe there was a point of order raised by the Government House Leader.

Point of Order

Maintaining Order in the Assembly

Interrupting a Member

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, I raised a point of order at 2:25 p.m., during answers from members of Executive Council during the question period. I rise under section 13(1) of the standing orders, that says, "The Speaker shall preserve order and decorum and decide questions of order," and, secondly, subsection (4)(b), "When a Member is speaking, no person shall . . . (b) interrupt that Member, except to raise a point of order."

Mr. Speaker, the opposition has done something that hasn't happened to me for a long time. They made me lose my temper, and I apologize for those comments that I made, but the situation is really beyond the point where we can just let it continue as it stands. The Wildrose opposition continuously shouts, heckles, and attempts, essentially, to shout down ministers or to intimidate ministers in the course of their answers. They ask questions and then don't listen to the answer. A number of members are constantly speaking directly across the aisle the entire time that ministers are making their points. Others are yelling. Others are shouting. I've not seen this kind of disorder in the past.

I've always been someone who likes to have a good back and forth in the House, Mr. Speaker, a defender of the occasional bit of heckling. It's not a bad thing. But what we're getting from the Official Opposition, from the Wildrose, is a solid wall of noise, which is nothing more, in my view, than an attempt to prevent ministers from answering properly in this House legitimate questions that are put to them. Quite frankly, I think that it is interfering with our ability as members to perform our jobs, as ministers of the Crown and members of Executive Council. I would ask that you take steps to ensure that in the future ministers are able to answer without having to shout over a chorus of what appears to be co-ordinated heckling by pretty much the entire Official Opposition in this House.

Mr. Speaker, it's essential, I think, that if we're going to have a question period, questions can be put, ministers are able to answer and to be heard without feeling that there's an attempt to intimidate them from giving the best possible answer they can.

2:50

It's a difficult thing. I have been on both sides of the House. I can tell you that I infinitely prefer asking questions to answering them because the pressure is quite great to try and make sure that you get it right and you get an accurate answer. I think that our ministers are doing an excellent job in attempting to answer these questions. As it goes now, it's interfering with the ability of members on this side to provide the answers that they are expected to in question period. I would ask that you rule and take measures in the future to make sure that the question period functions with a little less dysfunction than it has at the present time.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The House leader for the Official Opposition.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the hon. member for his comments. I'm a little unclear as to what is actually taking place here right now. I'm not sure if the hon. member has called a point of order against the Speaker or against the opposition. I guess the challenge lies in that while temperatures in this place clearly today reached a boiling point – obviously, members on this side of the House are extremely concerned with the direction that the government is taking, so from time to time during question period they express that displeasure. It's difficult to dispute the fact, that the hon. member mentions, that the volume did get loud in the Assembly today.

I guess part of my concern, Mr. Speaker, is, one, that it's our belief that it's your discretion that needs to be used during the exchanges that take place in the Assembly, and while I have a lot of respect for my hon. colleague on the other side of the House, it is not his role or job to call this House to order. Unfortunately, that's exactly what we saw happen today. He didn't rise on a point of order; he rose and called for order. I'll speak momentarily on some of my concerns around the language that he used in his efforts to call the House to order.

While it is quite reasonable and possible that this side of the House needs to do things about the volume they're using engaging in the debate during question period, I think that it is concerning for me to see, you know, hon. members taking the decorum and order of this House into their own hands in the middle of question period. Just as the opposition's behaviour today, perhaps, was unbecoming of the opposition, certainly that type of behaviour also isn't assisting the Assembly.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I will be asking the third party, but could I ask you: could you comment on your volume from your side of the House? Is it excessive in your opinion, respectfully?

Mr. Cooper: Well, I think, Mr. Speaker, that I provided some reflection that from time to time the volume on this side of the House does rise, and I think that I did say that perhaps we need to be respectful around that particular issue.

I might add that during the hon. member's discussion he had specified or pointed out the Official Opposition, and certainly today and many other days we've heard members of the third party expressing their displeasure. Certainly, we've heard members on the government side also engaging in this sort of decorum, that from time to time has become a distraction. You know, I think it's a little untoward for the hon. member to only point out the fact that our volume was raised. I have noted that, and I think it would be the right thing to do, for members of this Assembly, including on the government benches and backbenches, to also have that same personal reflection.

The Speaker: The leader of the third party.

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's been an interesting little discussion here, and we in the third party do our best not to complain a lot. I would say that we've done our best to have the best decorum in the House. I think even the other parties might even agree that we do that. I'm not saying that we're perfect, Mr. Speaker. I agree with the House leader from the opposition. We heckle a bit. We do. I think it's part of being here, Mr. Speaker. We talk about important things. We represent Albertans, and that's what we're here for.

But in the standing orders 23(h), (i), and (j) it talks about language in 23(j): "... abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder." We've seen examples of that here. Again, I'm only raising this because it's the discussion now. You know, the government side's members have decided to make a habit of banging the desks long after their last answer so whoever is asking the next question can't hear themselves say it. Without complaining, mind you, I've taken to using this device so I can hear what's going on.

I think there's a little bit of gamesmanship going on here. This is a competitive place. This is where we do that. But I also notice, you know, a minister of the Crown turning around when asked about a different bill, taunting members of the gallery that are there supporting a position that our side of the House is taking. I would definitely say that that qualifies as language designed to incite, likely to create disorder in the House. It was successful. Congratulations, Minister. You wanted to create a ruckus, and the minister created a ruckus, Mr. Speaker. It's to be expected.

You know what? I would say, respectfully, again, that our party will still continue to try to be the most orderly people in the House and the voice of reason here. Mr. Speaker, the government can get their feelings hurt, but I hope they didn't expect to be here and not be held to account by the opposition. You know, there's an old saying about if it's too hot in the kitchen. This is a hot kitchen for all of us. If you're going to be here and you're going to be in government, the idea of question period is to hold the government to account. You don't ... [interjection] Actually, the Government House Leader quietly interrupted me, but I'm going to repeat what he said. He said: it's not to shout them down. I agree with him on that.

But, Mr. Speaker, we need to hold the government to account. Those Albertans watching need to know when the government minister is over the line and when they're not answering the question and when they're not being accountable to Albertans. It's our job on this side of the House to make that known, and we have limited tools. One of the tools we have is to bang and make noise and, I guess, Mr. Speaker, you have the difficult job of deciding when it's too much. We all as a group elected you to do it. God bless you. We know you're doing your best. But, at the end of the day, I think, if people are concerned about having their feelings hurt, they might be sitting in the wrong room.

Mr. Clark: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, I just want to rise very briefly. Let me say this. It is the role of the Official Opposition, of course, to hold the government to account, but it is our choice as members how we behave.

3:00

You know, in my observation in the brief time I've been in this Assembly, it is up to the government side to set the tone for the House. You have a tremendously challenging job, Mr. Speaker, to decide when that tone gets too much. Our job on this side is to hold the government to account, and it's the government's job to respond

or not. There's a reason it's called "question period" and not "answer period," but it is ultimately up to the government side to set the tone.

Now, I will say that sometimes that tone gets a little bit too boisterous from this side, but that is us on this side using the limited tools that we have at our disposal. I have the benefit, perhaps, of being at the end of the House where I can't quite hear everything that goes on on that side. It just seems like a wall of noise at times. Perhaps it's the same experience on your side. There's a quid pro quo. There are two sides to this. I think that there are members who perhaps would find that their responses today, in particular, were a little bit too boisterous, but my urging to the government side is that it's up to you to set the tone in this.

Mr. Speaker, I don't envy your job here in having to sort all of this out, but we have a limited set of tools at our disposal to hold the government to account. We ask questions. It's up to the government to choose how you respond to those questions. Sometimes you can choose to ramp it up, and sometimes, I might suggest, it might not be a bad idea to ramp it down.

With that, I'll cede my time. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Hon. members, first of all, I'd like to acknowledge and appreciate the apology that the Government House Leader made and also acknowledge that, some might say fortunately or unfortunately, the responsibility for that rests with the Speaker, which you all elected. Thank you for that comment. I also appreciate, however, that these are my observations. I've mentioned them on a couple of occasions.

With respect to the third party and to the leader of the fourth party, the comments that I hear – and I do not hear them all, but I can tell you that the volume has largely been, in my experience, particularly today with respect to the Official Opposition – and I'd respectfully ask that the Opposition House Leader discuss that with his caucus and attempt to reduce the volume that's in the meeting. What I do see is that I have difficulty hearing the response to the questions that the opposition asks, so I'd appreciate your toning it down.

To the government side, to the point that's been made by several leaders, my job is to ensure that the opposition has ample time. They have limited tools, so you must appreciate that that balance is necessarily governed by the Speaker, and the tone – more the volume than the tone. There have been occasions at times when comments have been made which are inappropriate, but the larger situation that I'm experiencing is the volume, and I would respectfully ask – and I will be addressing it more closely in the future – to please keep your volume down.

I note that the Speaker will be recording that the point of order is well taken. I will be using that as a guiding principle for both sides as we move forward.

I understand that there is another point of order. Is that correct, hon. member?

Point of Order Parliamentary Language

Mr. Cooper: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I guess I hesitate to rise given some of the comments, but we just can't ever get to a place in this House where any member of the Assembly rises and calls anyone a goon or a gangster. While those two words might not be unparliamentary in the definition of words that are unparliamentary or not, certainly under 23(j) they clearly created disorder today. While the apology wasn't specific to the words, I'd ask for a full and complete withdrawal of those statements and will endeavour to keep the decorum much more becoming of all members.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Well, if it wasn't clear for the hon. Opposition House Leader, I will make it clear. If the words "goon" and "gangster" are not unparliamentary, they should be. I in an unqualified way withdraw them and apologize to you, Mr. Speaker, for rising in my place when I should not have. To the hon. members opposite, I withdraw those words and sincerely apologize to them and to the entire House.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. House leader. The point is well taken. I have checked at some length the words, and I can tell you the list is quite lengthy respecting the words that are unparliamentary. Thus, the apology is accepted today.

I have a ruling, so we close the matter. I would appreciate that that's dealt with on both sides.

Official Opposition leader, you have a resolution, I believe.

Request for Emergency Debate

Provincial Economic Situation

Mr. Jean: I do, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to move pursuant to Standing Order 30(2):

Be it resolved that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the devastating human, health, and social cost of the economic downturn, the resulting employment losses, and the bleak fiscal picture many Albertans are facing.

Mr. Speaker, I've requested time in the Assembly to bring this matter forward under Standing Order 30 because the impact of an underperforming economy and the resulting job losses across this province have become a matter of urgent public importance.

Over the last few months we have actually seen and talked about a number of statistics used to measure the performance of Alberta's economy. Alberta's real GDP fell 1.2 per cent in 2015. Unemployment has risen above 7 per cent, where it's expected to stay for all of 2016, even higher. For the first time in over 25 years Alberta's unemployment rate will surpass the national average. That's the first time in 25 years, certainly a matter that, on its face, looks to be of public importance. Today we watch as world oil prices drop to \$37 a barrel, and major job creators like Husky just announced plans to pull capital out of Alberta. In November alone, Mr. Speaker, 15,000 jobs were lost in our great province, 15,000 jobs of Albertans. That's 500 jobs per day lost in Alberta. The numbers are absolutely staggering, and we have seen absolutely nothing relating to concrete steps taken to do anything about it.

The urgency of this debate does not come from those statistics alone, Mr. Speaker. The urgency of the debate comes from the very recently revealed numbers that provide a glimpse into the human, health, and social costs of the downturn, which are staggering and will continue to be if nothing is done. The number of Albertans filing for bankruptcy has actually skyrocketed. The number of Albertans who have had their homes foreclosed is trending upwards as well – I saw first-hand in the '90s what bad government policy can do – and record numbers of foreclosures in my hometown of Fort McMurray. In fact, when speaking to a local real estate agent just a number of weeks ago, he indicated to me that more keys were given back to the banks in the previous four months than in the 25 years before as he worked as a real estate agent. That is very troubling.

Most concerning, at the heart of this matter is yesterday's report from the province's Chief Medical Examiner. It is very worrying, Mr. Speaker. The Chief Medical Examiner brought forward . . .

The Speaker: Hon. Member, Standing Order 30(2) says "briefly," so I would urge you to get to the point.

Mr. Jean: Yes, Mr. Speaker, indeed, as precedent sets about seven to eight minutes for this, I believe.

The medical examiner shows that the number of Albertans who have tragically ended their life has increased by 30 per cent this year. That's correct: 30 per cent. In the first six months of 2015, Mr. Speaker, 327 Albertans took their own life. At that rate over 650 Albertans will commit suicide by the end of this year.

3:10

Now, nobody should be so crass as to suggest this is the fault of any policy or any initiative of this Legislature or this government. We are not suggesting that at all, Mr. Speaker. That needs to be absolutely crystal clear. The fact is that many Albertans currently face life's greatest struggle because they are out of work and out of hope, and we want to give them some hope. It's absolutely heartbreaking. A counsellor from Calgary's Distress Centre said yesterday, and I quote: for me it says something, really, about the horrible human impact of what's happening in the economy, with the recession and the real, felt effect, the real suffering and the real struggle that people are experiencing. End quote. Demand for counselling service has actually increased by 80 per cent, Mr. Speaker. That number tells me that Albertans are looking for help. They're looking for hope, and they're in desperate need of hope. They're looking for someone to tell them that while things are tough right now, somebody has their back, somebody understands their plight, and somebody is working to get things back on track.

I'm calling for the debate of this important matter of urgent public importance because if we do not speak about it today, Mr. Speaker, we will not have another opportunity for at least two months to debate this issue in this House. At the current rate . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. I'm deciding on brevity.

I recognize the member of the third party.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me say at the outset that I think our party talks about the health and social costs and jobs every single day in this House, but that's not to diminish the importance of it. I will say that the motion of the Leader of the Official Opposition is made all the more urgent today by the government's notice of their intention to put time allocation on and to shorten the amount of time that we will have in this House to talk about the urgent issues that matter to Alberta.

This is an important issue. It can in no way be diminished. The greatest dignity that human beings have is the dignity of having a job. Mr. Speaker, I don't think it's a matter of debate. I don't think anybody on any side of this House will argue the fact that there's somewhere in the neighbourhood of a hundred thousand Albertans who have lost their jobs in recent months. If that's not an emergency, I don't know what is. I think it's probably worth talking about what the Official Opposition has in their motion because the social costs – and I think it would be interesting and important to hear the government talk about the costs to their social programs based on the unemployment, the lack of revenue affecting the government, the human costs in all these things.

