



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday morning, December 9, 2015

Day 31

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 29th Legislature

First Session

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Party standings:

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

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Wednesday, December 9, 2015

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Deputy Speaker: Good morning. Let us reflect. As we begin another day in service to our province and its people, let us continue to work in a spirit of co-operation, always mindful of the traditions of parliamentary democracy that guide our work.

Please be seated.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 6

Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act

Mr. Cooper moved that the motion for second reading be amended to read that Bill 6, Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

[Adjourned debate December 8: Mr. Fildebrandt]

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

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to rise today, which is a fine day in the province of Alberta, to speak to the amendments on Bill 6 as an agriculturalist, a lifetime agriculturalist. Bill 6 is an important piece of legislation and, primarily, important legislation for farmers, farmers like myself. The implications of that bill will affect our family farm and many across the province. We've seen many producers at the Legislature, on the Legislature steps, at various government consultative meetings, and at town halls in locations like Bassano. There a great number of producers came out.

I was pleased to see the people from the Hutterian Brethren come out at Bassano because those people have a particular religious belief. The Hutterian Brethren are in North America because of their persecution in eastern Europe. They came to North America to escape that form of persecution based on political events of that time.

Madam Speaker, I have some notes that I'm hoping to go by here in speaking about the Bill 6 amendments. One of the things that I find is that, of all departments that this government of Alberta administers, agriculture is indeed the most diverse. Agriculture is affected by the weather, the elements, but there are secondary resource industries, not unlike what's happening on our farm: the development of the petroleum resources, the development of the mineral resources in gravel and other things like that. In the area that I represent, Drumheller-Stettler, the diversity is represented by an agency of the Crown called the special areas, and it truly is special in many ways.

With this diversity comes an endless list of scenarios that play out every day on Alberta's farms and ranches. It was interesting. As we were attending the Chamber here, Madam Speaker, my compatriot here to my right, from Edmonton-Rutherford, was talking about the issues with calving and how the hours that we're keeping in the Chamber here are not unlike the calving times. It's completely irregular.

I remember on one occasion – and the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock is also appreciative of that – my wife and I purchased some cattle to improve our cattle herd, and the seller assured us that these calves were not going to arrive before the 1st of April. But when we were in Vancouver on a family holiday on Family Day, in February, the neighbour that was looking after our stock assured us that we had been told a fib, that these calves were arriving in great numbers. When we did finally come back from Vancouver, it was 30 below for a week constantly, so my wife and I took shifts to make sure that these newly born calves would not perish in the weather. We knew and we know from personal experience that legislation does not necessarily apply in those types of extreme circumstances.

Common sense and education are what the orders of the day are, and trying to legislate changes to a diverse industry like agriculture requires a comprehension that takes into account the concerns and the conditions of all sectors of this industry. I have business acquaintances at great distances in the fertilizer industry, and I found it interesting that just two days ago at the fertilizer plant in Medicine Hat there were two employees who were taken to the hospital because of their exposure to ammonia. We use anhydrous ammonia on our farm. My son is fully qualified to transport the pressure vessel and required material, and he has his hazardous-goods, his WHMIS, and his safety qualifications to do that. At 24 years of age I'm pleased that he also has his class 1 driver's licence to operate the semis that are required to move this fertilizer product.

Madam Speaker, safety is fully comprehensible at our farm and many like it. These sectors are fully coherent and relevant to that. We are not allowed to attend plants like the plant in Medicine Hat that had the safety accident because we don't have OH and S and WHMIS qualifications presently, and we would not be able to unless we complied with the requirements, the workmen's compensation and the OH and S requirements, that that plant site has. I find it interesting that even though that plant site in Medicine Hat – and the Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat fully is aware of that. Those people have all those safety qualifications, safety training, safety material . . .

An Hon. Member: One guy died.

Mr. Strankman: I understand that, unfortunately, one of the workers did pass. Although it's not a farm accident, it's a work-related accident. It was horrific, because in the training that we've taken – and I, too, have the same qualifications as my son. How anhydrous works is that it takes in the oxygen, and you simply can't breathe.

Madam Speaker, I have to reiterate that safety – safety in capital letters – on farms is of the utmost importance. A loss of one life – and I wasn't aware until just immediately that there was a loss of life regarding an agricultural product that we use. It's an important product for the growth of foodstuffs and the enhanced development of these plants. What anhydrous ammonia does is that it increases the uptake of carbon dioxide, which is believed in some circles to be a greenhouse gas. In some circles there is that belief.

Madam Speaker, the loss of one life or the injury of one is too many. I can relate to a family member. Just at the tender age of two my cousin also received a serious arm accident, and it affected his life. Even to this day he still is recovering, if you will, or adjusting to a farm accident, a machinery accident that affected his arm.

With that, Madam Speaker, farming is just not a job; it's a way of life. We know that while we're out there in the special area or in east-central Alberta, in the diverse constituency of Drumheller-Stettler, we are a great distance from safety, remedial services. It's a 45-minute to a one-hour drive just from our farm to a hospital.

Some of the members in the Chamber, repeat members, will know that the emergency care service in Consort is on a rotating basis, so when we drive to the community of Consort, we don't necessarily know whether there'll be a doctor there. That may only be one stop on the way to where you're going for emergency care.

9:10

The advancement of cellphones in regard to safety has been exactly perfect for our conditions although, because we live by the Saskatchewan border, many people do not realize that should they phone 911, sometimes the cellphones ring out to Saskatchewan. Therefore, there is no way that the Saskatchewan people will respond to an Albertan call.

With that, Madam Speaker, we know that safety is important. It's imperative that we have that because in these jobs we create the food that goes on Albertans' tables and indeed Canadian tables. The packing plants, Lakeside Packers in Brooks and Cargill at High River, are international-quality plants. They provide food that's distributed across Canada and indeed into the United States. In some cases, like Lambco at Innisfail, their processed lamb food goes internationally, and they make a marvellous market out of that.

Madam Speaker, I'll reiterate that there is no farmer in Alberta who does not want their operation to be as safe as possible. Hopefully, I can reiterate that because on our farm we do use a dangerous product, anhydrous ammonia, and we do use certified and licensed chemicals. On our farm we do use and have hired a complete aerial application, and we have since 1967. My father started it in 1967. My wife's father started aerial application in 1964. There are some goodly members across the way and even possibly on our side of the Chamber – it's interesting – that maybe don't relate to those kinds of years because that was somewhat before their cycle of gathering knowledge. Nobody cares more about farm safety than the moms and dads who operate them and call them home.

The gap between this government's proposed Bill 6, the Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act, and the common sense that Alberta farmers inherently believe in and deal with on a daily basis, when they're working with cattle or bison or even farm machinery that uses hydraulic equipment, powered, motorized equipment that is capable of inflicting damage, not unlike, Madam Speaker, the vehicles that we see on one of the main thoroughfares, Jasper Avenue – it's uncanny to me to watch people stand three to six feet away on a curb while a multitonne, industrial-sized vehicle, i.e. a city bus, goes by at 30 kilometres. The people stand there impervious to the potential danger that that piece of flying steel could inflict upon them. It's based on the fact that they do it every day, and they become complacent with that. You see people standing there, reading their newspapers, looking at their cellphones within six feet of a vehicle that probably weighs 20 tonnes, that's passing them at 30 kilometres an hour. Then you'll see out in the intersection, where people are passing at 30 kilometres an hour, which is a closing speed, a closing rate of 60 kilometres an hour, and they have no consequence to that.

It's interesting that a lot of those people don't have WCB coverage either. Possibly the bus driver does. I don't know; we haven't checked into whether that union actually has WCB coverage when they're at work.

Madam Speaker, agriculture is a vital part of Alberta's economy. It is shocking to me – and I'm trying to give some relative examples here – that this government has decided to introduce this legislation, Bill 6, which now we're debating amendments to, without a full, consultative, in-depth relationship with the ranchers and farmers. The ranchers and farmers that I've talked to in my constituency – I'm hoping to speak to many more in the community of Hanna this

Friday night at a town hall. I'm offering a full and complete invitation to any member of the government caucus to attend. I did that in question period yesterday, and I'm doing it now so that they will attend.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments for the hon. member under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was riveted by what my colleague was saying, and it would be appropriate to hear him continue along the same way that he was going. Please, I would love to hear the rest of your thoughts.

Mr. Strankman: Well, thank you to the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake for that. I don't know that it was exactly riveting. I don't perceive to be speaking at a quarter after 9 in the morning in a riveting conversation.

I am going to follow up with the theme of consultation. In the democratic facility that we're in, where we have a chance every day when we're in the Chamber to have a direct back and forth, the in-your-face portion of democracy, that the government would be wanting to bring forward this bill and its extremely wide-reaching impacts – I sympathize with the Premier in her belief in the idea of protecting people. I hope that I've given examples that we do that on our farm, and I know others and many Albertans who do. The statistical information that we've had says that even without regulation Albertans are not statistically above any other safety record of any other province.

To bring this forward in 45 days or less without full consultation – I've brought forward letters, and I've spoken to some 18 different stakeholder organizations, who are not happy with the consultative process that's brought forward. We've had unprecedented demonstrations on the steps of the Legislature to that effect. It's frustrating that we can't achieve a democratic solution to this, and the government is resorting to the powers that they have, whether it be closure or any other method within this place, to bring this legislation forward. We're still getting calls and letters coming in. Our constituency offices are inundated with this material. It's frustrating that we are in this place, where we do get a chance from, in this case, 9 in the morning to the wee hours of the morning to have these debates, and the government is marginalizing the comments that are coming from our side of the House and marginalizing, I believe, the voices that are being heard outside the House in relation to this. It's openly frustrating.

One of the bigger comments that we bring forward is the definitive wish by the government to bring forward only one agency, the WCB, to be allowed to provide these workers with insurance. Many operations already have a choice solution that they bring forward, and that is private suppliers of insurance. It's openly frustrating. Reverting to the 18 farm organizations that I've been in consultation with, they do believe there needs to be some reform, and they've sought out these private sources to effect safety for their workers, for their employees. In some cases they have a very close personal relationship like the rancher-owner of Little Gem Ranches in my constituency, who called me and said that their employee, who has a family relationship with them, now has to have a completely different relationship, which may cause animosity, may cause contempt. It may create a completely different relationship than what was there. Bill 6 is one of these pieces of legislation that may lead to that.

9:20

These people are working out their solutions on their own, and they simply don't need to have legislation to do this. They've been

doing this for a goodly number of years, statistically within the range of any other province across the land, and we can't see how WCB coverage would make anything better. Even the Premier has stated on previous occasions, recorded conversations, that WCB is in sore need of overhaul. Why did the government not try to achieve the benefits of that organization?

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

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise once again to bring the voices of my constituents to this Legislature and to all Albertans by speaking about the importance of referring Bill 6 to the legislative policy committee.

You know, daily I'm told – in the last two weeks it's been daily, hourly. We've been getting so many e-mails, so many phone calls from constituents about their voices not being heard. They have hired me to be their representative in this House and to bring their message here, just as all the members here have been hired to represent all Albertans in this Legislature. When I say all of the constituents, these are the farmers, too. We need to listen to the farmers, and they're clearly giving their voice. They clearly have a voice that's been shouting out and saying: stop; kill Bill 6; send it to committee.

That's what we're talking about now. This is a referral motion to send it to committee. Consultation: that's what they're saying to me. They want to have consultation. They don't believe that they've had an opportunity to have that consultation, that opportunity to talk to the government about what they believe is a problem. They've been using us as their sounding board to speak for them, but they would really, truly like to have this in committee so that they would have an opportunity to talk to the government and tell them their concerns.

Governments need to work for our constituents. We're all public servants, every one of us here. We're public servants, not public dictators. We shouldn't be running this from the top down, in an autocratic tone. We should be working here from the grassroots up, especially with these farmers, listening to their concerns and finding out what they want and how they can make this better. I believe that their input would help change this, Madam Speaker, and I think that we would have a better chance of having a bill that wouldn't be so contentious if we had conversations with constituents, the farmers and the ranchers.

I hoped that this government would be different. I hoped that they would listen. They said that they would. I know that the NDP government said that they would, but I guess not.

You know, I talked to one of my constituents in Killam. We had a town hall meeting in Killam. His name was Doug. Doug told me that no one in the room was against a conversation about safety or change. He said that this is a problem about the legislation. He told me: "I had an opportunity to participate in the rally on the steps with nearly 2,000 other producers and then attend question period. As the opposition parties defended farm interests, the governing party seemed more concerned about the success of Christmas lights in Calgary being changed to LED." He felt that was shameful. They came there with a true concern, and that's what they heard out on those steps of the Legislature. They heard from different people that they were excited about these LED lights. That's the word that I got from him.

I'd like to go on to a word, the word "represent." Represent means to be entitled or appointed to act or to speak for someone, especially in an official capacity. That would mean that we all have been commissioned with a great privilege to represent Albertans, an absolute, great privilege. I'm awed by the honour. Every time I look at the building and I walk through these doors, I'm awed by

this honour that I have to represent Albertans and represent my constituents, and I'm sure every last one of you, at least in our Wildrose Party, is honoured to represent your constituents and to be able to talk about Bill 6.

Wildrose believes in real representation. The farmers and the ranchers have asked this Assembly to stop and pause so this bill can be dealt with in a committee so that all the stakeholders – all the stakeholders – have time to provide input. The majority of the stakeholders represented in this situation are farmers, Madam Speaker.

The community of farmers and ranchers isn't quite sure what has hit them, Madam Speaker. When the legislation was tabled a few weeks ago, farmers and ranchers were surprised to find that the bill combined many complex elements like WCB, OH and S, the Employment Standards Code, and the Labour Relations Code. I think I referred to it as an ominous – I can't even say the word now.

An Hon. Member: Ominous omnibus.

Mr. Taylor: Omnibus. It's a tongue twister. Try saying that three times fast.

Since that time they have gathered across Alberta and here at the Legislature to let this government know that these changes should not have been pushed ahead. Rushing this bill through over a couple of weeks, especially due to the outrage, is clearly a mistake. I would think that now would be the right time to reflect and think about what it is that we are really trying to achieve here. If it's power and control at stake, I understand why this government wants to push this bill through, but if it's actual concern for the farmers and their families, the neighbours, the workers, then let us take our time and include the needs of about 44,000 or 45,000 farms in this bill.

Rushing through the amendments that have been introduced on this, given the backlash, will not correct this situation. We have reached the stage where we need to take some real time before making these changes, some real time, not just a few days, not till January 1 and then have consultation afterwards. Farmers don't like the idea of having consultation after this bill is passed. They've clearly told me time and time again that that's not proper consultation. They want to bring it to a committee and have their voices heard, have their voices heard over a period of 90 days, 120 days, you know, a year. Let's get this bill right. Why can't we slow down and start by improving education and holding discussions with farmers and ranchers and learning?

These are massive changes that we need to get right, not just draft up legislation that will affect so many people. We need consultation. We need their voices. We need that consultation. I know I've said it before – and I'll be saying it again – but it's so important that we listen to the farmers and consult with them. If we consult with them and we can actually look at what they've done on other bills, I think we could make a great bill. If we look to B.C. and say, "Okay; you've got these parts there; now we've got what we want here in Alberta," I think you can come up with something that's going to be tenable for the farmers.

9:30

They want safety. There's nobody that cares more about safety than the moms and dads that own and operate the farms that are out there, so let's make legislation that has education and has an opportunity to let them have their voice – their voice – to be able to speak about this. You know, by pushing through in such a forceful manner, without consultation and recognition of the farmers, we have begun a process whereby they are starting to feel alienated and picked on. They feel as if they're being perceived as uneducated

and that their industry is not valued, and nothing could be further from the truth.

Farmers take on so many different jobs. They take on jobs like being accountants, mechanics, welders. They have to be hedge fund traders. They have to go look and see where this market is at, how they can make the most money off this. The more legislation and the more things cost: well, they're market takers; they're not market makers, so they have to be even more cognizant and more risky with what's going on in the market. It's super important for them. I know they are experts. They are also experts in soil conditions. They've got to be able to read the soil and make sure of what fertilizer goes into that soil. So they've got to know so much more than just, say, the average person.

I talked to a guy named Brandon. He's from my riding, and he's sitting over in Holden. He was telling me that he works in a variety of different careers. He's six months away from becoming a mechanical engineer. He's worked in the construction industry. He's also worked in the oil industry and realizes the importance of safety and regulations. However, he feels Bill 6 will cause unsafe working environments. He doesn't feel there's going to be total compliance. He wants consultation. That is what he takes away from that. He feels it's going to take away rights of the individual. We need to bring this to committee, to let them have a chance to talk. He feels that he has not been given any say in how this bill has been laid out. If this bill is going to be passed, many aspects need to be changed, he was telling me. This bill considers farming as a job, a career, and it is not a job or a career. It's a lifestyle, and he's proud of it.