I will say in closing that I think it's just slightly ironic that 86 people whose wages are guaranteed for the next three and a half years are going to debate this, but because we do work for the other 4.4 million Albertans, I think it's worth doing. I've certainly heard from my constituents that it's important. When you consider that a town the size of Chestermere, Cochrane, or Camrose, 100 per cent unemployed in the last month based on the 15,000 number we

heard, if that's not worthy of having a serious discussion in this House, perhaps we're in the wrong business.

The Speaker: The leader of the fourth party.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The question is whether or not Alberta is in crisis, whether that merits an emergency debate in this Chamber. Whenever a question like this arises, I reflect on what I've heard from my constituents and from those people all over the province of Alberta, those who have lost their jobs, those who know people who have lost their jobs or fear losing their jobs or have taken a pay cut or have taken a reduction of hours, and when they do find themselves out of a job, they have very limited prospects of finding another job. If you ask those folks, they will tell you that there is, in fact, an emergency and a crisis in this province. It goes beyond the direct jobs in oil and gas extraction, of which there are very many although fewer as time goes on. There are many companies that don't count in the statistics about oil and gas extraction, and I think it's important to remember those.

There is a lot of doubt in the province, Mr. Speaker, and a lot of concern, and it goes beyond just simply the energy sector. Confidence in the small-business sector is incredibly low. You know, when I think about what is going on in this province, I reflect on a story that I heard from one of my constituents. He was a fairly senior manager at an energy company. They were going through a round of layoffs. Instead of firing two people in his organization, he chose to resign his position himself to save two families their mortgage payments and their jobs. That is the kind of thing that goes on every day in this province: the number of companies that have taken a 5 per cent or 10 per cent or 15 per cent wage cut and that in the new year will be taking another wage cut just so the people in that company can continue to pay the mortgage, can continue to pay the bills, continue to put food on the tables for their families. Yet still they live in fear that they will lose their jobs.

Now, I know the NDP doesn't control the price of oil. I'm sure you wish you did, but you don't. But what you do control is how you react to that, what the government does in response to externalities. The first thing you can do is advocate for Alberta industry. I'd like to see much more of that. Use that strong climate announcement of yours to aggressively advocate.

The Speaker: Hon. member, brevity. Brevity, please.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All right. I will close, then. Let me say this. We deserve to have a healthy, fulsome debate in this House. We can talk and collaborate together and come up with ideas that will better the lives of Albertans, and from that healthy debate comes good policy. When my team and I consider an issue, we do a little exercise. The first thing we ask is: what is the problem that we're trying to solve? And then: what's best for Alberta? What's best for Alberta here is evident. Albertans need to know and deserve to know that we in this House are working together to come up with solutions that will address the challenges they face every single day. I think a debate of this kind will do exactly that.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's standing orders state that a motion brought under Standing Order 30 must meet a number of conditions, including that it "must relate to a genuine emergency, calling for immediate and urgent consideration." That is Standing Order 30(7)(a). *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* provides further instruction on the

appropriate use of these debates as well as examples of topics that meet the test.

An emergency debate should be on a topic "that is immediately relevant and of attention and concern throughout the nation". Thus, matters of chronic or continuing concern, such as economic conditions, unemployment rates and constitutional matters, have tended to be set aside whereas topics deemed to require urgent consideration have included work stoppages and strikes, natural disasters, and international crises and events.

That is at page 690 in *O'Brien and Bosc. Beauchesne's* similarly states that the item "must be so pressing that the public interest will suffer if it is not given immediate attention."

Mr. Speaker, there's no question – there's no question – that the economic situation facing Alberta is very, very serious and that the impact on families and individuals throughout the province is equally serious. There's absolutely no question of that. This government is very much aware of that and is taking what actions it deems appropriate in order to counteract that.

What is not an emergency debate? Well, the procedural guides as well as Speakers' rulings in the Assembly can give us guidance on what is not a valid topic for an emergency debate. Critically, those are meant to deal with items for which there are not other avenues of debate. *Beauchesne's* states, one, that such a debate

must deal with a matter within the administrative competence of the Government and there must be no other reasonable opportunity for debate.

That's citation 387.

It also states:

Emergency debate provisions cannot be used to debate "items which, in a regular legislative program of the House of Commons and regular legislative consideration, can come before the House by way of amendments to existing statutes, or in any case will come before it in other ways."

That's at page 694. In other words, if there are other avenues in which to debate this matter, it should not be brought forward under an SO 30.

Mr. Speaker Zwodzesky ruled:

Urgency deals with whether or not there are other opportunities available to raise the matter. Now, I want to clarify for you that there are several vehicles available to you to do a variety of things. One of them is question period, where a well-crafted question that meets the rules and proprieties of this House and of Houses across the world that are part of the Commonwealth parliamentary system – that exists there as one of those vehicles.

He went on to say:

Secondly, a carefully crafted motion for return might accomplish something very similar, or a carefully worded written question might accomplish something similar. There is room for some debate within some of these vehicles.

That's from November 28, 2012.

I should note, Mr. Speaker, that there are ample . . .

The Speaker: Government House Leader, brevity, please.

3:20

Mr. Mason: Yes. Well, I need to quote my authorities, but I will try to do that quickly.

There are ample opportunities for this to be debated in the House, and this is the question. It's not the importance of it. It's critically important. But, Mr. Speaker, this has been coming for a long time. We knew before the election, in fact, that oil prices were collapsing, and we knew the consequences of that. There's been a tremendous amount of debate on the budget, on the capital plan. For example, we were trying to count the number of questions dealt with in this House on this matter. There are too many. Between October 26 and 29, the four days following the budget, there were 75 questions on

this point precisely in this Chamber within four days. I'd argue that there's ample opportunity for the House to debate this matter and that it has, and it will continue to.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Hon. members, the chair is prepared to rule on whether the request for leave for this motion to proceed is in order under Standing Order 30.

The Leader of the Official Opposition has met the requirement for providing at least two hours' notice to the Speaker's office by providing the required notice at 11:08 this morning, so that condition has been met.

The motion reads as follows:

Pursuant to Standing Order 30 be it resolved that the ordinary business of the Legislative Assembly be adjourned to discuss a matter of urgent public importance; namely, the devastating human, health, and social costs of the economic downturn, the resulting employment losses, and the bleak fiscal picture many Albertans are facing.

The relevant parliamentary authorities on this subject matter are pages 689 to 696 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, and *Beauchesne's*, paragraphs 387 to 390.

Hon. members, I believe that all members of this Assembly are acutely aware of the severe economic circumstances facing Alberta today. While this in no way ought to detract from the seriousness of the effects of this economic downturn on many of our constituents, I'm unable to find that the request by the hon. Leader of the Official Opposition meets the criteria to proceed to an emergency debate today. Standing Order 30(7) provides that "the matter proposed for discussion must relate to a genuine emergency, calling for immediate and urgent consideration." As is noted in paragraph 390 of *Beauchesne's*, sixth edition:

"Urgency" within this rule does not apply to the matter itself, but means "urgency of debate", when the ordinary opportunities provided by the rules of the House do not permit the subject to be brought on early enough and the public interest demands that discussion take place immediately.

At page 690 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, the authors note:

Matters of chronic or continuing concern, such as economic conditions, unemployment rates and constitutional matters, have tended to be set aside whereas topics deemed to require urgent consideration have included work stoppages and strikes, natural disasters, and international crises and events.

As all members know, the current economic situation in Alberta has been the subject of numerous debates in this Assembly thus far this session, including a debate on the Speech from the Throne, the Budget Address, the main estimates consideration, and, most recently, Bill 4. Accordingly, the chair does not find the request for leave in order, and the question will not be put.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 6

Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act

[Debate adjourned December 8: Mr. Jean speaking]

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Jean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to talk some more about Bill 6. I never got through more than a couple of tabs, and it's a great opportunity to stand up today and talk about businesses.

If we had the chance to send this particular motion to committee, as we've asked for in this referral motion, we'd probably find out, you know, that there have been a hundred thousand jobs lost, and we'd probably find that tens of thousands of families are suffering through some of the most bleak and dark times that they will ever face in their lifetimes. In fact, we may even find, Mr. Speaker, evidence that would suggest that Edmonton's Food Bank last month counted 18,500 recipients of food hampers. That's actually up 20 per cent. That's what you find when you send things to committee and have the opportunity to talk about it, the same as Bill 6. You'd find out, for instance, that the Christmas Bureau provides holiday meals and Christmas gifts for at-risk teenagers and children, and they expect to see a 12 per cent increase this year because of the economic downturn, yet they're struggling to raise money. In fact, we'd find in this situation that they've only reached 20 per cent of their fundraising goal for the year.

Now, Mr. Speaker, those are the types of things that, obviously, like Bill 6, we'd find out if we actually sent Bill 6 to committee and listened to farmers and ranchers and listened to and gave them an opportunity to express their dissatisfaction with this bill. We'd probably hear some other things at that, including that there have been some significant costs – human, health, and social costs – as a result of the economic condition that we're currently in but also as a result of the government's action or inaction, as the case may be. We've seen a government that has taken absolutely no steps other than some draconian legislative initiatives that don't listen to farmers and ranchers, that they bring forward without any opportunity for any input from the people that this bill actually affects.

They've suggested, Mr. Speaker, a number of times that this province hasn't had this legislation for 95 years, yet we know clearly that Alberta has the safest farm environment in Canada or one of them, for sure. It does so as a result of consulting with farmers and ranchers to find out the education needs, to find out the futures that they want for themselves and their children and their way of life.

Mr. Speaker, you might be surprised – and I know some people would be surprised – that farming and ranching are complex. They deal with a variety of issues, and a variety of skills is necessary as a farmer and rancher, whether it be as a mechanic or whether it be as somebody taking care of livestock or growing things. They are people that have to be multitalented.

You might also be surprised to find out some of the conditions that are for WCB and for portions of WCB exemptions. In particular, there are some organizations and job categories that have exemptions. It sounds like a big deal when the opposition talks about exempting farmers and removing that opportunity to exempt farmers from WCB, but they say that farm workers need protection. We know clearly that they already get protection through their own forms of insurance, and nobody cares more for their family and the people that work there than they do themselves.

If you look at the facts, Mr. Speaker, if you look at the 19 farm- and ranch-related job exemptions, well, you might not realize, if WCB exemptions are gone, what will take place. I don't know if you know this. You see, after these 19 agriculture-related jobs are removed, you still have 180 different jobs that are exempt from WCB, as farmers and ranchers were before this piece of legislation, Bill 6, came in.

I have to tell you some of them, Mr. Speaker. In fact, believe it or not, circuses – circuses – are exempt from WCB. That's right, much like this place from time to time. Circuses and all forms of entertainment are excluded from WCB. In fact, you're going to find this surprising – and I'd like all members of the opposite side, of the government, to hear this – and that is that the Alberta Federation of Labour is exempt. They're exempt. They're exempt from WCB.

Isn't that something? They're all, "Rah-rah-rah, let's cover the farmers," but they're not covered. Isn't that ironic? Yet they're the only ones the government consulted with, the Alberta Federation of Labour and unions, other unions. They're exempt. Isn't that ironic?

Without delay, let me tell you a few things, and I've only got 170 different ones to read. I know you're probably going to cut me off, Mr. Speaker, because I do like to talk about Bill 6 a lot, and I'm looking forward to my, I think, three or four other opportunities to talk on Bill 6 for 90 minutes each. Accounting, auditing, book-keeping, or income tax services: they're exempt. Actuarial services are exempt. Advertising agencies: does that mean people that actually have to go up high and hang big billboards are exempt from WCB? Addressing and mailing services: that means people that operate equipment, folders, collators are exempt from WCB. Isn't the government worried about them? Are they not worried about people that provide advertising display services or advertising distribution services? They're exempt. What about the Agriculture Financial Services Corporation? They're actually exempt from WCB, too, Mr. Speaker. So it's not unusual that farmers were exempt from WCB and that ranchers were exempt.

3:30

In fact, I'm only at number 6 on a list of 170 exemptions. I haven't even started. Yet we have the government side that says: no; we have to make sure that farmers are covered by WCB.

Mr. Speaker, we have, wow, a travelling amusement fair. They're not covered by WCB. Now, these are people, I would imagine, that do circus tricks and things like that. Aren't we worried about those people that are doing circus tricks being covered by WCB?

How about animal grooming or boarding or training establishments for animals, Mr. Speaker? They're exempt. Now, why would they be exempt and farmers not exempt? They're dealing with animals, they're dealing with stock, yet they're exempt.

Apartment building or housing rental agencies: they're exempt from WCB. Appraising services: exempt. You're not going to believe it, Mr. Speaker, but even architectural services are exempt.

Art restoration services, that use those nasty chemicals to refine equipment and furniture: they're exempt from WCB, with all those nasty fumes and chemicals. Even, Mr. Speaker, number 20, assaying services. Now, that seems kind of weird.

Artifacts, historical documents, or art exhibits, assembling or displaying those things, all of those art exhibits: they're exempt. A big statue falling on somebody's head: I can see the WCB wanting to run in there and cover them for sure, but they're not because they're exempt. Under this government's legislation those people are all exempt, and I'm only at number 20 out of 170.

Let's talk about the other positions that are exempt. I'm looking for some good ones, Mr. Speaker. Oh, look at that one. The Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission: they're exempt. The Alberta Mental Health Board: they're exempt.

And, best of all – I like this one – the Workers' Compensation Board: they're exempt from themselves. How about that? Workers' comp is exempt from workers' comp. How do you like that? So not just the union buddies but also the workers' comp buddies. Interesting. That's an interesting one. Mr. Speaker, I'm at number 23.

Auto racing. Now, auto racers in Alberta can drive a car around a track; they don't have WCB. That sounds like a pretty dangerous job compared to farming on a combine.

Provision of babysitting services: no WCB. Maybe that's next. Maybe that's the NDP plan. We're going to have babysitters unionized right across the province and join the WCB. They're going to force that on them next. Now, that's only number 25, Mr. Speaker. I have another 152 to go.

Wow. A band or an orchestra: they're exempt from WCB.

Even operation of baths, including steam, Turkish, and sauna baths: they're exempt, Mr. Speaker. I can't imagine any place more dangerous, a slip-and-fall accident waiting to happen, than a public bath, and they're exempt from WCB. Is the NDP government not worried about covering those people, protecting those people? They're certainly interfering in farmers' and ranchers' lives.