I've seen some of the signs they have used in the protest, one in particular that reads: farmers feed everyone. I mean, where do you think the food comes from? Farmers feed everyone. Have you thanked a farmer? Have you guys gone out and just done that much, thanked a farmer and said: "Thank you for the food. Thank you for the grains so we can have our bread. Thank you for the cattle so we can have the beef that we eat or the pigs so we can have our pork or for any one of the different dairy products, the milk, the eggs – there are so many – the poultry that we have"? Everybody needs to stop and thank a farmer for what they contribute to this society. Without them we're not eating.

Madam Speaker, are we truly showing farmers the respect they deserve? They do feed everyone. Is this how we thank them? I would like to know what other MLAs would eat at home, in restaurants if it weren't for the farmers. Every time you eat bread, a vegetable, a piece of meat, do you think about the work that went into it and where it came from or the many hours of work feeding and planting and harvesting?

Madam Speaker, they don't stop. When the cows are giving birth, they don't stop. They keep with the cattle. That has to be a safety issue for the farms. They have to make sure that that calf is born correctly. If the weather is in such a state, they know that in three days they're harvesting, and they know that in three days this weather is going to go, and it's going to change. They can see that on the Weather Network. When they look at the Weather Network and it says that it's going to snow and it's going to snow for the next week, do you think the farmers are going to stop working? They have to keep going out in those fields.

This needs to be able to go to committee so they can be consulted. This government has forgotten about the farmers' insight because it wants to pursue its own agenda and make some changes, some of which may not even be needed. Why can't we take the time to get this right? Farmers want to protect their families, their neighbours, their workers. They also want to have a little say in what goes down in this important piece of legislation. I think that it's only fair that we include them, and that is what they are asking. They've been

clearly asking this. They asked it on the steps of the Legislature. They've asked it in e-mails. I know they've had e-mails that have been sent to all the ridings because I've been CCed on the letters that they've sent to the Premier or to the Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose, who has 19,055 farms in his riding.

In fact, if people are interested, his phone number, if you want to make sure you get a hold of him, is 780.352.0241. Again, that's 780.352.0241. Call now before we don't have a chance.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, under 29(2)(a)? Go ahead.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to ask the hon. member. I've received several e-mails and phone calls from third- and fourth-generation ranchers around the entire province that are hopeful that this Bill 6 will get hoisted to committee, where they come in and talk about how to ensure that the family farm gets safer. They're hearing from a lot of other Albertans – oil and gas workers, construction workers – that are very, very concerned that at this time this bill is going to have effects on employment in the agriculture industry at a time when they are facing such tremendous hardship themselves in our overall Alberta economy and with the lack of confidence that seems to be out there. I wonder if the Member for Battle River-Wainwright is hearing similar things.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Yes, I'm absolutely hearing concerns about the employment and how many people they can actually hire as a result of what's going on here. They're saying: how is it going to – well, they don't know what's going to be rolled out, and they don't know how it's going to be rolled out. They don't know the effects of what's going to happen to them. Just like the other member, I've talked to people that have had five generations of farms, and they're frankly concerned about what they're going to be able to hire. Do they have to now prove that they have WCB coverage if they're an independent worker? Or do they have to hire these people on and now go through all the work of having to get all this WCB and OH and S and different paperwork that's involved and then have the worry of making sure that it's in a good, orderly fashion in a desk somewhere when the OH and S operator comes and knocks on their door asking to see this paperwork, that they have to make sure that it's in good working order?

Some of them are saying that this is too much, so they're questioning if they should be hiring more people or if they should just go with automation and quit hiring more people. This could really affect jobs. I know this government has said that they want to protect jobs, but what's happening here, I'm afraid, is that it has the opposite effect. It's going to have the opposite effect in that there are going to be fewer jobs that are going to have people employed. If we have these certain hours of work that they are restricted to work at, well, there are only so many people that actually know how to operate farm equipment and how to operate things on the farm. There are very specific tasks that occur on a farm, and these people are concerned about being able to find them, so if they have to stop and let this person have the break – like I was mentioning before, it's going to be coming, and they know this is going to happen – well, they'd rather have that person for a couple more hours.

The people that are signing on to work on these things understand. They understand that if they tell their employer, "No, I can't work anymore," the employer will just say: "Fine. That's good." But the majority of people that work on farms are more than happy to go ahead and work and work with the farmers that are there.

Thank you.

9:40

The Deputy Speaker: We still have a few minutes under 29(2)(a). Any further members wishing to comment on the Member for Battle River-Wainwright?

Go ahead, hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: I appreciated the hon. member's speech. I know he's coming from a sincere place, and I know that he's attempting to represent his constituents, but he made a couple of statements about our views over here that I wish to correct. He said that the farmers were feeling that they were unappreciated, that their industry was unappreciated, and that they were seen as, you know, pretty unsophisticated. I just wanted to correct that because we have the utmost regard for that industry and the people who work in it. We know where food comes from; it's not the store. We know that. I think that if there was a prevailing view on this side, it would be that farmers are sophisticated businesspeople, and in some cases they run quite large industries – quite large – and they employ lots of workers. So from our perspective, Madam Speaker, I think it's important to note that people in business who employ people have responsibilities as well.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much. Madam Speaker, I rise to not support the amendment to Bill 6. Referring this to committee is not what I think needs to happen. Now is the time to deal with this bill, for reasons of timeliness. I find the whole issue of farm safety critical, that we move forward with it in a timely fashion.

It's been a while since I've been on a family farm. As a teen and even up to when I was 22, I was working on farms in southern Ontario for extended family members. They were managed by my older cousins, and I can remember those times with a lot of fondness. They were the best wages I ever made in my life up to that point. While I never felt unsafe in the workplace, there were things that could have been harmful, of course. There was exposure to herbicides that was happening on a regular basis early in the crop year. There was lots of work with heavy machinery. But, thankfully, you know, the kinds of things that were done to pass on the safety from the farm owner to the manager to the lead hand to me working in the fields all worked out okay.

While I haven't had a tremendous amount of experience on farms – and it's been a long while, for sure, since I've been working on farms – I have had experience working in workplaces, in factories in particular, where I felt quite unsafe. But being young and needing the job, I didn't do anything other than the best I could to protect myself in the workplace, by not partying a lot, going home and resting, coming back to work and being focused. To be sure, those were hard jobs, working a brake press that could bend quarter-inch steel, and the ramifications of a slip-up on that job would have been disastrous for me. It felt like there wasn't a lot of safety equipment, and there were old machines. For eight hours a day I was standing. It was tiring and laborious, but I did what I had to do to get past that job on a daily basis, get it behind me, and never look back, of course.

My point is that while that wasn't a ranch or a farm, I was a young man needing the money. I was not aware of what workplace rights I had, and I didn't speak up a lot because I needed to get the money so I could come back out west, frankly, and make my life out here. It's been a great life. But I can see how workers, paid employees in a farm or ranch setting like I was when I was a young man – and nothing bad happened to me on the farms that I worked on. But I could see how a young man in a ranch or farm setting who needs the money or is desperate or doesn't know his rights – and, frankly,

there are no kinds of protections like OH and S or WCB on a farm or ranch in this province – might not feel like they could refuse a dangerous job, how they might do all they could for their employer because they need the money or because they're really conscientious and want to do the best job they can possibly do. I can see how they may get into situations that could lead to outcomes that would be disastrous for them in the long run.

I think the time is now. We've heard many stories here about employment on farms and ranches that is not ideal. I've heard a lot of stories from people saying that, you know, it was the best time they ever had. There were talented people who could rope cows. They could treat them with medicine on a hillside. They could let them go, and everything worked out fine. But there are probably lots of situations that aren't ideal for workers on farms, and it's those situations we don't want to delay by a referral to committee. It's those situations. We want to kind of put some basic protections in place through this bill. It's those situations that aren't ideal, that would cause long-term ramifications for the person who was injured in the workplace, that need to be addressed.

I am conscious that this probably is a defining moment for us all with regard to a decision around the bill. I want to say that coming down on the side of protecting workers' rights is not a bad side to be on for any of us. It's a side we all should be on. So it should go forward now. It should put some basic protections in place for paid employees on farms. It should ensure that there's clarification that if you are an owner of a farm, if you're an extended family member, if you're a volunteer, that's not the situation we're endeavouring to address. We're endeavouring to address the situation where a person may feel like they don't have protections in the workplace.