A baseball club, Mr. Speaker, the operation of a baseball club: now, that's one that's exempt. Why doesn't the NDP look at making the WCB cover them? Even the billiard parlour: you know, they don't have to worry about WCB. A bonding company or a booking agency doesn't have to.

Mr. Speaker, I'm worried. I am worried. Number 35 is a bowling alley. That's a WCB accident waiting to happen. Now, why are they exempt and farmers aren't?

Buying and selling livestock. Just the farmers and ranchers that operate have to be covered, but if you buy and sell livestock, you don't have to. Now, I don't understand the difference, and I don't see anybody on the other side standing up to talk about the difference.

I challenge the Premier. I haven't seen the Premier talk once on this bill. Talk to Albertans. What's going on, Madam Premier? Why are you not telling Albertans what's going on? How can you justify a bill where you're not even prepared to stand up and talk about all the great things that you've done? In fact, Mr. Speaker, if she would have talked the first time that it was announced, she could then talk about a totally different message after the amendments. Of course, we all know that the bill was totally transformed in a matter of two or three days. Why? Because the bill wasn't right. News flash: the bill is still not right.

Kill Bill 6, Mr. Speaker. Go back to the people. Listen to farmers and ranchers. Send it to committee. Follow through with this referral motion. I say that especially to the members in the back. I think that they should look at this list that we've put in, and I'd be happy to table it. Mr. Speaker, I'm sure that you'd like that so that you can go over it later.

Computer processing services. Competitive sports of all descriptions: no WCB for any competitive sport of all descriptions. That sounds like an accident waiting. Community recreation centre: I like that one, too; no WCB necessary if you have a community recreation centre.

If you carry on business as a commissioned livestock buying house, that's another place that you don't need it. Yet farmers and ranchers need WCB even though they have the safest record in Canada, and they've had that good record for many, many years. It shows that Albertans already know what they're doing. The farmers and ranchers do know what they're doing. It's this government that doesn't.

Now, let's look at this. Foreign embassies, consulates: they don't need WCB. Why do farmers and ranchers need it even if the people that come from outside of this country don't need it if they work here and do things? It seems odd, Mr. Speaker.

Consulting services other than consulting by a professional engineer as defined in the engineering and geoscience profession: they don't need WCB either. They've been exempted by this government, yet the government wants to cover farmers and ranchers.

Counselling service: they don't need it. A convention bureau doesn't need it. A credit union doesn't need it.

A curling rink doesn't need it, another accident waiting to happen. Can you believe that a curling rink doesn't have to have WCB? They're exempt from it. Farmers and ranchers: they have to have it, but a curling rink doesn't.

Even dance studios – and we’ve seen a lot of dancing lately from the other side – don’t need it. They’re exempt as well from WCB. I see the look of surprise on your face. I’m not surprised.

Demonstration services: well, I guess the NDP aren’t required. Designing services or anybody that provides domestic help: they don’t need WCB. Drafting services don’t need WCB.

An employment agency, even an escort agency, doesn’t need WCB. They’re prepared to exempt escort agencies but not farmers and ranchers. If you expedite goods and materials, you don’t need WCB because you’re exempt under this government, but farmers and ranchers need it.

Well, let’s see. Extraprovincial or foreign-based charter flights: they don’t need WCB, Mr. Speaker, on a plane. Those people operating on a plane are exempted, yet farmers and ranchers, that have been doing it for years and years, need WCB.

Wow. A fire protection association: they don’t need it. A football club doesn’t need WCB. They’ve been exempted as well. Even fraternities are exempted.

Geological services are exempted. Geophysical services are exempted. A golf course is exempted. Now, it seems a very strange situation when a golf course is exempted, even a miniature golf course. Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker? A golf driving range: the way I golf, they need WCB there for sure. A golf school doesn’t need it. When you bring in students and you have all these students around with all these clubs, you don’t need WCB. You’ve been exempted. But farmers and ranchers are mandatorily required to have WCB even though we’ve heard evidence that they have the best record in Canada.

A gun club, Mr. Speaker: the operation of a gun club doesn’t need WCB. Now, I’m surprised that they didn’t see gun club at number 81. Maybe they passed it off. Maybe they’re starting in the 50s and working their way up or down. But a gun club is exempted from WCB. Farmers and ranchers have to have WCB.

A health studio – I’m missing some. I missed hair removal, Mr. Speaker. I don’t need that yet. Hockey clubs: they don’t need WCB. They’ve exempted hockey clubs. They’re okay with that. Holding companies. Hostess services.

Ice-skating rink: can you imagine a place waiting for an accident more than an ice-skating rink? Now, why would an ice-skating rink have to be excluded from WCB, not have to have WCB coverage, and farming and ranching does have to have WCB coverage? Even a family farm, a mom-and-pop operation, has to have it, or else they don’t get any vacations. They don’t have any opportunity to do anything except have WCB coverage and be taxed, not only a carbon tax of a thousand dollars per household but more expenses for WCB.

Any industry carried on by any band on any reserve or any corporation doesn’t have to have WCB if they’re operating as a band.

An information bureau: no WCB required. An inspection bureau or service other than for testing or inspection of pipe: no WCB required, Mr. Speaker, on any of those inspection services.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Official Opposition leader.

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

3:40

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. More of a statement/question. I’m guessing you didn’t read through the entire CBC article. The top sentences actually said about the suicide rates that it’s too early to say if there’s a correlation between what is happening now and the rates of suicide. I find it incredibly offensive that this is just one more little trick in the game that you’re playing. Let me tell you

why that is. There are 500 Albertans that die by suicide ... [interjections]

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

Ms Renaud: Yes, I do. I do. I will ask a relevant question.

When my brother took his life because of mental illness, I’m guaranteeing you it wasn’t because of the economy. Explain to me how you know better than all of us that suicide is increasing because of the economy.

Mr. Hanson: Point of order.

Point of Order Relevance

The Speaker: The point of order is noted. Hon. member, do you have the point of order you’d like to speak to?

Mr. Hanson: Yeah. If you please, Mr. Speaker, under 23 ...

The Speaker: Well, I’ll tell you what. I think the point may well be in terms of moving the discussion ahead. I think the relevance principle was missed in this question.

Hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, do you have another under 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Hanson: No. I’ll withdraw the point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Withdrawn. Thank you.

Debate Continued

The Speaker: I saw you standing. You’re going to respond to the question?

Mr. Jean: Yes. I’d be happy to respond to the question. I understand. I have had that same situation in my family, and my heart goes out to you. It really, truly does. It’s something that no family should have to wrestle with, the loss of a family member. That’s why I think it’s so important to do exactly what I did in relation to this, Mr. Speaker. I looked to the experts. I looked at research. I made sure we researched the issues properly and saw that there was a direct correlation relating to the economy.

Mr. Speaker, that’s exactly what we should do here. We should refer this motion, Bill 6, as I’ve asked, to the committee so that we can listen to experts, farmers and ranchers and the other experts, the eight agricultural industries that say: “This is the wrong bill. The bill should be killed.” I would listen to experts, just like I would listen to experts here, because experts are the ones that would be able to give us that testimony that would be backed up by facts.

That’s why I’m suggesting to this government: “Stop Bill 6. Don’t go any further.” We heard it clearly the first time, when you got it wrong, and then three days later, when you tried to get it right, you still got it wrong. We know it’s wrong, Mr. Speaker. We know they keep getting it wrong. Stop getting it wrong. Just stop Bill 6. Stop killing the farms and ranches of Alberta, and make sure that we have an opportunity to have a vibrant economy and economic conditions in farming and ranching that are the envy of the world. That’s how you diversify an economy: by keeping it strong, by not putting roadblocks in front of it, by not making it so difficult to farm that nobody wants to farm anymore, and, most importantly, by listening to the farmers and ranchers that built this country and that continue to build it every single day.

Mr. Speaker, it’s not about what I think. It’s not about what anybody else over there thinks, not even the Premier. It’s about

what Albertans want and what's best for Albertans long term. Nobody is ever going to tell me that the best thing for Albertans is to tell them what they don't want to hear or to do what they don't want to happen. What we are here for is to do what they ask us to do, and right now they're asking this government to kill Bill 6 and to take six months to a year to talk to farmers, to listen to farmers, and to listen to experts. That's what the Wildrose is here to do, to make sure the government listens, because they clearly don't.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane under 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Westhead: Yes, under 29(2)(a), Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much to the Leader of the Official Opposition. He talked about looking at the research. You know what? I did that, too, and I mentioned that in my member's statement earlier today. You know, as a registered nurse we actually take the time to go through the research, look at the academic literature, and find out the truth. I did just that. Actually, when I read the open letter that the hon. opposition leader mentioned, he talked about education being sufficient to change behaviour. My question to the hon. leader would be: did he read any research to inform the statement he made in the open letter? Especially considering that there's a lot of contradictory evidence if you look at the academic literature on injury prevention techniques, Mr. Speaker, my question to him would be: can you tell us what research you looked at? I'd like for you to table those reports so that I could have look, too.

Mr. Jean: You know, Mr. Speaker, it goes on and on. Can you believe that the operation of a mobile museum doesn't have to have WCB? It's exempted. A modelling agency is also exempted. In fact, this government has a ton of exemptions, 170. It goes on page after page, and I'd be happy to table these organizations that are exempt.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.
Oh, pardon me.

The Speaker: I'm sorry. I'm leaving the chair. Proceed.

[Mr. Feehan in the chair]

Mr. Clark: Thank you, sir. I'm going to take the opportunity here in my time to hopefully change the tone a little bit. What I want to talk about is the purpose of consultation, the form that it may take, and where this particular government has succeeded with some of the consultations that they've undertaken. We've used this word "consultation" in relation to Bill 6 over and over and over again, so many times, in fact, that it may almost have lost some of its meaning. What does it mean to consult?

What I see when I see, I think, a successful consultation – again, we can quarrel with the outcomes of the climate consultation, whether members of this House like the carbon tax, don't like the carbon tax, like the way it's been implemented, don't like the way it's been implemented, but I don't think we can quarrel with the fact that the consultation was comprehensive and that it happened before rules were made. You went around the province and struck an expert committee. You included Albertans. You asked their opinion in many different forms. You asked their opinion in person. You asked their opinion online. You solicited e-mail responses, written letters. You had experts weigh in from industry, from the environmental movement, and you came up with a work product where you cannot deny that the process that was used was a valid process.

Now, the experts in agriculture and ranching and farming have not been asked about Bill 6 and about these sorts of changes.

This government has done the same thing on royalties, and I certainly hope the outcome for that is a positive one. I do have my doubts and my worries, but I sincerely hope that it's a positive outcome.

You've done the same thing on mental health, a vital topic that has come up in this House today, something that's close to my heart, that I know is close to the hearts of the government side, and that I know is close to the hearts of members on this side. I know it's close to the hearts of Albertans. You have an expert, the Member for Calgary-Mountain View. The hon. minister of Municipal Affairs and of Service Alberta is involved. Other members of various communities have gone around Alberta and consulted and have asked for the input of Albertans, have asked for the input of experts. That report is forthcoming in the next couple of weeks, and I'm sure it will be a worthwhile exercise. It will have tremendous information that is actionable, that this province can do something about, and with which we can start to address some of the challenges that we have in this province around mental health. It's important.

This government is also consulting on payday lending. There's currently a survey up around payday lending. That's an important topic as we think about poverty in this province and cycles of poverty and whether Albertans get trapped by unreasonably high rates of interest charged by payday lenders. That doesn't feel right to me. I know the Minister of Finance has done a tremendous amount of work, before he was elected to this House, on that topic. I know that many members on that side have done a tremendous amount of work on that topic, but you've consulted and are continuing to consult on payday lending.

But you haven't consulted on Bill 6, so that's why I rise to speak in favour of this amendment that we send it to committee. When we consult, what might we learn? Well, we might learn that the amendments that we anticipate once this bill finally, eventually, gets to committee, in fact, don't go far enough, that the rules that are proposed to protect paid farm workers may actually not go far enough.

I've gone and looked at what other provinces do in this country, what our neighbours to the east and to the west and in Manitoba do. The *Western Producer* has a very good article on, I believe, December 4. Perhaps I'll table that tomorrow for the records of the House.

3:50

I just want to read out some of the standards that are in place in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. There are some interesting ideas here that we may be able to adopt with a made-in-Alberta solution. Unless we properly consult and actually ask people in farming and ranching communities, we won't know what people in farming and ranching communities want. If we pass legislation first and then seek to consult, I think what we'll find is that the response to that will be, "Well, you've already decided what you're going to do. Why are you asking me now?"

Consulting after the fact isn't consulting; it's telling. That's the problem here. That's why we have 1,500 people on the steps of the Legislature. That's why there are people in the galleries today. That's why my office in inner-city Calgary has received dozens and dozens and dozens of e-mails and letters and phone calls on Bill 6. You've made a mess of it, my friends. You've made a mess of it, unfortunately, but you have a way out. You can pause the bill, and we can properly consult.

Let's talk about occupational health and safety standards in the province of British Columbia.

Every workplace that employs workers must have a health and safety program, including farms.

However, only employers that have twenty or more employees and have a workplace with moderate to high risk . . . must develop and maintain an occupational health and safety program.

That's interesting.

In Saskatchewan:

Regulations apply to all workplaces, including farms. The act places responsibility for health and safety on everyone who works at the workplace, including owners, workers, self-employed people, contractors and suppliers.

The level of responsibility for each of these is based on authority and control. An employer has the most responsibility to ensure health and safety standards are met . . .

A self-employed person, such as a farmer, who does not employ others, has the same responsibility under the act as both an employer and worker combined.

That's interesting.

In Manitoba:

The act governs the relationship between employers and employees with regard to workplace safety and applies to all workplaces, including farms.

Every employer must ensure the safety, health and welfare of all their workers. The act gives direction on how farmers should protect those who work on a farm as well as how workers are required to protect themselves and others.

Let's talk about workers' compensation. Let's talk about British Columbia's act.

[It] applies to all employers and workers who are engaged in paid work, although it does allow for some exemptions.

Exemptions are not based on industry . . . but rather duration of employment and if the employment is taking place at a private residence.

So for example:

Exemptions are if a person works an average of less than eight hours a week and a person is employed for a specific job for a temporary period of less than 24 hours.

That's interesting. Some of those exemptions we may want to adopt in Alberta.

All paid workers [in B.C.], and the employers of those workers on all commercial farming operations, regardless of size, are included under WCB legislation. Unpaid workers, such as children and family members performing chores or assisting in seasonal activities, are not included under the legislation [in B.C.].

In Saskatchewan:

Like Alberta, the WCB manages a compensation system for workplace injuries on behalf of workers and employers. There are exemptions for certain areas, including dairy, demonstrating and exhibiting, feedlots, grazing co-ops, land clearing, fur farms, livestock brokers, mobile farm feed services or portable seed cleaning plants, pig farms, poultry farms, trapping and voluntary workers.

Voluntary workers perhaps like your neighbour coming to help.

In Manitoba:

The act applies to all employers . . . in all industries. It does exempt farmers and family members of farmers from WCB regulations . . .

Farmers [in Manitoba] can voluntarily apply for coverage for themselves and their family members.

Labour standards in B.C.:

A farm worker is anyone employed in farming, ranching, orchards and agricultural operations who grows or raises crops or livestock, clears land, operates farm machinery or other equipment, sells any products from a farm or washes, cleans, sorts, grades or packs a product from harvest.

Farm workers are covered by most sections of the act except minimum wage, paid wages, deduction of wages and statutory holidays.

Interesting. From British Columbia:

Farm workers are not entitled to overtime, but a farm worker must not work excessive hours detrimental to their health.

That's a pretty broad definition.

Saskatchewan:

The legislation outlines the relationship between employer and employee, including application of minimum wages, holidays and maternity leave.

The act does not apply to employees in farming, ranching or market gardening, but it does apply to those in [some other areas like] egg hatcheries, greenhouses, nurseries, bush clearing, feedlots, confined feeding operations and commercial hog operations.

I could go on, but I think you get the point. I can keep going.

I will table that article. I think it's actually very instructive and very interesting. There are some very interesting aspects of laws that apply in other provinces, our prairie province neighbours in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, our neighbours to the west in British Columbia, that I think we would perhaps welcome in this province as a way of protecting those on farms, both paid workers and perhaps family as well. What matters is keeping people safe. We get to that point by asking the question of the people who are impacted by the changes, just like we've done with climate and royalties and mental health and payday lending. We haven't. The government has not asked those questions in a way that is authentic, where Albertans both rural and urban feel that you've done your homework, that you intend to actually genuinely consult.

I've got to say, my friends, that the risk of invoking time allocation to shut down debate on this discussion doesn't help. It doesn't help in the slightest. It creates headlines that you don't want. It creates a very easy narrative. What I would ask is that you take the time to get it right, take the time to make sure that what we come up with actually protects paid farm workers, gives them the protections they need.

We talk about timelines here. Well, what can we do in the interim? Does that mean that we sit around and we do nothing for six months or for a year? What it means is that we, you the government work with ag societies. There's already a lot of tremendous work that goes on in this province, driven by ag societies, driven by farm families, that helps address issues around farm safety. You can put some resources into that as the government today to help improve farm safety all around the province.

This amendment, by sending this to committee, doesn't mean that you do nothing. It doesn't mean you have to abandon your principles. It doesn't mean you have to abandon support for farm workers or the desire to keep people safe. You can help promote farm safety by working actively with ag societies all around the province, by providing some resources to them. That can happen right now, today. It should be happening right now, today, from this government. Ag societies all around the province already do a tremendous amount of work on farm safety. It's a topic that I know is top of mind for farmers because – trust me – no one wants themselves to be injured, no one wants their family to be injured, no one wants their neighbour to be injured, and no one wants a paid worker to be injured. No one – no one – wants that.

I know that my friends on the opposition side here have taken some heat from the government, perhaps, with their motives. No one on this side, I promise you, wants to see anyone hurt. I know that my friends in the government have taken a lot of heat, from myself included, for the process. I think we all agree that the process hasn't been ideal, but no one, certainly, at least, not me – I guess I can't speak for absolutely everyone. I don't question your motives.

I don't. I really don't. I genuinely believe that every single person on that side wants people to be safe, and I genuinely believe that you feel you're doing this for the right reasons, consistent with your principles, the reasons that you were elected to this House, the reasons you chose to go into public service in the first place, relating back to work that you probably did in your communities before you even became elected. I know that you're doing this from a good place. I genuinely believe that.

4:00

Unfortunately, the way that you've gone about this means that the outcome isn't going to be what you want. You had to amend this bill dramatically. The amendment is longer than the bill itself. The protections that will actually be offered up as a result of these amendments, actually, are relatively thin. You could have gone further. Had you consulted properly, had the process that you followed been an open and comprehensive and fulsome process, I think you'd find in the course of three months, six months down the road that we'd have far greater protection for farm workers in this province and you would have the buy-in of the vast majority of farmers and ranchers in Alberta. The outcomes would have been much better.

So you have an opportunity. You have an opportunity to make it right. You have an opportunity by supporting this amendment, sending it to committee, initiating a proper consultation process that starts by asking questions. What problem are we trying to solve? What's the nature of that problem? What's already in place? How do people around this province want to address that problem? Once you've got to that point, come back to the Legislative Assembly with a comprehensive bill that is detailed, that spells out exactly what the parameters are for farm safety legislation and occupational health and safety, in the labour code, the Employment Standards Code, in WCB. In doing that, we'll find, I think, a lot more success.

Why is it that a city MLA is standing up and talking about farm issues? It's about the way that you go about coming up with an answer. It is in response to what I am hearing from my constituents.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

I recognize the Member for Lethbridge-East on 29(2)(a).

Ms Fitzpatrick: Yes. Mr. Speaker, I will ask a question, but before I do, I'd like to make some comments that are pertinent to my question. Yesterday in the House Bill 204 was passed unanimously. I'd like you to keep that in mind as I continue with my comments.

The first comment is that I am hearing over and over again in this House that we must develop the regulations first. I did a little checking since I have, actually, considerable experience in this area. I worked in the federal public service for over 32 years, and about 10 of those years I spent developing policy, bills, and regulations.

Always – always – the bill is done first. Now, while that bill is developing, certainly there's consideration in terms of what the regulations might be, but the bill is developed first. I will say . . .

The Acting Speaker: Excuse me. Member, can I ask you to proceed to your question, please.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Okay. I can't make any further comments on it?

The Acting Speaker: I'd like you to proceed to a question, please.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Okay. I am getting there, and I just want to give an example before I continue. Bill C-4, which was an omnibus budget bill, was passed by the federal government. I worked for the

federal government; that's why I'm fairly conversant in this area. The federal government refused to provide any details. There were no regulations done when that was passed. What they said was that after it received royal assent, the details would be provided.

A similar situation is happening here. I would suspect that some of the members on the other side of the House may have forgotten that this process was followed in almost every piece of legislation that was ever done here. In fact, Bill 204: there were no regulations attached to that yesterday. They will be developed in the next eight months.

I attended a meeting in Lethbridge. Eight hundred people attended, and a number of those who attended also identified that they attended most of the other previous meetings. They provided their input.

Point of Order

Question-and-comment Period

Mr. Stier: I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. We've heard quite a bit. Is there a question coming from this person?

The Acting Speaker: I recognize the Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With regard to the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod and his point of order, 29(2)(a) says:

Subject to clause (b), following each speech on the items in debate referred to in suborder (1), a period not exceeding 5 minutes shall be made available, if required, to allow Members to ask questions and comment briefly on matters relevant to the speech and to allow responses to each Member's questions and comments.

It has always been the practice of this House that a question is not required, but a comment may be substituted or both together. One or the other or both are permitted under the rule.

The Acting Speaker: I recognize the leader of the third party.

Mr. McIver: I'll be brief. What he said.

The Acting Speaker: I think that we should take a moment to address this question before we move on. As the Government House Leader clearly said, the matter at hand is that

a period not exceeding 5 minutes shall be made available, if required, to allow Members to ask questions and comment briefly on matters relevant to the speech and to allow responses to each Member's questions and comments.

It would seem to me that that indicates there is some limitation on the speaker to come to a question at some point because it does indicate that it does allow responses to those questions, and if you use a hundred per cent of the time, it would not allow for that response. However, it does not specify a specific amount of time, so I would ask all members that they try to strike some form of balance, and if it continues to be an issue, we will define "briefly" in the next little while as necessary, and I will seek precedent. I understand from the two comments made that the practice in the past has been that there has not been a limit. I will reserve ultimate judgment until tomorrow, but I felt that it was important to have said these things.

I also want to comment to members on both sides that it really is not your judgment to be deciding when the question is to be called. It is my judgment, and I will continue to reserve that authority.

Thank you.

Can you please proceed.

Debate Continued

Ms Fitzpatrick: As I was saying, with those 800 people who were at that meeting, excluding the people at the back who were calling the two ministers names, there were some very productive comments provided by some of those participants at that meeting. In fact, at the end of the meeting I spent close to an hour talking to about 40 people who provided comments to me, and those comments I brought forward to our caucus.

Now, back to the devil is in the details. I appreciate that the member indicated that it would be a good idea to go to committee, and perhaps when the formal consultation on the regulations occurs, then that will happen. But the actuality is that the bill gets done. You can't develop regulations without a bill.

Now my question to the member: were you aware that, in fact, a member of the Official Opposition actually voted to support not providing any details on Bill C-4?

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, I guess I'm not up to speed on every single vote that may have happened in Ottawa. I would hope, though, that the member is not holding up the Harper government's omnibus bills as a model to be followed by this House. I would certainly hope not. I would also note that all federal bills, as I understand it, do go to a committee phase, which is also important.

You know, you mentioned the productive comments that came out of the Lethbridge consultation, and I know that there have been productive comments coming out of all the consultations, some noisier than others. I think that that's exactly what needed to happen before legislation was presented.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I recognize the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

4:10

Mr. MacIntyre: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in support of sending this poorly drafted bill to committee. From the moment that this bill was introduced, it became apparent to all the farmers in this province that this government made the ridiculous presumption that a handful of nonfarmers, a handful of politicians and bureaucrats, know more about farming and farm safety than the 43,000 farm families in this province, and that's simply not the case. I am quite certain there are 16-year-old children that have been raised on farms that have forgotten more than the politicians and bureaucrats will ever know.

Furthermore, to address the statement made earlier by another hon. member about lengthy litigations being one of the reasons why we need to foist WCB on our farmers, I think we could not find an insurance company more embroiled in litigation over their deplorable treatment of injured Albertans than the Alberta WCB. As the hon. Premier herself has previously noted, the place is a miserable mess, yet suddenly, now that the NDP are in power, that story has changed. Not one attempt to fix the WCB has been made by this government, and now suddenly it's okay. It's okay to subject an entire sector of our economy, farmers, to this problematic WCB insurance regime and in very great haste.

Although members opposite won't know this, there are insurance providers that some farmers use that provide better coverage at a lower cost without the red tape or the delays common at WCB. But under this legislation farmers are not given that choice.

Frankly, Mr. Speaker, if this bill was really about farm safety, if that was the true intent of the bill, if this government was really interested in transparency and accountability, they would not presume to know more than the thousands of farmers who live the farm life each and every day and understand the risks each and

every day, but that's not what has happened. A small group of bureaucrats and politicians think they know better and cobble together a bill that is so flawed that this government had to hastily drop six pages of amendments to try to quell the very loud protest coming from Alberta farmers in justifiably protesting this bill.

Furthermore, when it comes to the lack of consultation, I was amused to see a report that even the minister of agriculture said that he had no input into this bill – and he's the minister of agriculture – and that he had, according to the report, quote, no authority to change it. I would question: well, then, what on earth was he elected to do?

This government is demonstrating a very clear and imminent threat, to coin a phrase from a former president of the United States. We have this weapon of mass destruction that's descending upon our farmers known as WCB and OH and S, and they were never asked if that's what they wanted to have happen to them. So we have this threat. The other threat, of course, is that this government is consistently ramming legislation through here without appropriate consultation, without giving heed to the experts, many of whom are up there in the gallery today, and they are not having their voice.

If this bill, however, was to go to committee, then we could invite the experts, the farmers themselves, to come in and one by one advise this Legislature on the very best measures for farm safety.

Mr. Cyr: Do they want to hear what they have to say?

Mr. MacIntyre: Good question. Do they actually want to hear what the farmers have to say? We keep hearing that they're hearing, but all I've been hearing from farmers is, "Kill Bill 6," and somehow it still manages to be alive today. I'm not sure why. Perhaps some more phone calls need to be made to the various NDP MLAs that have farms in their ridings.

For example, the minister of agriculture himself, the Member for Whitecourt-Ste. Anne, has 1,230 farms in his riding, and he can be reached at 780.786.1997. We also have the Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater. They have 1,159 farms and ranches in that riding. If the folks at home are watching, they can call 780.675.3232 in Athabasca and voice their concern. You know, if the government won't send this to committee and invite testimony from farmers, maybe the testimony needs to come by phone messages to these numbers. Even the Member for West Yellowhead has 695 farms in his riding. There is no office in Edson, but you can reach him by phone at 780.865.9796 in Hinton.

I'm really quite appalled at the NDP's decision to draft this bill without first entering into significant and meaningful consultation with rural Alberta as to how this thing happened. Albertans are being represented by a government that has too quickly forgotten that good governance requires a commitment to the best interests of Albertans, not a commitment to pushing through rapid-fire atrocious legislation too quickly to check with those that would be most affected, and we know that that's precisely what happened. It was pushed through too quickly. No proper checking, no due diligence was done. We know that is the case because we just had an amendment dropped, six pages long, trying to correct a series of mistakes. If that isn't evidence enough that a bill needs to go to committee, I'm not sure what is.

We have a lot of talk from this NDP government on their commitment to proper legislation. Well, let's have a couple of examples. The Minister of Energy, speaking about the royalty review, told the House on June 17:

As with all the projects, we are consulting with industry as we move forward and looking at the pros and cons of all of that.

Again, we're in constant consultation with industry to look at those projects that will bring value and jobs to Alberta.

The Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour, speaking about the minimum wage hike, told the House on June 18:

The Premier and I met last week with industry leaders, with labour, and with advocacy groups to hear their input on this, and we're going ahead with those consultations.

Here we have consultations, but when it came to the farmers, no, no. In a backroom some bureaucrats and politicians whipped together a bill on the back of a napkin, it looked like, to jam it through the House. Somehow farmers don't qualify for this level of consultation.