Madam Speaker, I think a hoisting, as somebody called it, or an amendment or, ultimately, a referral to committee, which would prevent us from moving forward in an expeditious fashion, is not the right thing to do.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. leader under 29(2)(a).

Mr. Jean: Thank you. I did have an opportunity to listen to the speaker, the Minister of Finance. My question really relates to two things he said. The first was that he said that, of course, this is a defining moment. I agree with him. This is a defining moment for the government. It shows clearly, whether it be Bill 6 or Bill 8, that they're not consulting and not doing proper consultation with stakeholders, in particular school boards, who are still confused in relation to Bill 8 because we haven't had enough time to actually look at what's been brought forward, and Bill 6, of course, because there's been absolutely no consulting by this government whatsoever for farms. So I do agree with him. I think it's a defining moment, and it especially is going to be defined in the next election in rural Alberta.

You know, one thing that I do notice is that he kept mentioning: it should; it should; it should. Now, that is clearly what the Wildrose is talking about. We don't know – and neither does the Minister of Finance – what this bill is going to do. It should do things, but nobody knows what it's going to do, and that's because there has not been proper consultation.

I just say to the minister this. They brought forward a bill. The bill on its face and on content was totally inappropriate, and in fact Albertans rejected that bill. The government itself rejected that bill after saying and arguing in this place that it was a perfect bill. They rejected their own argument by bringing in not just one amendment, not just half a page of amendments but more pages of amendments than the original bill was, and they did it in just two days, Madam Speaker. Doesn't that clearly say that the government was wrong

the first time? What makes this minister believe they're right this time after only two days of changes and still no consultations with farmers? Farmers are still angry. They are not listening, Madam Speaker. What does he say to that?

9:50

Mr. Ceci: Thank you for the question. I think this is the first time that the Leader of the Opposition has asked me a question, so thank you very much for the opportunity to address the concerns.

You know, the defining moment: perhaps we need to kind of get our head around who it's defining for. It will be defining for the person who is injured. That's who will see this moment as a period in time when they were let down by their Legislature in this province. It's defining for them because they will not be able to go back and receive adequate insurance coverage for their disability, their injury. It's defining for them because they will live a life like the stories we have heard of some Albertans who have had to go through much pain and suffering to get basic workplace coverage for themselves and their families. That's who it'll be defining for. All of us will be fine. We will get up the next day. We will say: it's a great day in Alberta. But that person and the person after them and the person after them will be defined by our inability to move forward on this issue.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think just some comments. This goes to the trust issue. We've seen this minister now just do exactly what the Premier has done in this Assembly over and over and over again, and that is to blame farmers and ranchers, say that for a hundred years they've been trying to hurt their employees, trying to kill their employees. This is why they're mad in rural Alberta. So through you, Madam Speaker, let me say: shame on the minister and shame on the Premier.

This is absolutely ridiculous. This is a government whose own documents show that they've tried to stop kids from participating in their family farms. They've tried to do that. Their minister now has risen in this House and has said that this is just the beginning, so we don't even know if we can trust their changes. Over and over and over the cabinet and the caucus across from me have stood up in this House and blamed farmers, said that farmers were trying to hurt people, said that farmers were trying to kill people and that that's what they're trying to rectify. That's not true, Madam Speaker. That is not true at all.

Farmers and ranchers are my neighbours. I love having them as my neighbours. I respect them very much. What these ministers are saying is absolutely ridiculous and not true. This caucus is all for safety, and so are farmers and ranchers. What we aren't for is a monster bill where nobody knows what it is, where this government doesn't even know what it is, that takes away the rights of farmers and ranchers. Let's be clear on that. It takes away the rights of farmers and ranchers without any consultation with the people that this legislation affects.

The only thing that this cabinet can do is to continually stand up in this House and blame good people: good people that make this province work, good people that have been here since long before any of us, good people that feed the world and feed this province. All this minister can do is stand up in this Assembly, Madam Speaker, over and over and blame farmers.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak in favour of the referral amendment for Bill 6. It should be no secret

where I or my colleagues stand on this issue. We do not support Bill 6. The farmers and ranchers of Alberta do not support Bill 6.

Madam Speaker, my caucus has heard from thousands of Albertans, and we've actually consulted with farmers about this bill. I believe it's quite easy to see that this bill needs to be completely redrawn. We have hosted telephone town halls, actual community meetings, responded to thousands of letters from within our constituencies and from others, especially from members opposite. Most importantly, we really listened. We listened to Albertans when the government did not.

The government wants this bill passed after only 45 days of being made public. This bill is one of the many reasons why they previously passed a motion for the House to sit mornings as well as afternoons and evenings. The NDP are determined to pass as much legislation as possible without consultation and education. They claim that this bill is about safety and protecting farmers, yet it ignores the key components of safety. I will repeat this very slowly, Madam Speaker: education. Education. Only this NDP government would conclude that legislation is the cause and effect of safety.

Madam Speaker, a bill of this magnitude, that affects 47,000 farms, needs to be dealt with in a proper way and should only be completed with extensive consultation. Consultation. Extensive consultation. If we say it enough, maybe you'll understand. The fact is that farmers have been left out, forcing even Albertan musicians and icons like George Canyon and Paul Brandt to lay out to the Premier how the family farm is a way of life and not just a business. Paul Brandt is an Airdrie boy, by the way.

To put it plainly, this Premier and her government are completely disconnected from rural Albertans. Further, and more importantly, this is just another way this government is reminding rural residents that their voice does not matter. These guys aren't going to forget, either.

If they won't go to the farmers, I will bring their voices here to this Legislature along with my colleagues here. I have spoken with many farmers in my riding and want to tell this government what I am hearing. To quote one Albertan:

I am a resident of a small town in Alberta. I am also a rancher's daughter that knows the value of being raised on a ranch in northeastern B.C. There are many different hours than any other industry. There is an opportunity to learn about animals and planting, from being a little person up until an age to safely work on my own. I chose town life; however, I will always celebrate who grows our food for everyone and who works hours without compensation to make their farm or ranch the best it can be.

The farmers want the government and the urban people to understand and respect them. They feel like they haven't been asked, just told, and that is because normally they keep working and they're quiet. Please listen to them for the next few months or years before the bill is proposed again. Set up meetings in every constituency and really listen to their needs.

I am thankful that I was raised on a ranch. I have many skills that others do not. Please look for those skills when listening to the food producers.

This is one letter. It's representative of thousands. Don't bite the hand that feeds you. You've done that.

Community consultation is not simply a stand-alone exercise but the building of nurturing relationships. We can't create policy without listening to the people whose lives are impacted by these policies. Truly, guys, give your heads a shake. I truly believe that farm parents are way more concerned about the safety of their children and will absolutely do the utmost to protect them. They will protect their children, not the government. Pushing unenforceable, expensive legislation onto the backs of our hard-working families and farms is not what we were elected to do.

The implementation of this bill without consultation will only serve to be a huge windfall for WCB, will not affect farm safety one bit, and will only denigrate our democratic process. This is not just a business. Like we've said, it's a way of life. Workers are not the proletariat; they are children, family members, friends, and neighbours. I think it is absurd to think that bringing in broad legislation will change anyone's willingness to keep their loved ones safe, especially when it comes to their children. Farmers will accept anything that will make farms safer, better, and more efficient, but as you can see from the mounting opposition, this is not the case. Never before has this Legislature seen protests like the ones that have been happening here – never before – from real people, not paid activists.

10:00

I would like to now talk about an article in the *National Post* which tells the story of a family who run a poultry farm and how a Saskatchewan OH and S official attempted to sanction parents for assigning their children farm chores, labelling them as an act of child labour. The following is a quote from the article, which I will table tomorrow in the House.

Cool Springs Ranch & Butchery north of Yorkton, Sask., is a magnet for the local food enthusiast – the kind of place that hosts farm to fork dinners and describes their animals as “pasture-fed” and “free-range.” It's family-run, to boot – with Janeen and Sam Covlin allowing their daughters Emma, 8, and Kate, 10, to help raise their animals, bring them to slaughter and prepare them for market.

That was, until the government dropped by last week with an Occupational Health and Safety order prohibiting the girls from working in the chicken processing plant, a major part of the farm's operation.

The couple posted their plight to social media and support came their way in waves, much of it critical of an overbearing government trying to mess with tradition and grassroots family life.

Hmm. Kind of like what's happening here.