Here we are, and now we've got massive protest after massive protest because this government's definition of consultation for farmers is substantially different than for everyone else. That's unacceptable. Instead of consultation meetings and information sessions, it's a come-and-be-told session. That is not consultation. Consultation, as was defined earlier by the hon. member, is to come, listen, learn. The process should have been that, first and foremost. Consultation is not just a buzzword that you throw around.

The farmers have said that they feel like this government does not care about rural Albertans enough to deem them worthy of proper consultation before drafting a bill, and we have a Premier that appears to be more focused on foreign affairs than listening to people who are trying to convince her that this bill needs to die.

There are some facts here about this. Fact 1, there are more small family farms in Alberta than in any other province.

Fact 2, 45 days to consult and pass a law is insufficient for any law. This is a huge industry with many stakeholders, and the thing that ought to stand out uppermost in the minds of everyone in this House and all Albertans, really, is that every farm is unique. They are complex systems, and they are not considered by the family farmers to be a job. It's their life, and this legislation is imposing on a life and a quality of life.

Fact 3, in this government's addresses on Bill 6 it has continually glossed over the fact that B.C. recognizes the unique position of family farms and provides them with special recognition under their laws because that government recognizes the uniqueness and the complexity of farms. We heard the hon. member earlier talking at length about British Columbia and their laws.

4:20

If this went to committee, we could take a good long look at what British Columbia has done and go through that, and we just might find a lot of very good concepts that could be incorporated into this bill. By not going to committee, we are robbed of that opportunity and the farmers themselves are robbed of the opportunity to look at British Columbia's legislation and say: "Wow. That's really good. We like it. We think that's what we should have here in this province." But we will never have that discussion because this government seems to be determined not to send this bill to committee and, instead, just ram it on through this House for who knows what reason.

Fact 4, this ill-conceived plan is going to directly impact the lives of some 43,000 farms in this province, people who make their livelihood and who have their life on that farm. And they just could not be bothered to consult. It's just shameful.

Because I represent Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, I have a very large demographic that are farmers, and they are furious. My constituency office is just absolutely overrun with phone calls, e-mails, letters. They're furious because they feel like this government did not consult them, and now this government is turning a deaf ear to their cries. It's one thing not to consult them at the front end of this bill, but now the farmers are rallying right across this province,

thousands of them, and they're all with one voice saying the same thing: stop; slow down; kill the bill; send it to committee. And now, having not been consulted on the front side of this bill, they feel like they're being ignored in the midst here. It's going to be an interesting next election. I think the orange crush might get crushed by a farmer's boot.

Earlier this week I received a letter from a cattle rancher, and I'm just going to quote a little bit from that letter if you don't mind. She works on a cattle ranch, and she and her husband apparently own this. She says:

My husband is a second generation rancher. We ranch with his parents. We also have two young [children]; aged two and one. We are a family owned and operated ranch.

She says:

I am opposed to Bill 6. I feel it affects a way of life . . . Also, if any changes are to be done, they must be done with as much feedback from fellow producers as possible. Not just big [corporations], but the family farms as well.

Mr. Speaker, this NDP government's inability to recognize the significance of what the writer of this letter and so many other letters just like this are telling us is exactly why we should not be legislating in such a rush on this matter.

This lady goes on to say:

Farming and ranching is a way of life. It is not a job, it is a lifestyle. We live what we do every day, it is our home. On the family farm it is impossible to draw the line between our home and the barn

and determine where home ends and work begins. We can't draw a line between our garden and the corrals because to us

it is all our home.

The whole thing is home. The gardens, the corrals, the barn: it's all home.

We don't wake up every day and head out to work. We wake up every day to live our life.

Here's the concept that the other side just doesn't seem to grasp about farming. They don't drive into their farmyard and say: oh, I'm at work now. No, they say: we've come home. It's just ludicrous. And now this government wants to legislate home. That's why these farmers are so upset. That's why they're here. We have a government that's trying to legislate and regulate home. It's crazy. You can't legislate and regulate home. Go ahead, send OH and S out to draw a line between the home and barn and say: okay; well, this side is work, and this side is home. Is that ridiculous or what? Is that ridiculous or what?

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Just before we go to 29(2)(a), I'd like to remind members not to communicate with the people in the galleries.

Anybody who'd like to speak to 29(2)(a)? Proceed.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to ask the member a question. But, first, I'd like to thank him for his presentation through you, Mr. Speaker. I enjoyed it.

The Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake is my neighbour, one of the many neighbouring MLAs I have surrounding my riding. The other day he took the time to travel down to Sundre to participate at a town hall with me before we came back up here on Sunday, and I do appreciate his time for that. I think he would agree with me that one of the things that stood out as we met with farmers and ranchers on Sunday night was trust. This government has broken trust with farmers and ranchers, which is one of the reasons why we probably need to send this to committee, just to get that trust back.

The question, of course, is: how did the government break that trust? Well, let me be clear, Mr. Speaker. The government released documents that they now say they didn't mean to release or that

somebody accidentally released. I don't know. They can't seem to come up with an explanation on why they did that. But here's one of the things, just one of the things: does the legislation include unpaid workers such as neighbours who help during busy times? Do you know what the answer was? Under the proposed legislation the OH and S Act and regulations would apply when an employer engages the services of a worker regardless of whether or not the worker is paid – for example, neighbours who volunteer to help – and regardless of the worker's age.

Now, I can tell you that farmers and ranchers will be very clear – and I live in a farming and ranching community – that neighbours help neighbours. That's pretty important for our lifestyle. It's pretty important for our operations. So they see a document like that on a website, and now the government says: oh, we didn't mean to do that. And we think that they now trust this government, going forward, to write regulations over the next 18 months that they're not a part of? I know that the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake will agree with me that that was a big concern.

The second thing – and I'd like to hear his comments on both of these – is that the Premier of Alberta, Mr. Speaker, has stood up in this House repeatedly saying that she is trying to right a great wrong, saying that farmers and ranchers for almost a hundred years have been forcing people to do unsafe work, have been forcing people to do things that they don't want to do, which hurt and kill them. That is outrageous. Farmers and ranchers from my community are some of the best neighbours I have. I'm proud to call them my friends. I'm proud to call them my neighbours.

So I'd like to know, through you, Mr. Speaker, to the member, how the member thinks that this government can get trust back when she would speak about farmers and ranchers like that.

Mr. MacIntyre: Thank you for the question, hon. member. Well, you know, there is a simple solution to getting trust back. I'm sure that each and every one of us in this House have done things in our past, maybe not even that far back, where we have inadvertently caused someone harm, someone who trusted us. The thing to do, of course, is to genuinely apologize for that breach of trust and also to take those steps necessary to start earning that trust back.

In relation to the town hall meeting that the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre is talking about, the farmers that we met with one-on-one after the meeting was sort of dispersing repeatedly said the same thing over and over and over again, Mr. Speaker. They said – and I'll try to paraphrase – that the government is ramming this bill through and then telling us, "Trust us; we'll get the regs right," when, in fact, the trust has already been broken. To go now to those farmers and say: "Yeah, we blew it. Here are six pages of amendments. We didn't consult with you when we drew this thing up first. But, yeah, just trust us. We'll get the rest of it right." That's not going to happen. That trust is gone.

If this government wants to get the trust back, there are a couple of things that need to happen. First of all, they need to apologize to the farming community across this province for some of the insinuations that somehow farms in this province are horribly unsafe places and that somehow children are being forced to do unsafe things and workers are being forced to do unsafe things. Nothing could be further from the truth. Not at all.

I am a former farm boy and a paid farm worker, and nobody could tell me to do something unsafe. I'm a free man in a free nation. I'm not a slave to anyone, and neither is anyone else in this country. There is nobody in this country that can force someone to do something unsafe.

4:30

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I call upon the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti next.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to speak to this amendment. I support the amendment, you know, a referral motion to send it to committee to do further consultations with the farmers across this province. I encourage the government to take the time to get it right and to talk to the experts. I won't point to the members in the audience because I've been asked not to do that, but I'll speak for all farmers across all Alberta, not just the ones here today. All farmers should be consulted on this important piece of legislation. The government has said that they could take up to two years to consult on the regulations, and that's fine. But why won't they take even six months to consult on the legislation? That's the question I have for them. You know, there are two pieces. There's regulation and legislation, but they should consult on the legislation as well before they bring it forward.

Mr. Speaker, I support farm safety. Farm safety is important, and I think all farmers support farm safety and protection for farm workers. I don't think there's one farmer in Alberta that doesn't think safety is important, especially for the protection of their farm workers. I don't think it just has to be WCB. You know, even the Premier herself says that WCB isn't the greatest program and that there are lots of flaws with it, so why force farmers to have WCB and not good private insurance? There's lots of good private insurance out there, and most farmers have that. Actually, private insurance goes further than WCB. It protects them 24/7 whereas WCB only protects them when they're on the job. One accident is too many. We don't want to have any accidents on the farm, but when you do, it's good to have an insurance program to cover it.

You know, the amendments haven't been brought forward yet, but everybody has been talking about them. The amendments that were presented yesterday by the government say that it's only going to affect paid employees, and then we saw last night the unions and everybody talking about I think it was 112 pairs of gloves. The members across can correct me if I'm wrong because I'm taking information that I've heard from across there: 112 pairs of gloves. What I've heard is that out of all the farm accidents, only 9 per cent are paid farm workers. The rest are the owners, the relatives, the neighbours, and the people that visit. So when you're talking about 112 pairs of gloves, you're really only talking about 9 per cent of 112 pairs of gloves, Mr. Speaker.

Plus, out of that 9 per cent, you know, the government assumes that no farms have any insurance. Well, I've heard that anywhere from 80 to 90 to 96 per cent of farms today already have insurance. Now, I would hope that the government would have done that research before to come up with a clearer number. I've heard up to 90 per cent, and it could be higher. Nine per cent of 112 brings you down to – I don't know – somewhere around 11, but 90 per cent of them are already covered, so with all this legislation they're bringing forward about protecting farm workers, you're talking about one or two people since 1997. Well, we lose one every day to fentanyl. I'm not playing that down, Mr. Speaker. As I said, one life is too many. But I think they're not playing with all the facts over there. I don't think everybody understands exactly the true facts of what they're talking about. Farms are safe, they have good insurance programs, and farmers care about their workers. Somehow this government doesn't think that the farmers do care about the safety of their employees, but believe me, I know they do.

You know, this government just kind of assumes that no farms have any safety programs: no insurance or safety or WCB. The numbers they use talk like no farms have any coverage at all when

we all know that that's just not true. I think farmers really do care more about the safety of their farm and their workers than the members sitting opposite do. I don't say that they don't care, but I'll guarantee you that farmers care about somebody getting hurt on their farm more so than somebody sitting in this House does. I can tell you that.

You know, we can always improve. I'm not saying that we can't. I'm not against bringing in some legislation, but have a minimum amount of insurance that farmers have to have for coverage. Don't specify WCB; just say that you have to have a certain level of coverage. I'm not against OH and S coming in and inspecting a farm if a fatality has happened or something has happened on that farm. You know, if you inspect it and figure out what went wrong, they can use that information to get it out to the other farmers and maybe prevent it from happening somewhere else. We've heard it lots in this House that education does more than legislation for saving lives on the farm. A piece of paper with legislation probably isn't going to save one life, but if you can go in and figure out what went wrong, tell everybody about it, educate people, that could save some lives. It's real, Mr. Speaker.

I mean, I could go on and read all kinds of e-mails and letters that I've gotten and repeat everything that's been said in this House. I think there's lots of good stuff that's been said, but I'm not going to repeat it, and I'm not going to read all the letters I've gotten. I've gotten lots of them, believe me. I'm just going to sit down. Those are the points I wanted to get made.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
You wish to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Nixon: I do, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Please proceed, hon. member.

Mr. Nixon: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Again, through you, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank the hon. member for the presentation. I was listening intently and certainly found some wisdom in it. I know the member has been a member of this Assembly for a long time, certainly more than the class of 2015, which makes up the bulk of the members right now. I was wondering if he could just comment on the size of the protest, on the size and the volume of the e-mails and the phone calls that he is getting on this issue, and on how that compares to his experience with other issues in his time as an MLA.

Then I wonder if he could advise the House a little bit on his thoughts on the complaints that we are getting from constituencies that are adjacent to our ridings. In my case I have a rather large riding, as you know, about 25,000 square kilometres. It borders my friend from Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills' riding on the western side as well as a member's riding from across the way, Banff-Cochrane. It's ranching communities all through there. As you know, just because there are riding lines – they don't quite line up. Counties are on this side and that side, and neighbours are on this side and that side, so the communities overlap our ridings. I'm having ranchers coming into my office in Sundre almost every day saying: "I cannot get help from my MLA in Banff-Cochrane. I cannot get help. I cannot get an answer."

Now, Mr. Speaker, I sympathize. My office has gotten over a thousand phone calls on this in the last week, but we are responding to them. I held a town hall when I was back shortly for the weekend to see my family. I'll have a town hall when I come back next weekend. Even if the government tries to limit debate on this bill, I will still continue to hold town halls in my constituency across the riding.

I'd like the hon. member to just comment on the sheer size of this and how big a deal this is, for some of these rookie MLAs to understand that, as well as his thoughts on constituents having to go to other MLAs to be able to get representation in this Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Would you wish to respond, hon. member? Please proceed.

Mr. Drysdale: I thank the member for the question. I don't always consider myself an old-timer, but when I look around here, I'm getting up there, and I'm hating to admit it. I don't think I've been in this House that long, Mr. Speaker. I was first elected in '08, and now, actually, I am one of the longest serving members here. There are a couple that have been here longer than me but not that many. When I came, there were members that had been here 30 years and 20 years, so I don't feel like it's been that long. It's only been eight years, but I'm actually one of the longest serving ones now, believe it or not.

You know, in that time, as the member asked, I haven't seen this kind of demonstration and outcry from the public. This is the biggest I've seen. I have to admit that in my years of being around, I've never participated in a rally before in my life, and I've now participated in three or so in the last week. We know that something is going wrong, Mr. Speaker, because I'm not one to take that lightly. So it is unusual. It has definitely caused an uproar.

The other question the member asked, you know, was on the representation. For me, I'm the only PC MLA in northwestern Alberta. The ones farther north are ND, so of course I get calls from Manning, Grimshaw, Peace River, Fort Vermilion, which is like 300 kilometres from me. They have nobody else that will listen to them on these concerns.

So he's right. It's widespread, and I get calls from lots of people outside of my constituency. You know, I mostly work on behalf of my constituency, but I'll listen to any farmer and bring their concerns and thoughts forward on this issue. It's just too bad that it's come down to this, and now we've got time allocation coming in. I guess this government is going to ram it through, like it has been said. We'll all do our best to speak for the farmers in Alberta, and we'll continue to do that even after this is rammed through, Mr. Speaker.

4:40

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.
You wish to respond under 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Strankman: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Please proceed.

Mr. Strankman: I'd also like to speak to the member. The Member for Calgary-Elbow made some mention of a farm magazine, the *Western Producer*, that gives some options that other provinces have. I was wondering if the member could respond about the possibility of appeals to regulations coming forward. With his experience in the Legislature . . .

The Acting Speaker: I'm sorry, hon. member, but our time is up.
Now, anyone else wishing to respond? I will recognize the Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to the referral motion. You know, this referral motion is about trying to get it right. Bill 6 and the amendments that we hear are coming to Bill 6 appear to fall far short of what farmers are asking for and that ranchers are asking for. It speaks to the need for consultation, and I believe that

this referral motion would grant that by sending it to committee, so I speak in favour of the referral motion.

Farmers and ranchers have rightly been wary of the suggested changes of this bill, that don't really take into account the complexities and the distinctive intricacies of family farm life. Many of my colleagues have discussed and talked about, you know, the difficulty that happens between trying to figure out where farm and work life begin and where home and family life begin and how that's very difficult to decide and how different farms bring in different complexities. It's very different being a grain farmer versus a cattle farmer versus a dairy farmer.

You know, these complexities, I believe, are understood by the farmers in our province. They understand that this bill, Bill 6, even with its amendments, is onerous and often misguided. Sometimes their livelihoods are even threatened. To highlight this, I know that like many of the other MLAs in this Legislature, we've received immense amounts of e-mail and letters and feedback from our constituents. I would like to take the time to perhaps read some of the more eloquent e-mails that I've received, because I believe that the House and this Legislature need to know how our farm families are feeling about this piece of legislation.

If we are the representatives of the people of Alberta in this Legislature, as we are, then I would pray that we'd actually listen to these people. I've said many times to the people in my constituency: "I'm your mouthpiece. I take your ideas, I take your values, I take your beliefs, and I place them into this Legislature. I'm your representative." So when we can bring the people – this is actually their Legislature. It's not yours, and it's not mine. It's the people of Alberta's. When we bring their ideas, when we bring their comments into this Legislature, I think it's important that we actually listen to them. You know, I would ask you to listen carefully, and I would ask you to give these words careful consideration when we debate the merits of this bill.

I have one constituent that writes, I believe, very heartfully:

Tonight I feel sick inside as I comb over the list of changes the Alberta government has in store for our family farm. I dread what will happen to our life and our livelihood when the government imposes itself on our family.

Our little unit consists of my 82 year old father, my 79 year old mother, my husband and myself. We have a seven year old daughter who loves all our animals, especially our cows. She watches and participates in every facet of our farm life. This is the only life she has known, and she emphatically states it's the only thing she ever wants.

Now, I don't know if you've ever had a seven-year-old little daughter, but I can just hear that seven-year-old little daughter because I used to have a seven-year-old little daughter, and I can understand what she sounds like. I think that sometimes maybe we'd be a little further ahead if we would refer this to the committee so that they could hear little seven-year-old girls speak or the farm families speak directly to this.

She loves checking cows on the pastures, watching and helping during calving, raising chickens and bunnies, riding her pony, and joining us for haying. That's all going to change and the life we have will never be the same. It breaks my heart to tell her the government doesn't trust her family to keep her safe. She won't understand how a stranger will be able to come on our farm and change our lives. I can't even begin to explain ... how the changes will likely mean we will have to quit.

Tell me that a committee doesn't need to hear this.

Am I emotional? No doubt. Losing my freedom and the work I love is painful. Am I over reacting or uninformed? Absolutely not. As the saying goes, this is not my first rodeo.

My husband and my father have both managed oilfield operations. I was a television journalist for the CBC. My mom

was a tax consultant. We know a great deal about OH&S, WCB, Labour Relations and Employment Standards. We know these rules and laws have no place on our family farm. These are great rules for corporate farms and larger family farms who have paid employees [on staff]. [These rules] won't work here, and are frankly an insult to us and our way of life.

By placing our small family farm under the same rules as big feedlots, commercial grain farms and other big corporate outfits, the Alberta government has shown it doesn't understand or respect, how we live, what we need and who we are.

You see, Mr. Speaker, we need to ask the farmers what they want. In a democracy it ultimately comes down to that. The people are supposed to rule. We need to ask them what they want. We need to address their concerns in this bill. With anything less, I believe, we're not living up to our responsibility as legislators.

This farmer asks:

How will Bill 6 cover these scenarios?

These would be great questions for a committee that we refer this to.

If I bring a calf into the house to warm up after its mother has dumped it in a snow bank, will my home become the workplace, subject to unannounced inspections?

I maintain and run older machinery to avoid debt. Will I be forced to buy new?

How many safety meetings should I hold? Do I need a Job Hazard Assessment for each task? Will I have to write a Job Safety Awareness Book? Where will I keep all the documentation stored for the seven years required by law?

When the OHS inspector shows up on my property what type of biosecurity measures will he take? What is my course of action if he causes a disease outbreak or infection?

4:50

These are good questions, and they're questions that a committee needs to hear, that they need to consider, that they need to discuss. We need clarity on this for our farm families. While most of my family are farmers, I've never been a farmer myself. While I've been around farms and I've been around cattle, I don't stand here trying to say that I'm an expert on OH and S or WCB and how they apply to farm families, but this committee needs to hear these questions. This is a wise referral.

You know, I guess it's up to the government, and ultimately, I guess, it's probably up to the backbench of the government. One of the things that I'm beginning to learn as an MLA is that, at least in my party, when we make a decision about where we're going to go, it actually is a caucus decision. When my leader or when my leadership team comes to us and says that we need to consider a particular course of action, we actually have the conversations. I've heard my leader say: "Listen, this is a team thing. We go down this path only if we have the consent of the caucus." We actually do have and you folks over in the government benches do have significant power to impact and to intervene on this piece of legislation.

This constituent asks another set of questions.

If a normally gentle cow has a fit of bovine rage because she is having trouble calving, and [somehow] someone gets hurt, will a stop work order be issued? What happens to the cow? Is she left to suffer and perhaps die because no one is allowed to complete the necessary work?

If a neighbour needs my help, and he has no WCB coverage for me, do I stop being his helpful neighbour?

Now, maybe we've started to address some of that.

If I see animals loose on a roadway should I just leave them to cause a wreck and get killed, or kill a driver? I may not know who owns the animals. I've always helped in the past for the safety of all. Once the animals are contained I search for the

owners, but with the new rules, I could be causing untold problems for a fellow farmer just because I was trying to keep everyone safe.

I know this happened to me just coming to the Leg. here just about a month ago. Driving down the road, I saw three horses running down the ditch in the highway. Knowing that they can spook and jump out in front, you know, you slow down, and eventually you push them off into a fence that's broken down, into a field. Then you go up to the farmhouse, and you see if they're their horses: no, no, no; that's the neighbours down the road. They know who they belong to, found out from one of the kids from my basketball team. You know what? You do those things because that's the way agricultural life works in Alberta.

Will my child be allowed to help calm a frightened calf, watch a birth, help with paperwork, join a cattle drive? Will she be allowed to handle a 4-H steer?

The scenarios may seem outrageous, but Bill 6 creates more problems than solutions for the small family farm. It horrifies me to think a government bureaucrat could come onto my farm, [into] my home, and into my life and change everything.

I hope we're listening, and if we're not, I hope we have enough care about these kinds of scenarios that we're at least willing to put this before a committee that can listen.

There is nothing worse than giving too much power to an individual. While I have met government workers who tried to be helpful and were genuine in their concern, I have seen others who have too much power and wield it maliciously. This bill will put my family at the mercy of a government bureaucrat. If passed, a wonderful rural way of life will be gone. [That] is heartbreaking.

That's just one letter. I thought it was one of the most eloquent, and I think it speaks to this whole issue of: how do you divide this issue between a workplace and a home? How do you do that? Where do you draw the lines?

Mr. Speaker, I think we can see that these are not the words of some robber baron who wants to take advantage of their workers. These are not the words of a parent who does not care about the safety of their children. This is not a selfish entrepreneur that cares more about profit than workers' safety or their neighbours. This is a typical Albertan farmer, who does not want the onerous regulations that will be placed upon their livelihood and their way of life. These are real issues that she's bringing up, and they need further discussion at the committee level. I don't see why it's difficult to see that.

Perhaps this Legislature and this government need to recognize that maybe some of the answers, rather than being found in onerous legislation, really are found in education. You guys know enough about me now to know of my history as an educator. One of the things that I loved about this next one, that I want to share with you, is the whole tack that she takes towards education and how this could be used to address this issue. "I had offered all my curriculum-friendly materials to [Alberta] Education free of charge."

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Under 29(2)(a) I recognize the Member for Calgary-Klein.

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do find it distressing that the hon. member continues talking about these outrageous scenarios, that we've explained already, but I will ask a question. You know, we brought this bill forward because of lobbying that has come to us, over years and years, from farm workers and families that have been impacted by injuries and from farm groups. That's how this came to be and why we brought it forward. We thought it was important. My question is: of all the people that come to your office, there must have been some people who want this bill,

so how have you talked to them about it? What have you said to those who want to see this bill in place?

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the hon. member: I can honestly say that I have not had one conversation in my office with a farmer or with a rancher that has supported this bill, okay? I mean, I believe you when you say that there are people that have come to you requesting this, okay? I do believe that they have, but at the same time I think that an honest, open discussion on this issue would also recognize the many, many, many, many people that have been coming forward saying that they've got serious problems with this.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: I recognize the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and through you to the member: thanks for his presentation. This matters. Sometimes it's trivialized as we debate it, and we can be a long way from home in this place, but this matters to people. When I was back home – I know the member will have seen the same when he was back home – there were grown-ups with tears in their eyes as they talked about this. Today in our gallery there were people with tears in their eyes. This morning we watched the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock give a great speech about why this matters to him. He raised his five kids on a farm. He's a farmer. This matters. This matters. This is important.

People should be given the opportunity to speak to it. I know that the member believes that they should be given an opportunity to discuss something that matters so much to them, to participate in something that – it shouldn't be trivialized. Nobody has said that they don't want to do safety. I haven't talked to one farmer or rancher who has said: hey, we don't want to do anything to improve things. But every farmer or rancher says that they want to participate, and I know the member has heard the same thing. I know from my office that I haven't gotten one e-mail yet that was for this bill.

5:00

The question that I have is – and I was proud today to sit in this Assembly as the Leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition stood up in this Chamber and talked for about an hour and a half. An hour and a half he stood in this Chamber. He used all the time that he could to defend the constituents, to defend the farmers and ranchers across this province, and I still, Mr. Speaker, have not seen the Premier stand up in this House and do any speech. The Premier has not stood up. Her members are not standing up. We're giving you lists all the time. They're not standing up. They're asking questions, but they're not standing up and explaining what they want to do, as you know. The Premier of Alberta, who is forcing this on farmers and ranchers, has not stood up in this Assembly, but the Leader of the Opposition has, for an hour and a half.

I want to know what the member thinks about that as far as leadership and what a shame that is on this Premier for not standing up and communicating to farmers and ranchers across this province and not standing up for Albertans, because, Mr. Speaker, that is her job.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. You know, there are times in life when you get the chance to listen to somebody articulate and for somebody to speak to an issue with passion and with veracity and with understanding, and I can tell you that today I was never prouder of the leader of my party

than when he stood up and spoke for an hour and a half, so articulately explaining the issues in and surrounding this issue.

The chance that we have, the most important thing that we can do in this Legislature as MLAs, as elected members, is to represent the wishes of our constituents, so I do not understand how we cannot do that here. I'm so proud of my leader and of the people on this side of the House that I've heard speak against this bill because they have spoken what the people are telling them. You maybe don't have to agree with what the people are saying, but they are saying it, and they are saying it loud and clear. As representatives we have only one other . . .

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Would anyone else like to speak? I recognize the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I come from an urban riding, Calgary-Fish Creek. Many may not know, but Bow Valley Ranche, in Calgary-Fish Creek, is one of the original hearts of Alberta's ranching community and farming community. I'd like to think that all Albertans have deep roots in the agricultural and farming and ranching spirit, which is really the pioneer spirit, which has built our province. I think we should all be proud of that, and I think it's something that is embedded in Albertans' DNA. Again, I think we're all proud of that.

Farmers and ranchers were the original innovators, I believe, in our community. They were problem solvers. A can-do attitude came from them, indomitable stubbornness that actually got us to where we are in the face of a lot of challenges. Prairie work ethic: I think that term came from the farmers and ranchers of not only our province but across the prairies. They've overcome hardship and drought and other natural disasters, freezing in the middle of winter when they didn't have power, cutting the logs they needed to stay warm, and harbouring the animals and the grains and the implements and the supplies they needed to survive hard winters. But, Mr. Speaker, they're having a hard time surviving this NDP government.

Self-reliance is something that they pride themselves on, and that self-reliance is part of the problem that we're seeing here today. That self-reliance is one which is a fierce sense of family spirit and a sense of community but also a deep sense of family and safety for those families that, quite frankly, is probably the greatest source of safety we will find: in the warm hearth of their families, the love that they have for each other, and the fact that they want them all to come home safely at the end of the day. Many of them cross acres and acres, hundreds of acres during those days, watching cattle, raising crops, and other things.

I like to think of the image of barn raising. You know, barns were not raised in this country, in this province, across the prairies by architects and engineers. They weren't raised by cranes. They weren't raised by unionized labourers. There weren't catering services there, and certainly there were no safety officers watching out for them. They watched out for themselves and each other. Yet it all got done safely and with each person watching out for the man, woman, or child beside them. I think we should all be proud of that. In fact, probably the safety that we have in the workplace comes from that sense of independence and innovation and caring that came from the farms of Alberta and made its way into the workplace, not the other way around.

You know, I grew up as city boy in Calgary, but I became friends with some of the largest ranchers in southern Alberta, and they invited me down to their farms and their ranches. We had an opportunity for me to learn. I'm very proud that when I was 14, I spent the summer working on a farm. I can tell you that I never

worked harder in my life. I was never more well fed in my life. It was probably one of the most memorable occasions of my life, and I sure slept well at the end of the night, I'll tell you, for the short nights.