In this article is an explanation which I believe will help many members in this House.

Since the Second World War, children living on farms performed all kinds of heavy labour, said Anne-Marie Ambert, a retired professor of sociology at York University who has written on changing family roles and expectations. “A farm can be very dangerous, but crossing the street can be very dangerous too,” she said.

That's something all of us here have taught our children, right?

As social values shifted to make children, as one U.S. sociologist put it “economically worthless, but emotionally priceless” labour laws also evolved in each province, though farming has remained somewhat of an outlier. Farms are what settled this country and they instill a work ethic that seems to be on the wane, Prof. Ambert said.

“It makes life meaningful to children to contribute [in this way] and maybe this is why we have so many kids in high school who feel very depressed,” absorbed by Facebook and on smartphone games. The case was also framed as an unjustified attack on a family farm. Though surprised the government withdrew the order, Prof. Barnetson said standing by it would have been a bad move politically. “They can't afford to lose rural seats,” he said, of Western provincial governments.

I'm sorry. This is just all too fresh and familiar right now.

This bill poses too many serious questions to be left up to the hope that the government gets it right in the regulations. They don't trust you. We need to be voting on what is before us and ensure that we are getting it right the first time. There is no need to rush this piece of legislation through the House. The minister and the

Premier should refer this to committee so it can receive the due attention it deserves and the farmers can have the input that they deserve. To many farmers this is another slight to their livelihood and way of life, making criminals of parents who are trying to teach their children a hard-work ethic – shame on you – and neighbours who receive a hand from their community. Shame again.

Madam Speaker, this government needs to engage in real consultation with the hundreds of people who are voicing concerns. Simply put, this government must send this bill to committee for further study. I will support the motion put forward by my hon. colleague, the referral amendment, and I urge all of you in this House to do that.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Under 29(2)(a)? Go ahead, hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. MacIntyre: Thank you. I appreciate the words from my esteemed colleague, and I have a question for her. Previously, when the NDP were on this side of the House in opposition, they referred to the government of that day's omnibus bills many times and even asked the government of that day to keep Alberta omnibus bill free. Somehow that's been forgotten. It must be the dome effect, when you get over on that side, or something. They referred to them as a tool that the federal Conservatives had been using and called it “odious and offensive.” Again, I guess that's forgotten. That's that dome effect again.

Farming, being one of the oldest occupations that we have in this province, doesn't seem to be recognized too much. This seven-month-old government wants to come in and slam down a bill in less than 45 days – and I trust that the hon. Member for Airdrie has been hearing about that from the farmers – a bill that really should be dealt with in four separate bills. They've done this without consulting the main stakeholders, who are the farmers, the experts on farm safety, by the way, and somehow expect the farmers to just sit quiet and take it. Well, what we're hearing – and I trust the hon. member is as well – is that this bill should be pulled apart into four separate bills, not an omnibus, so that the details of employment standards and OH and S, in particular, can be included in legislation so everyone knows what's involved when it has to be voted on.

Farmers all over Alberta have told us – and I trust they've also told the members opposite – to come to this House and represent them, and that's not what we've been seeing. We've also heard them repeatedly in the farmers' rallies and in the town halls saying: slow down; put this bill to committee. Call in the witnesses, the farm safety experts, those farmers out there that rallied around this place, and reflect and refer on this bill deeply. Call in experts, and have advisers come and discuss this bill.

Now, we've heard from the Premier that it's important for the sake of potential injured workers that this bill be passed yesterday, like that wouldn't be fast enough, and that for the sake of those potential injured workers we just have to ram this thing through the House right now and somehow that will immediately save people. When this thing comes into law on January 1 – shazam – everybody is safe now. Isn't that how it's being portrayed?

Hon. member, could you maybe just elucidate a bit on this business of how all of a sudden on January 1 we're all going to be safer on the farm because the Alberta Legislature passed this Bill 6?

An Hon. Member: Shazam.

Mr. MacIntyre: Shazam.

Mrs. Pitt: I would absolutely just love to speak to that comment. Wow. January 1 is going to be such a big day for farm safety here in Alberta. You know, unfortunately, the government sort of backpedalled on their plans for this bill, claiming just a day or two ago that these changes, when this bill is passed, the regulations that define how these changes with OH and S and WCB will apply, will actually be developed over the next 18 to 24 months. Sometimes it's 36 months – we've heard that as well – so clarification from this government is certainly of the utmost necessity here. I'm absolutely shocked that this government would ram through safety regulations and protect farmers as quickly as possible, but we forgot to ask what year that was going to be. Just absolutely shocking. You know, it's really quite interesting that this government is so quick to ram through this piece of legislation without consultation.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm honoured to rise to speak to the referral amendment to send this bill back to committee. I'd like to start off by saying that my constituents of Chestermere-Rocky View and actually many of the constituents that I've heard from in many of the other constituencies on the other side of this House are reacting with nothing less than outrage. To them, the NDP does not understand the uniqueness of operating a farm, and they have no interest in taking advice or consulting those who do.

10:10

I would like to start off, if I may, by entering some letters into the record here, which I will happily table later.

I and my husband emphatically oppose Bill 6. You have not consulted actual farmers and ranchers adequately. You cannot apply 9 to 5 job rules in an industry that never was and never will be a 9 to 5 job. This is unfair and discriminatory. OH and S rules do not fit the ag industry, and any regulations legislated must be made with the ag industry's unique needs and the function in mind. This must be done in consultation and in partnership with grassroots farmers and ranchers, with lots of time for input and discussion and with all the rules and applications hammered out . . .

I am sure that it's starting to sound redundant, Madam Speaker, but I will continue on because perhaps with as many family farms as we have, we maybe need to say it 47,000 times before it starts to resonate.

. . . not after a bill has been passed that is completely unacceptable and undemocratic.

Madam Speaker, he goes on to say:

Bill 6 is an attack on families, imposing regulations on how people raise their kids, threatens the livelihood and the right to work and provide. Furthermore, it limits kids' abilities to work and bond with their families while on the farm, a good work ethic, and responsible ownership.

He goes on say that Bill 6 – and he adds in the carbon tax, which he also officially opposes – attacks the family farm.

The NDP is not for people, and they're blatantly trying to squeeze out smaller businesses in favour of large corporations; unions, a conflict of interest; and excessive government control. This bill also attacks private property and ownership rights.

This is one of my constituents, Madam Speaker.

I mean, let me be perfectly clear. I don't believe for one moment that this House is not committed to safety. That has been stated over and over again, and I am appalled that there are people on the other side of this House who would take the attitude about our farmers, the people of this province, the people who are the fabric of the beginning of this province, and say out loud that farmers do not care about their families, their children, or the workers that work on

those farms. It's appalling to me. Absolutely appalling. It's disgusting.

Safety comes through proper consultation. How does the opposite side, how does the government understand what safety even is, how to regulate safety if they've never been on a farm, if they don't understand things that need to happen on that farm? Every farm is a thumbprint, Madam Speaker. Every farm has different needs and different consultation. Every farm has different buildings, fences, equipment, people, whether it's a beef farm or a grain farm. Whatever it is, it's a unique experience, and until that consultation is done, there is no broad-spectrum bill that can be passed here that will help out each of these individual farms.

We cannot trust the NDP when they promise to consult after this bill is passed. Regulations can be passed without consultation. Without consultation: let me make that clear. I'm appalled that the NDP deems farmers unworthy of proper consultation in advance of drafting this actual bill. It's shameful. Attempts at consultation after introducing this bill have been insufficient so far, and they have failed to realize that our farmers deserve an opportunity to speak to the ministers or the government or the MLAs by whom they are allegedly represented. Let me tell you. The amount of letters and e-mails and phone calls that I have gotten in my office from other constituencies is overwhelming. We are maxed out. We can't even keep up.

The attempts that this government has made to communicate with Alberta farmers so far have resulted in, and I quote: a miscommunication. This is unacceptable and entirely the fault of the government. I appreciate the fact that there has been an apology for the miscommunication. Mistakes are made. We are all going to have to hold that we've made a mistake at some point in time, and I appreciate that. But with the miscommunication in mind, perhaps we want to look at it from the point of view that it is time to slow down. How many more miscommunications does this government want to be responsible for in advance of making sure that this bill actually represents farmers? Perhaps that is exactly the reason to take the time to slow this down to talk to farmers.

Talk to us. We are more than happy to provide you with the information that we've been given so far. We have thousands of letters that were tabled that will give you the information and help to make succinct decisions with regard to safety.