And I was safe. You know what? I was 14, but there were 18-year-olds and 19-year-olds and 22-year-olds and 30-year-olds and 50-year-olds, and they were all watching out for me, and when I was in the way of a piece of machinery, they pulled me aside. They wanted me to work hard. They gave me a baling hook and said: kid, you're going to get some muscles here, and away you're going to go. But there was always somebody watching out for me. Now, I had to fight for food at the table at the end of the day, but they were always watching out for me.

Those families of southern Alberta that I've gotten to know, again, some of those large ranches: those are the pioneers and the spirit, those are the people that founded the Calgary Stampede, the Big Four. Those ranchers have sustained themselves. Mr. Speaker, sustainability is what we're talking about here. That sustainability now has gone on for over a hundred years amongst not only the large ranches but the small family ranches of this province.

Sustainability is something we could learn about in this House because that sustainability is under attack. Quite frankly, the sustainability of our family farms and ranches is under attack, but it doesn't have to be that way. We could do the right thing in this House, members on all sides here, and truly consult, not by going back and scrambling and trying to find a way to backfill a lack of consultation, a lack of information, a lack of talking to the neighbouring provinces, who could probably tell us what they've done right and maybe what they've done wrong and what we could do better.

We have an opportunity to be the best in Canada here, which we're used to being. This is a province of leaders, this is a province of innovators, and this is a province where, I think, we like to think that we do things on a best-practices basis. Here is an opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to do just that. I would suggest that this is an opportunity that should be seized by this Legislature on behalf of Albertans and rural Albertans and farmers and ranchers across this province. We have the opportunity to do that here today.

[The Speaker in the chair]

You know, the very fabric of Alberta's family farms is really, again, under attack here; hence, a way of life and sustainability not only could be but is likely to be seriously undermined unless we change course here today and tomorrow.

To really end my comments here, again I'm pleading to the government, with the support of the House. We all, I think, as has been mentioned by many of the members here, do indeed believe that the government has the best of intentions, is doing it with the clear conscience that they have done the right thing. But I'm here to tell you that we've had not only 15 or 100 or 2,000 farmers and ranchers on our doorstep here but also across Alberta, in arenas and fields across this province, telling us and asking us to get it right. I think this is an opportunity that needs to be taken, Mr. Speaker. Let's consult before we ram this through. Let's consult Albertans, let's consult our neighbours, and let's do what's right for this province.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Questions under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler .

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes. To the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek: as a city boy and seeing the

outpouring of reaction to this, could you give your more personal relationship and that from your friends and neighbours in your constituency?

5:10

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Gotfried: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for his question. Indeed, I've been flooded with hundreds of e-mails and phone calls, which was surprising, quite frankly, but I've heard that from some of our other urban members as well. You know, we all would like to think that there is maybe an urban versus rural issue here, but there's not.

You know what I'm hearing? I'm hearing about the 70-year-old who's had a successful corporate career, who grew up on the farm. They still have those values. That prairie work ethic, that pioneer spirit actually helped them. There's a great book called *Cowboy Ethics*, which everybody in this House should read, that is being used on Wall Street to teach people about ethics, to teach people about values, to teach people about doing the right thing, to teach people about hard work, not easy money. Those are the things that I'm hearing.

Quite frankly, it is encouraging, you know, to hear people tell their stories of having grown up in an agricultural community or on a farm family. Again, it's the story of Alberta. They're not from Alberta. They're from Saskatchewan, they're from Manitoba, they're from B.C., they're from Ontario, and they're from the Maritimes. They came to this province because of the Alberta advantage, which was alive and well not just in the corporate boardrooms of this province, not just in the small businesses, not just in the corporations but in the hearts of all Albertans that were working there and in the farms and ranches of this community.

Mr. Speaker, this is not just a rural issue. This is an urban issue. This is something in the DNA of all Albertans. I think what we're finding out now is that those people who grew up on the farms are now sharing those stories with their children and their grandchildren to make sure that that is not lost, that pioneer spirit that is the heart, the lifeblood, and the livelihood here in this province, that drives us all to have that entrepreneurial – and I like to use the term “agri-preneur.” The agricultural entrepreneurs were our first entrepreneurs in this province. They got things done. They were faced with problems, and they found ways to innovate and get around them.

Many of those people became successful in many other walks of life, and we see that today with our farmers and ranchers across this community. They're not just farmers and ranchers. They're engineers. They're doctors. They're veterinarians. They're scientists of many different sorts. They've got MBAs. They're tax accountants. Many of them have those other careers, that they juggle, but the only way they can do that is through the strength of their families.

Again, I thank the member for his question and an opportunity to speak a little bit about something that's a little deeper in our society, I think, than just an urban issue.

The Speaker: Under 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Hanson: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Please proceed.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just a question for the Member for Calgary-Fish Creek. Being a city boy, even you should be able to answer this one. Going back to our leader's debate there, for an hour and a half he mentioned all of the other industries that

are exempt from this legislation. One of them was accounting. Now, this is a hypothetical question, but it did come from a document off the WCB website. It was trying to compare what would be considered a farm accident and a nonfarm accident. It referred to a woman doing her farm books in her farm office, and it said that if she dropped her stapler and broke her toe, that would be considered a farm accident. Now, this document says that accountants are exempt from this legislation but apparently not farm accountants. If the same woman goes into the kitchen to get a cup of coffee while she's working on her books and knocks a toaster off the counter and breaks her toe, that's not a farm accident.

This is very, very confusing legislation, to say the least. Could you just give us an idea of what your thoughts are? How bad is this, and how onerous is this legislation going to be to implement?

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, thank you to the member for his question. Again, I think that it's indicative of the confusion that we're all facing here. The people we're hearing from who live on the farms and ranches of Alberta are confused and worried, but Albertans across the country . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Hon. members, before we proceed, my apologies to the Member for Livingstone-Macleod. He had made a request earlier in the day for unanimous consent to introduce a visitor. With the indulgence of the House I would ask if you're prepared to allow the member to make that introduction.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

(reversion)

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate you bringing this back to light here today. There is a large group that have been here for some time, and today I announced their names. They're from the Nanton-High River-Cayley-Longview-Claresholm region. I recognize a lot of the names, and I'm so pleased to see them here. But in the lengthy list that I had today, apparently one of the names was missing, so I would now like to mention another name to you and through you and the members of this Assembly. I'm not sure if she's still here. I'm getting a shake of the head up there; I guess she's not. I'd just like to read into the record that Amy Davidson was here today as well. I think that all these people deserve a big thank you from all of us for sitting here throughout and contributing as much as you do because it sure helps on this side to know that we've got people that are working as a team with us against this situation with Bill 6.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. My apologies for the oversight.

The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 6

Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act

(continued)

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and speak on the amendment to refer Bill 6 to committee. I would like to outline why the need is so great that we refer this to committee. I

recently hosted a town hall, just last Friday, for my constituents in Bonnyville-Cold Lake. The reason I hosted this town hall was to hear from my constituents what their thoughts are on Bill 6 and maybe to bring some of the questions that they may have to this Legislature. Now, because of the short time frame that this bill has been in the House, I didn't get to give a lot of notice to my local community. It would have been nice to give, say, two or three weeks to get it in the papers, maybe some news radio. Maybe more folks . . .

Mrs. Pitt: Make a song.

Mr. Cyr: Yeah. Make a song. Thank you.

Mrs. Pitt: Or a parade.

Mr. Cyr: Well, a parade might be going a little too far.

But I had 36 hours' notice, and in that 36 hours I had 140 farmers come out. That's a lot of farmers to decide to call. I started off the night to them, and I said: here's Bill 6. You know, the thing with our farmers and our ranchers is that they already knew exactly what was in Bill 6. They had already read and understood what was in Bill 6. So they just wanted clarification. I said: "Okay. Well, I will give you the information that I have," and they continued to pull out the literature that was posted on the government website. One of my constituents actually said, "Which version are you working with?" I said, "Well, what I know now is that there are no versions on here, but I'll go through the one that I do have."

I would like to say that some of my constituents were saying: "We've been trying to get hold of the government. We've been trying to get hold of the agriculture minister. We've been trying to get hold of the Premier." Some were even going far enough to reach out and talk with some of the other MLAs, my colleagues as well as NDP. They just want answers. They have questions, and they're not getting replies. Right now what we're seeing is that apparently the information to contact the different ministers and the Premier has been taken down from the website. Now, I did a favour for the NDP. I'm trying to help.

5:20

Mr. Ceci: You're here to help.

Mr. Cyr: I am here to help. Thank you, Finance minister.

I was wonderful, and I gave them the wonderful e-mail addresses for the Premier and the agriculture minister. Yes. They can thank me. I definitely was helping out so that my constituents could actually reach out to these ministers and the Premier.

Now, I will say that several had deep concerns with the fact that they didn't try just once to contact these different MLAs and the Premier and ministers; they tried several times, dozens of times, trying to get hold of them. Some waited 20 minutes, half an hour on hold to get through, and when they finally got through to some of these phone lines, their name and phone number was taken down, and then they were told: thank you. That's what they got to do. Now, this is shameful. This is very shameful. The fact is that we have a serious disconnect between Albertans and our government. That's concerning. That is deeply troubling, that Albertans can't get to MLAs that are in the government. Apparently, the only MLAs that are responding are opposition MLAs. This is a deep concern.

Now, whether it's a lack of insight from the government or just plain incompetence, I can't say. But I can say that a lot of my constituents are definitely questioning: how do we trust a government that is bringing out a bill and that hasn't consulted us? These farms are going through a trying time right now because many of them, in my riding especially, have oil and gas industry to be able

to offset their farming income. As I've stood up in the House – I don't know – three or four times, I have gone to the jobs minister and asked: what are we doing about Bonnyville-Cold Lake? We're losing jobs. It's crazy. We've got crazy amounts of empty houses. We have incredible – incredible – need on our charities right now, that are depending on the generosity of their fellow constituents.

Now, I will say that to arbitrarily apply regulations and standards but not actually consult is still a bit of an insult. I would like to read into the record some of the questions so that the government could actually hear some of the concerns that are coming out from across Alberta. I'm sure that it's not just my constituents that are asking these questions. I am sure that these questions are coming from almost every farmer. The first question is: if the NDP are determined to pass this during this session, who are they consulting in order to write up the regulations, and who is all participating in this process? This cannot just be producer groups as some only represent their paid members. That's question 1.

Question 2. Farmers and ranchers do not want to talk to the NDP about safety and have asked for the bill to be killed so that they can be given the opportunity to actually consult with them or go into dialogue with them about what is happening and what the NDP's concerns are. What are they trying to achieve? Every one of these farmers and ranchers are safe. I reinforce that: they are safe. It comes down to education, not legislation.

Now, the majority of farmers – here's question 3 – and ranchers are okay with them bringing forward an insurance. However, they just want to have the option to use private insurance over WCB. Most already have private insurance for their employees. If the government's real care is for the workers, why are they not happy with this type of compromise?

Question 4: how would you define a family farm? Some family farms are run by just families. That's not a bad question.

Question 5: you say that all information prior to the consultation has been electronically available; what about the basic right to know what's going on for those older operators or those who do not have computers or for areas that do not have high-speed Internet service?

Question 6. One farmer said that this is the most intrusive agricultural legislation he's seen in his lifetime. Why would the NDP bring forward this type of legislation without even talking to them first?

Question 7: are you using the legislation as a smokescreen to divert our attention away from other legislation that you are introducing, and do you think you are diverting our attention away from increasing taxes and the debt bill and the carbon tax right now? That's a fair point. Picking a fight with the farmers right when you're introducing a carbon tax, or what I would say is a hidden PST – it's unfortunate that you would choose this route if this is where the government is going.

Question 8. Hutterites are saying that they feel singled out by the proposed changes and do not want their names to be used if you do not use others. They felt discriminated against. Hutterites have not asked for specific exemptions and said that the agriculture minister's flip-flop on this issue has created concern, just like these proposed new amendments.

Question 9: what are all the fines that OH and S can lay on farmers, and what type of control will they be allowed to exert? This is a good question. Again, there were questions and answers that were put out, and they were very clear. Alberta government put out questions and answers that were very clear on this but withdrew it and said: we're going to fix it; it's the bureaucrats' misunderstanding.

Question 10. They would like the government to look at statistics that say that Alberta has the lowest amount of farm deaths per capita in all of Canada. This is without legislation.

Question 11: will the government please represent all Albertans, not just a few opportunists?

Question 12. We don't appreciate the quote from a newly elected NDP MLA who said: four years to correct 40 years of conservative government. Is this an appropriate comment?

Question 13. Please tell us where the critics are coming from. Who did you consult?

Question 14: can the government please make public all consultations they have had, with who and when? Who are the stakeholders? Now, we just saw an e-mail going out inviting some of the major stakeholders. Apparently, that is a bit of a shock because they already know exactly what they're going to do with this bill.

5:30

Question 15: what will happen to the farms that have been in the same family for generations that cannot keep up with the changes?

Question 16: why are you spending taxpayers' money to buy radio time to promote this bill and the carbon tax bill?

Question 17: how can you not see that this is not democratic; this is not Alberta?

Question 18: there are so many unanswered questions; why don't you take the time to explain it and write up properly laid-out legislation so farmers can trust you completely? Well, we got the answer for that today with these wonderful motions that have gone through giving us an hour tomorrow. That's most unfortunate.

Question 19: 2012 was the last farm safety review, and the panel's recommendation afterwards was that there was no consensus on legislation and that education is needed. They say that the Premier . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Banff-Cochrane, questions under 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under 29(2)(a) I thank the member for sharing the concerns that he's heard from his constituents and also for his offer to help. I think his offer to help is genuine because he's an honourable member. I know he's a hard-working guy. You know, they've said, "We're here to help," many, many times. Sometimes if you say it enough, maybe it comes true.

I guess my question is that we all need to work together. We all need to work together on this very important issue of safety. We all agree that farmers are very, very safe people. There's no question there. We all agree with that. You know, there's a WCB process actually called partners in injury reduction, so I'd like to think of all of us here as partners in injury reduction, too. You know, that program in WCB is actually a way for employers to get discounts on their premiums as an incentive. If they have a safe workplace, they actually get a discount. We can all be partners in injury reduction, too.