They want safety. As it's been said by hon. members, there's nobody that wants safety more than the families on these farms, that want safety for the children and the workers that actually work on these farms. Please, we are begging you to listen to the people that we represent, that you represent. You represent them. This is their House. You are here to represent them. Since you refuse to listen to the cries of farmers outside this House and inside this House, I might add – unfortunately, you do not have the view that I had yesterday of people weeping in the stands. It was hard to look up there. These are our people, the people who put food on our tables weeping in the stands, out on the front steps, in my constituency. [interjections] Please don't laugh. It's not funny. It's not funny. These are our people. You are laughing at the fabric of this community and the fabric of this province.

I am going to read another letter. Let me just give you a small smattering of what I'm getting here, a tiny bit of what I'm receiving.

I am writing to you as my MLA to express my concerns and opposition to Bill 6 as it currently stands. I would hope to see further discussion and education . . .

I think we've said this before, but I'll say it again.

. . . with farming communities before anything is passed through legislation. I am concerned that the supposed NDP, who campaigned on the promise of open and transparent government . . .

Let me say it again: open and transparent government.

... would underhandedly and secretly try to push this bill through without proper forums or discussions.

Madam Speaker, I'd like that to be entered.

I have more. Let me continue.

Please, please, do all you can to stall Bill 6 until after the consultations with farmers and ranchers in the coming month. There needs to be much more consultation with grassroots producers, or the freedom for farms to be successful in Alberta will disappear.

Madam Speaker, please, they are asking. I know you understand this when I say this to you.

Please do this immediately. This draconian measure must be stopped.

This is from a retired farmer and rancher in my constituency who worked more than 50 years of hard work.

This next letter actually comes with a name, and if it's all right with you, Madam Speaker, I would like to mention this person's name from my letter.

My name is Janet Carr, and my son Riley and his young family farm and ranch in this area. We have approximately 235 head of beef cows and bulls on our cow-calf operation. As well, we grow our own feed, with about 610 acres of hay land, and we have over 900 acres in grain. We also do local custom farming to supplement our income to make ends meet in order to support our two families. My grandson and granddaughter are the fifth generation from farms in this very community. The following is an e-mail that I have sent.

And she sent this to everybody in this House. Everybody has received this e-mail.

The government must stop interfering in our livelihoods as to when we can work and how we raise our children. If they have their way while ours is being limited, who will spend all day and night in a winter storm looking after the cows and calves ...

Maybe it would be the members opposite. I'd love to see that happen. We'd invite them at 3 o'clock in the morning onto our family farms in our constituencies to come help out with this job so that you can actually have an understanding of what goes on to get food to your table.

Let me continue, Madam Speaker.

... especially when you have 18 calves born in a 24-hour period that need assistance calving, nursing, kept warm and dry, in an effort to keep both calves and cows alive? Who will get the hay off in time when there's five days of rain in the forecast and the hay is your livestock's food, their winter feed, where the quality affects the animals' health and production. How will we get our crop seeded in time in the spring? How do we get rid of our crop diseases and the bugs on our plants, that don't care if it's somebody's day off when they're harming the crop's quality and the yields so they need to be sprayed when time is of the essence? How do we get our harvest completed in time when winter is looming? As we know, in this province winter could come at any time. We do not have any control over the weather and are one of the few industries that has no control over commodity prices that factor in our successes or our failures, yet we do this anyway as it is our past and our future, our way of life and our homes. All of this affects our animals, our crops, and our financial well-being. There are farmers and ranchers, and there are some that do both. That calls for even longer periods of their busy times. No one ...

10:20

And let me repeat to the members opposite, through you, Madam Speaker.

No one that we know would ever – ever – put their children, themselves, or their employees in harm's way.

Just in case it hasn't been said enough, let me say it again: never would put them in harm's way, ever.

Let me continue, Madam Speaker.

This is not some commercial type of industry that has a construction-type yard in the city with the consistent danger that requires such strict safety measures.

Safety is of the utmost importance. They are willing to speak with the members opposite. They want to speak with you. They want to be consulted. This House owes them that consultation. That's why we're here in the first place.

This is just a farm where kids run and play, ride their horses, do their chores, and help work alongside their parents, grandparents, friends, and neighbours. The very nature of our way of life is having all of those around for branding, cattle drives, hauling bees, getting cattle to the grass, harvest times. We all pitch in to help each other in order to get the work done before the weather turns.

This sounds to me like a high-functioning community. Is that what this sounds like?

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

Mrs. Aheer: Yes, a high-functioning community. If you go into any community, some aspects of this will be in that community.

Again:

This is our livelihood and our way of life and always has been, the way it has been since farmers and ranchers existed. Yes, we hire casual and part-time labour throughout our busy season, but we have high levels of liability insurance because farmers actually care about who is on their farms, taking care of them, and making sure that they are safe.

Again, if I can mention one more time for the record, it is appalling to me that members of this House would assume that our farmers and ranchers would not be willing to take care of their own and the people that feel honoured and privileged to work on those farms in the first place.

She continues on, Madam Speaker:

The government interference is completely inappropriate. Are they going to pay us for livestock or crop losses because we weren't allowed to take care of our own business because of something that happens that might need to be addressed and the person on duty cannot do anything because they might be a few minutes over their allotted work time? We all have safety protocols for safe beef, chemical, and grain handling, et cetera., and we follow them. Enough is enough. When we all go broke due to their new workplace legislation and fines, who will feed us?

I have a constituent, Madam Speaker, who after 50 years of work is pleading that I do all that I can. He's willing to do all that he can to help me address this situation and address the House so that our members here understand what we're actually getting at here. We are behind the safety measures. We are with you on that. This is not a matter for discussion. We, the farmers, the people that we represent want safety on their farms, have safety, have liability insurance, have those things. They are willing to discuss it and have consultation with you so that as you go through the process with these farms, we can find the necessary things that need to happen. But you owe them that consultation. Again, consultation.

I'd like to read another letter, please, Madam Speaker.

We are deeply disappointed in the Bill 6 proposal by the NDP government. We are not thrilled with this outright attack on the family farm.

The Deputy Speaker: Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre under Standing Order 29(2)(a).

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Through you, I'd like to thank the hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View for her words. I found that presentation interesting. I'd like to ask her a question about something that is applicable to why I think we would need to send this to committee and what many of the people of my constituency are concerned about and why they think this should go to committee. That goes back to what the Minister of Municipal Affairs said yesterday in question period. Yesterday in a response to a question about Bill 6 she said, "We will move forward on with Bill 6 because [this is just a] very basic and a small piece of the big picture moving forward."

Now, this government, again, put documents – we've talked about this – on websites that have said that they would restrict children on family farms. They said that they would restrict neighbours helping neighbours on family farms. The government, of course, says that they didn't mean for those documents to go up. I don't know the exact situation that happened there, but they do acknowledge those documents were up. So farmers and ranchers are very concerned, and I would say rightly so, after seeing documents like that that could significantly affect their livelihood and significantly affect their lifestyle.

Then what the government is doing is saying: "Here we go. We have this blank cheque. We've put in these little changes to the bill that we are saying will protect you, but we have a blank cheque that can do all the regulations afterwards, after this bill is passed and the elected officials of this Assembly that represent farmers and ranchers can no longer defend them in this place." Then the minister, Madam Speaker, is standing in this Assembly and saying: actually, this is only a small part of this; this is only a tiny part of the big picture. Well, that concerns me, and I know it concerns constituents that heard it, and I think that's all the more reason why this bill should be going to committee so that farmers and ranchers can have their say, because, quite frankly, they've lost trust in this government. I've lost trust in this government; most definitely farmers and ranchers have lost trust in the government. I don't have to tell you; it's pretty clear why. I'm sure you recognize that they have not acted in a very trustworthy and honest way with farmers and ranchers.

So I'd like the member to maybe comment on how she thinks the farmers and ranchers in her community feel given that the Municipal Affairs minister stands up here and hints that there's more to come, that there'll be maybe more punishment or more restrictions on farmers and ranchers in the future, you know. I'd be curious about what she has to say about that.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you for the question. To my point on the broad nature of that statement and on the flip side to say that it is a small portion of what is actually going to come forward: they're extremely concerning statements regarding an industry that, as I said before, Madam Speaker, is complex. It's a thumbprint. You could talk to any of the farmers on this side of the House or to people who've had the privilege of working with farmers, knowing farmers, growing up with them. Each farm is like a family. They have unique situations; they have different relationships on that farm. They also have various types of things that they do on those farms. They're not all the same.

So for a comment like that to be made, that things are coming down the pipe that we will be legislating, that they have some ideas and that this is just a small portion is extremely concerning. That just goes to show that the government actually doesn't have any idea what they're talking about. They haven't consulted with farmers because that comment would have come out with details,

suggestions, thoughtful discussion regarding an industry that is the fabric of Alberta.

Thank you for the question.

The Deputy Speaker: Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. My question, actually, to the member is: if a farmer was to have an accident under this present legislation with one of his workers and OH and S was to come onto that farm and, in order to be able to do a proper assessment, shut everything down during harvest and that farmer was to now be unable to get the harvest in because of maybe a freak snowstorm, which happens in Alberta, or was to lose his harvest, would the government be responsible? Because insurance would not cover that, would the government be responsible for that loss for that farmer? I'd like to ask the member what she thinks about that.

Thank you.

Mrs. Aheer: Yes. Thank you for that. That's actually a very . . . [Mrs. Aheer's speaking time expired]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I move that we adjourn debate at this time.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

10:30

Government Motions

Time Allocation on Bill 6

26. Mr. Mason moved:

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 shall be put forthwith.

The Deputy Speaker: There is a period to respond for the Official Opposition. Go ahead, hon. leader.

Mr. Mason: Yes, thank you very much. Madam Speaker, it's become clear through the words of the members opposite and through their actions in this Chamber that not only do they want to block important safety measures for Alberta farmers from coming into force, but they even want to block the bill from getting to the Committee of the Whole.

Members of this House will know that based on feedback from the members of the public, our government has announced our intention to make amendments to Bill 6, which confirm that farm and ranch families will be excluded from the new rules. Members of the opposition parties have been briefed on this amendment, Madam Speaker, and it's been tabled in this Chamber for the review of all members. Rather than allowing the bill to get to committee, where our amendment and, presumably, amendments of the opposition as well could be discussed, we are still stuck in second reading, with a number of motions designed to delay second reading coming from the opposition. The bill has been debated for over 10 hours at second reading. All members have had ample opportunity to speak. Rather than getting the bill to committee, the opposition would like us to spend another 10 hours debating a bill that the government has already indicated will be amended.

For that reason a time allocation motion has been put forward to help move the bill along while also providing the opposition time to participate in debate and, in particular, to focus the remainder of

our time here in Committee of the Whole so that we may discuss our amendments and amendments that the opposition may have.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre to respond.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to first point out that I think the hon. Government House Leader's assertion that the opposition is filibustering is unfortunate. We're not anywhere near a stage where anybody can discuss that yet. I'd like to maybe illustrate that through you, Madam Speaker, to the Government House Leader and talk about the first time that time allocation was used in this Assembly. At the time the Government House Leader said that debate on the motion would be limited to six days on an opposition filibuster on spending from the heritage trust fund. Six days. This Government House Leader is attempting to do that for one hour.

Now, at the time that that happened, there was a combined total opposition of five, one NDP and three Social Credit MLAs as well as an independent. That's five. In this Assembly today we have 33 members of the opposition. Not all of them have even been given an opportunity yet to speak on this bill. Not all of them have. Many of them have, but they've been working their way through there. So for the Government House Leader to say that this is a filibuster is completely unrealistic. The members on this side of the Assembly have just as much of a right and just as much of a responsibility to their constituents as the government members do to theirs.

Now, Madam Speaker, as you no doubt know, the government chooses not to speak to their bills. That's unfortunate. I can see why they would want to end debate and go home, but the people that sent me here and have sent my colleagues in the Official Opposition party as well as the third party and the independent colleagues in this Assembly, our constituents, have made it clear that they want us to speak to this bill. They want us to debate this bill because it affects their lives. Yesterday we sat in this Assembly and we watched people crying in the gallery because this bill means so much to them. We're getting thousands of phone calls. We can't even keep up with the phone calls, trying to process the information on how this bill will affect them. And this government has the gall to put forward time allocation of an hour – an hour – not six days, not something reasonable so that we can get our constituents' views on the record.

Madam Speaker, I think we'll go with some quotes from opposite on how they felt about this when they were in opposition because I think their arguments at the time made sense. To quote our hon. Premier, on December 6, 2011:

All of this balancing back and forth ultimately leads . . . to several conclusions. This is not a piece of legislation that is either completely good or completely bad. There are problems within this legislation. It is being rammed through very quickly. The use of time allocation has made that go even faster than it should have.

That is not acceptable to Albertans.

Again the Premier, Madam Speaker:

A week ago this PC government apologized to party members for its failure to listen to the grassroots. Yesterday they backtracked again, this time on pension rollbacks, because they failed to listen to Albertans. It's clear that they still don't get it because now they plan to ram through . . . [a] bill without written briefings to the Assembly members and without listening to Albertans.

Again the Premier:

That apparently is the emergency that has pushed us into this situation, where the government is, I would suggest, misusing the rules of the House to ram through this bill. So just in principle it's really difficult to support such a mechanism . . .

Madam Speaker, that's exactly what they're doing now. It's unacceptable.

This government has made some mistakes on this bill, and they're running scared. We've seen it. They're getting beat up back home. They're getting the same number of calls. So what they're doing now, Madam Speaker, is trying to stifle debate so that they can get through this. They can hopefully change the story and go home for Christmas, but that is unacceptable to Albertans, and it should be unacceptable to Albertans because this is the Assembly where their issues are supposed to be dealt with. This is where democracy is supposed to take place. This is where debate is supposed to happen, and by the government taking this action, they are stifling debate. They're not just stifling the opposition members; they're stifling the people who sent us here to represent them, and I think they should very much be ashamed of their behaviour.

I will very much be voting against this motion, and I would humbly ask all members of the Assembly, including the backbench NDP MLAs, who do represent the constituents who will be very upset about this decision.

Thank you very much.

[The voice vote indicated that Government Motion 26 carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:37 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Gray	Miranda
Babcock	Hinkley	Nielsen
Carson	Horne	Payne
Ceci	Kazim	Renaud
Connolly	Kleinsteuber	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Littlewood	Sabir
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Schmidt
Dach	Luff	Schreiner
Dang	Malkinson	Shepherd
Feehan	Mason	Sucha
Fitzpatrick	McCuaig-Boyd	Sweet
Ganley	McKitrick	Westhead
Goehring	McLean	Woollard

Against the motion:

Aheer	Hanson	Rodney
Barnes	Hunter	Schneider
Clark	Jansen	Starke
Cyr	Loewen	Strankman
Drysdale	MacIntyre	Swann
Ellis	McIver	Taylor
Fraser	Nixon	van Dijken
Gotfried	Pitt	Yao

Totals: For – 39 Against – 24

[Government Motion 26 carried]

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 6

Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act (continued)

[Adjourned debate December 9: Mr. Mason]

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

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd seek unanimous consent for one-minute bells on the referral amendment only, please.

[Unanimous consent granted]

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any further speakers on the referral amendment?

Seeing no further speakers, we're calling for the question on the referral amendment to Bill 6.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment R1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:55 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hanson	Rodney
Barnes	Hunter	Schneider
Clark	Jansen	Starke
Cyr	Loewen	Strankman
Drysdale	MacIntyre	Taylor
Ellis	McIver	van Dijken
Fraser	Nixon	Yao
Gotfried		

11:00

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Gray	Miranda
Babcock	Hinkley	Nielsen
Carson	Horne	Payne
Ceci	Kazim	Renaud
Connolly	Kleinstauber	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Littlewood	Sabir
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Schmidt
Dach	Luff	Schreiner
Dang	Malkinson	Shepherd
Feehan	Mason	Sucha
Fitzpatrick	McCuaig-Boyd	Sweet
Ganley	McKittrick	Westhead
Goehring	McLean	Woollard
Totals:	For – 22	Against – 39

[Motion on amendment R1 lost]

The Deputy Speaker: Back on Bill 6. The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am honoured to rise today and speak to second reading of Bill 6. To begin, I will quote the Premier and Government House Leader on their views on closure. Sadly, the following is not a tragic comedy; it is reality. The Premier said, on Wednesday, April 24, 2013:

To further limit debate by significantly limiting the amount of time allowed for budget debate within each of the days when we're allowed to debate, in my view, represents an excessive use of its majority by the government caucus.

She went on to say:

Marleau and Monpetit on pages 66 to 67 speaks to the issue of privilege and states that

any disregard of or attack on the rights, powers and immunities of the House and its Members . . . is referred to as a "breach of privilege" and is punishable by the House.