There's been a lot of miscommunication. We've made that clear. The Premier has taken responsibility. As a member of this caucus I take personal responsibility for that miscommunication, too. But because there's been that miscommunication, we've issued clarifications and amendments and tabled the amendments here in the House. We've had press conferences, extensive communication about how we made a mistake. We also put forward some amendments to clarify that.

What I would like to know from the member is that when these people contact his office with very legitimate questions and concerns – if new legislation was going to come into my workplace, I'd have a lot of questions, too, and well they should. What I'd like to know is: when you've had these people come into your office, given the fact that we have clarified information, given the fact that we have retracted the WCB and OH and S communication that was

incorrect – we retracted that – what have you done in your office to help these people, to quell their fears? I mean, they've got some legitimate fears, and we've heard a lot from the opposite side about all the preposterous things that exist out there, and a lot of them are preposterous because they're just simply not true. The member is nodding his head; he agrees that they're not true. So what has your office done to calm the fears of those people that come into your office that say: what's going to happen here? Have you shared the amendment? We've defined family farms, and "family" is actually defined very clearly.

Some Hon. Members: What amendment?

Mr. Westhead: The amendment's been tabled, and you all know exactly what I'm talking about.

The Speaker: Hon. member, are there any other questions that you have?

Hon. member, could you respond to the question that was asked?

Mr. Westhead: Mr. Speaker, I'm not done.

We've defined . . .

The Speaker: I heard a question. Please be seated.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you. First things first, the answer that I give is: kill Bill 6. That needs to be it. It's absolutely the answer, but if the NDP is not willing to kill Bill 6 – and that is where they're going with this; they're not looking to kill Bill 6. What they are saying is that we're going to limit what the opposition can do to discuss this bill. The answer that I was saying was that at least the NDP could make a compromise with the Wildrose or the third party or fourth party and send it to a standing committee. This is what they're for. They're refusing to go through with this. They're pushing this through. There's no good reason to push it through in these last few minutes. The fact is that this amendment, that has been tabled, just hit our hands yesterday, and we're still going through it just like all of the farmers. We have some good indications that there are flaws in it, and our leader spent 90 minutes explaining exactly what some of these flaws are. Some of them, in fact, are that some of the . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today to support sending Bill 6 to committee. I was elected to represent the people of Grande Prairie-Smoky. Each of us here in this House was elected to represent a different constituency so that all Albertans are represented here. Now, when I think about that responsibility, I'm extremely humbled to be in this position, where I am here to represent the people of my constituency. When the people in my constituency come to me with concerns, I have to respect those concerns. When Bill 6 came forward, the number of people that started e-mailing, calling, texting, all these different forms of communication, all against Bill 6: I have to respect that. I have to represent those people. It's my job and the job of each person in this House to represent the people in their constituency.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I believe in safety. Every single person that expressed concerns over Bill 6 has expressed to me the same thing, that they believe in safety, too. They don't want a life lost. They don't want a limb lost. They don't want to have any harm done at all because any of those things that happen on a farm happen to people that they're concerned about: their family members, their friends, their employees. To suggest that the members on this side of the House or any farmers in Alberta are not concerned about

safety is insulting. But Bill 6 is about much more than farm safety. It's disingenuous for the government to suggest it isn't or to suggest that opponents of the bill don't care about safety.

Mr. Speaker, I'm still receiving e-mails and calls and texts, lots of them, and these communications, again, are unanimous. Each person speaks with passion, with intelligence, with respect, and they call for withdrawing Bill 6. "Kill Bill 6" is quite often the phrase they use. We hear it on the steps of the Legislature multiple times from thousands of Albertans driving hours to be here to express their concerns with Bill 6. We hear it in the town halls over and over and over again, people expressing the same thing: kill Bill 6; send it to committee; consult with us.

Now, when Bill 6 came forward, it didn't have a lot of words in it. It basically was fairly simple. It removed the farm exemption from employment standards, labour relations, occupational health and safety, and workers' compensation. But, Mr. Speaker, just on a quick Internet search, when I looked at some of the codes and regulations and acts that are involved with those four different organizations, I came up with over a thousand pages that people will have to live by.

5:40

Now, I can't imagine, Mr. Speaker, being in a position where all of a sudden on a certain date I'm going to be responsible to live up to a thousand pages of regulations in different kinds of acts and stuff like that. There could even be more, but that's what I found on a quick look. It's very understandable that people are upset, that they're worried, that they're concerned.

Now, I understand that the ministers' offices and the Premier's office are getting a lot of calls, a lot of e-mails, and I understand that it's hard to handle that kind of volume of communication. Obviously, this kind of outcry, Mr. Speaker – the rallies on the steps, the town halls, the e-mails, phone calls, texts, all those different things that are going on – should be some indication that something is wrong, but sadly, of course, we have the Premier and this government doubling down and tripling down, and now they're going to force this bill to pass.

Unfortunately, the members opposite that represent rural ridings have not represented their constituents. This is sad for democracy. But there's still time; this bill hasn't passed yet. I guess I become a little concerned when I see them jumping up to ask questions under 29(2)(a) just so they can take a couple of cheap shots followed by maybe a question to those of us that are speaking to this bill. I have yet to see one of them stand up and take the 15 minutes that's allotted to them to speak to the bill and represent their constituents.

Mr. Speaker, I've got constituents that have expressed concerns to the point where they're wondering whether they're going to continue farming. I find that alarming. I find that upsetting. I can't imagine people sitting at the kitchen table and, because of Bill 6, having to make a life decision: am I going to continue with the career I've chosen, that I've done my whole life? I can't imagine having that kind of stress and that kind of worry.

Mr. Speaker, most farmers already cover their regular workers with WCB or equivalent. In fact, quite often I've heard that they have something better than WCB, but under Bill 6 they won't have a choice. They will have to give up better insurance and be forced to take substandard insurance.

Now, we've all heard the quotes of the Premier in the past and her concerns with WCB, many quotes over and over again about a broken, miserly system. She spoke at protests in front of the WCB building, but for some reason she feels that WCB is perfect for farmers. She's willing to force them to sign on to something that she didn't even support herself. Now, has she fixed the WCB? Has there been any attempt by this government to do anything for the

WCB to correct some of the problems it may have? Nothing. They've had all this time, and they've done nothing.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this government doesn't even know what their rules are. They want a blank cheque. They want to fill in the details later. They want us MLAs in this Legislature to pass Bill 6 without knowing what it'll end up like. How can we in good conscience pass something when we don't know what it is? How can we expect the people of Alberta to sit here and accept something when they don't know what it's going to be?

Now, we've already learned today that the amendments that they've brought forward contain more pages than the original bill and that the majority of the amendments can be changed by cabinet at any time. They don't have to go back to the people. They don't have to come back to the Legislature. They can just do it any time. I think that alarms farmers.

We hear about the misinformation regarding this bill. Though there may be some misinformation, the truth is spelled out in black and white, and that's scary enough. Farmers are resourceful, intelligent, and willing to work with government regarding any concerns they have. But in order to do that, you have to consult with them. You have to sit down with them. You have to talk to them. And you have to do that before you bring the bill into the Legislature.

Now, at some of the first meetings they had technical experts. They were willing to give expert advice on the regulations. They had them there at the Grande Prairie meeting. The information that they provided contradicts what the government said the intention was. What information was given to these technical experts that were there to give information? Who gave them that information to go to the meetings with?

Now, we've heard the Premier say that she wants to give farmers the right to say no. She wants them to have the right to say no to dangerous work or any number of things that they think this bill is going to correct. But if she truly believes and this government truly believes that they want to give farmers the right to say no, then they should listen to them because that's what they're saying. They're saying no over and over and over again. Can't this government listen to the farmers? They say that this is about giving farmers the right to say no. That's what they're saying.

The NDP MLAs should have the right to say no, too. They should have the right to say no to Bill 6. That's what democracy is about. So when this comes up to a vote, they have the right to say no. I don't know that the NDP MLAs understand how much power they have. They could stop this. The ones that have farmers in their constituencies, particularly them: they could say no. They could stop this bill. They have that power. They could correct this problem.

An Hon. Member: People will be watching how they vote.

Mr. Loewen: People will be watching how they vote. They will.

Now, I had two meetings this past weekend. I'm a busy person, too, Mr. Speaker. I have a family at home. I spend my week here, I go back to my family, but I had people calling me, concerned about Bill 6, people from other constituencies. So with short notice I planned two town halls with the help of the constituents there. One was planned with 24 hours' notice. One was planned with 10 hours' notice. I just want to read through some of the questions and comments that I took because I had somebody taking notes at the meeting because that's what it's about. It's about listening. These are just some of the random comments and questions.

5:50

This is from the Peace River meeting. There are more accidents on the highway than farms, 11 farm accidents. Did they have

anything to do with farming? What is the hurry to put Bill 6 through? Why didn't their MLA come to the meeting tonight? No response from their MLA. Doesn't answer calls, et cetera. Boards and commissions were asked to consult with government, but they didn't get any information. Do petitions help? Is there a format for petitions? Retractions? The Hutterian brotherhood are exempt. Hiring for one day: do we need WCB? OH and S will be forced on us. Concerns about fuel tanks, paint cans, oil, and trucks, et cetera. OH and S. Criminally responsible if someone is hurt. Very serious. Need safety committees, says OH and S in manual. Can Bill 6 be repealed with change of government? Exemption if owner-operator? Will make sure I never hire anyone. Hunters on land will have to be safety trained or WCB? Best timing for this bill . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any questions under 29(2)(a)? Rocky View-Rimbey.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. It's a long one. I know it's always tough to get it into the speech when I do it myself, so I sympathize.

I do have a question for the member, but through you, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to thank him for his statement. I found it very informative. During question period today there was an exchange with the Municipal Affairs minister, and as she was answering a question about Bill 6, she said, and I quote: this is only the beginning. This is only the beginning. So we're debating right now whether we should be sending this bill to committee and whether we should be consulting with farmers, and essentially what the government members continue to tell us is: "It's okay. Give us a blank cheque. We'll regulate afterwards. We'll fix everything with farmers afterwards. It's going to be okay. Just trust us." That's what they're asking. They're asking us as elected representatives who represent a lot of farmers: just trust us. It's okay that there are thousands of people calling their office. Just trust us. There are thousands of people on the stairs of the Legislature, protesting. Just trust us. Then she says that this is only the beginning. What is the next step?

Now, she was referring – and I'll get to the question here shortly – to Bill 6 as she makes regulations. She's saying that the regulations she's just making are only the beginning. Now, this is a government who released this on their website. [interjection] I thank the hon. Finance minister for his opinion, through you, Mr. Speaker. Maybe he'll get up shortly and give a speech on why he supports this bill.

The Speaker: He gets the opportunity if you'd ask the question.

Mr. Nixon: Absolutely. I'm making brief comments first, Mr. Speaker, as 29(2)(a) says.

Would children be covered? Would regulations set a minimum age to work on a farm or ranch? These are the government's documents. The government is committed to meeting international standards and ensuring young workers are protected. Under the proposed legislation workers regardless of age would be covered by OH and S. This would include the children of farmers and ranchers who are helping out on the commercial operations of the farm.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this document was released – let's be very clear – by the government with the bill. Now the government is saying that they're miraculously trying to change regulations to deal with this. That's what they're saying, and they're saying: "Just trust us. Just trust us. Don't worry. Tell your constituents that it's going to be okay." Then the minister says that this is only the beginning.

Mr. Speaker, the question for the member – and it's a brief comment – is very clear. Will his constituents, will the farmers that are in the gallery today, will my constituents be expected to

continue to trust a minister that says that this is just the beginning, a minister that has already tried to change the way of life on farms? How can that be? To the member, through you: how can we be expected to trust this government?

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

Mr. Loewen: I'd like to thank the member for the question. Of course, it's very hard to have trust in a group of people that have decided just one day to drop something like this, this kind of regulatory burden, on farmers in Alberta and then say that they've consulted. Now, of course, what they've done is that they've come up with some amendments that they plan on ramming through, probably tomorrow because they brought forward something on the agenda to shorten debate. Mr. Speaker, we have an amendment. I haven't had time to go to my constituents and ask them what they think of these amendments. So here we are in the same situation, no consultation.

We ask about trust. We have government members running around saying, "Well, that isn't what we meant" even though that's what was said and that's what was in writing. Then they come along and say, "Yeah, trust us," and they drop these in our lap and say: this was our plan all along. Obviously, it wasn't. It's very disingenuous to suggest that it was.

Again, no consultation. This government seems to have a different definition of the word "consultation" than I would have. Now, I gave the definition of consultation the other day in my member's statement. "Consultation is defined as the action or process of formally consulting or discussing, a conference in which advice is given or views are exchanged." Does that represent what's happened here? I don't think so.

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

Mr. Orr: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

The Speaker: No.

Mr. Orr: Okay. Fine. I thought that's where we were, so I'm fine.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise and speak to this amendment. I will say that I appreciate the tone that has come about this afternoon because I think it truly does demonstrate the seriousness of what we're dealing with here. This isn't just about people who are upset and ranting and raving. This is a bill that truly does need to be sent to committee for further study and for further consideration, and it is extremely important.

In many ways Alberta has become a distinct jurisdiction in our nation because we actually rarely use committees in our House here. It's a parliamentary tool for the benefit of study and examination, but it's become an unfortunate trend that we rarely use it. Committees really do allow for greater clarity, insight from stakeholders. They allow for experts within the field of knowledge to share their knowledge. But we're not using them. I doubt that it's possible for even all of us combined to be truly absolute experts on all matters. That's why it's of utmost necessity, actually, that this bill does get put to committee. Therefore, I support the amendment.

The government is proposing this legislation, yet it has very little experience in the industry that they're trying to change, certainly, at least, not experts. So I think it's critical that we go to committee. The government doesn't have a single career farmer among them, yet they feel they have the expertise to impose wide-sweeping, history-changing legislation without any other members having professional agricultural experience, and, worse than that, they haven't reached out to industry stakeholders. Today only they sent an e-mail inviting a telephone conference with some of those

stakeholders, yet we've also had today closure invoked on the bill. There is going to be no conversation on this. They're essentially telling Albertans that they're listening to their concerns, but there's been very little real consultation actually hearing them. You know, when you have to keep telling somebody that you're doing it, generally it's an indication that they don't realize . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, it is 6 p.m., and I wish to announce that the Assembly stands adjourned till 7:30 p.m.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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