Erskine May, 22nd edition, on page 108 states that

any act or omission which obstructs or impedes either House of Parliament in the performance of its functions, or which obstructs or impedes any Member or officer of such House in the discharge of his duty, or which has a tendency, directly or indirectly, to produce such results may be treated as a contempt even though there is no precedent of the offence.

Madam Speaker, very strong words. Some – some – would say: reeking with hypocrisy today.

To add fuel to the fire, the Government House Leader said, on December 3, 2013:

According to *Beauchesne*, section 75, "The privilege of freedom of speech is both the least questioned and the most fundamental right of the Member." *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* on page 89 also states that freedom of speech is the first right of members. "By far, the most important right accorded to Members of the House is the exercise of freedom of speech in parliamentary proceedings."

He continues:

In 1977 the First Report of the Special Committee on Rights and Immunities of Members stated that freedom of speech is a fundamental right without which [the members] would be hampered in the performance of their duties. It permits them to speak in the House without inhibition, to refer to any matter or express any opinion as they see fit, to say what they feel needs to be said in the furtherance of the national . . .

Mr. Mason: Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Pardon me, hon. member.

You have a point of order?

Mr. Mason: I hesitate to raise this, Madam Speaker. I know that the third party is precluded by the rules that are in place from speaking to a motion to invoke time allocation, but the motion that's now before us is, in fact, second reading of Bill 6 and not the closure motion, which has been disposed of by the House. One ought not to reflect upon a decision that's already been made by the House.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Rodney: And that's a perfect segue. Thank you.

It is clear, according to authorities, that time allocation was not intended as a mechanism by which the right of members to speak could be limited arbitrarily by the government of the day.

Madam Speaker, as the second longest serving MLA in this Legislature I can tell you that I have never seen anything like what is happening now with Bill 6. For this government to proclaim that they will take up to two years to compose regulations for this bill and only dedicate a precious few days to debating it is baffling. If you don't take it from me, take it from thousands of Albertans clear across the province. Equally absurd are introducing a bill without consultation and a set of amendments that's even longer than the original bill. As mentioned, for the government to invoke closure when ranchers and farmers are demonstrating clear across the province with a simple, decent request for consultation is simply beyond comprehension. Many find it utterly disrespectful.

Madam Speaker, I am not an expert in this field, clearly, but as a youth I lived and worked on my uncle's farm, so I can relate to the plight of our ranchers and farmers.

Here in this Legislature we've heard from many members of this House about the lack of consultation and about lumping together

pieces of policy that really should not be pushed through as one piece of legislation. Madam Speaker, there is one simple way forward. The bill can be amended so that we can legislate on what this government has marketed this bill as, a piece of safety legislation for farm and ranch workers, by omitting the elements of the bill that have nothing to do with safety for ranchers and farmers. Or we can pause. We can take a step back in a very meaningful way, and we can decide how best to proceed after meaningful consultation. We might actually find that increasing education and supports and creating a system where best practices can be shared and implemented is a much more meaningful way forward. You may also decide that this legislation needs to be put again before the House, but that's a decision that you do have the ability to make.

Throughout their time as opposition members those in the government who previously sat in this Chamber were very critical of omnibus legislation. For instance, the Minister of Economic Development and Trade said, on March 19, 2015, "Omnibus bills that group together significant pieces of legislation that should be given their due course for debate in this Chamber . . . hinders our ability to get into each of these . . . as separate issues." On May 7, 2014, the member spoke of "the breakneck speed with which this PC government rams through legislation." Madam Speaker, it's obvious that history is repeating itself and not in a good way.

A year earlier the current Premier spoke to an omnibus bill that tied together three pieces of legislation. She noted that the general rule is for each issue to have a separate piece of legislation. The Premier said, on May 8, 2013:

By putting three pieces together, of course, we cut that opportunity . . .
the time for discussion,
. . . by two-thirds.

Madam Speaker, Bill 6 is actually four pieces of legislation, so all the more reason for sober second thought. If this government wishes to rush this legislation through in the next 24 hours, they have the ability to do that given the position this government has, with a majority government. However, they would be doing a massive disservice to those Albertans who've braved the cold across the province as they protested against this legislation.

Ironically, one year ago, almost exactly on today's date the Minister of Economic Development and Trade said, in his capacity at that time as opposition critic, regarding the Condominium Property Amendment Act, which was on the table at the time – one of his criticisms was that passing legislation but leaving many decisions to regulation left Albertans in the dark as to what the new rules would actually be. Essentially, some of the members opposite believed that decisions would be swept into a dark corner, where they could be developed away from the light that is the Legislature.

Madam Speaker, the member stated:

Changes that impact people's homes should happen in the Legislative Assembly through, you know, our robust debate, through different points of view, and through adequate oversight.

He went on to state:

Well – you know what? – nobody said that democracy is the most expedient form of government, but we do live in a . . . Westminster-style democracy, and details that affect condominium owners should be discussed in the light of day, not behind closed doors in the cover of darkness. That, I think, is a very legitimate concern.

If the member stands by this sentiment, then why is he prepared for his government to do the opposite for issues that are critical for ranchers and farmers?

Madam Speaker, I have some friendly and timely advice for the current government. We as the previous government made errors of

judgment on legislation. That contributed to the fact that we are now sitting on this side of the aisle, so please consider this: do yourselves and all Albertans a favour; do not do the same thing. By this Premier's own admission she has lost the trust of farmers and ranchers, and if the Premier and the government want that trust back, they have the time to allow for extensive consultation, starting now. This government has a wonderful opportunity to evolve from what's perceived as a heavy-handed group that, many say, is suffering from dome disease to a much more reasonable organization. It's simply nonsensical to invoke legislation before true consultation, and that's the opposite of what any government, including this one, would strive for.

Thankfully, that can be fixed easily. They can listen to the advice of our party and the Official Opposition and the Alberta Party, but if they won't do that, they would be applauded for taking the advice of thousands of farmers and ranchers clear across Alberta, who are pleading for this government to slow down and be reasonable. Madam Speaker, I shudder at the possibility that this NDP government thinks that they're the only ones who are right on this issue and that rural and urban Albertans are all wrong. It's time for the tail to stop wagging the dog.

Therefore, Madam Speaker, I am honoured to move that the motion for second reading of Bill 6, Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 6, Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act, be not now read a second time but that it be read a second time this day six months hence.

I have so much more prepared, Madam Speaker, but out of respect for other speakers, I will conclude with the . . .

11:10

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. member, could you just pause for a moment while we get the amendment, an original copy.

Mr. Rodney: I will just conclude with these thoughts as you come to collect. This time, Madam Speaker and all hon. members, is critical for the government and all Albertans to go back to the drawing board, to do the due diligence that is not only necessary but extremely beneficial, to achieve the true goals that you have originally intended so that all of those who are affected by this bill in their lives every day have the information they require to make any and all necessary changes on their farm, so that any and all of the very well-publicized pieces of misinformation and imperfections of the bill are actually addressed in a way that reflects the opinions of those who have made sure that these serious concerns are heard.

Madam Speaker, I do not feel the need to use up all of my time. I'm happy to pass the puck. I can't wait to hear the debate on this, and I trust that, indeed, we all will do the smart thing in this House for all Albertans.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Well, I thank the hon. member for his motion. It is, in fact, for those that have not experienced this before, a hoist motion. Were it to come to completion, every member would have a right to speak again, and then it would be voted, and if it were passed, the bill would just disappear. It's a way that the opposition has of trying to basically defeat a bill by making a motion that it not be read now, because if, in fact, the House is not sitting six months from now, the bill just dies because there is nobody there to catch it.

Having said that, Madam Speaker, this is clearly an attempt to get rid of the bill and to prevent its passage by this House. As the government has indicated its intention that the bill should be passed, I urge all hon. members to vote against this amendment when the question is put, and the question will be put at the end of the hour of debate, as will the main motion. If it is defeated, then we will go on to the main motion, just so all members are clear. I urge all hon. members to defeat the hoist motion that the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed has put forward and to support second reading of Bill 6.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment H1? The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm very pleased to stand up in support of the amendment put forward by the Member for Calgary-Lougheed. One of the first assignments I had as a new MLA was to get to know my constituents and the stakeholders in my portfolio. The goal of these meetings was to make sure that I understood the issues and challenges faced by the people I represent as well as the stakeholders across the province. I was supposed to find out what was unique about my constituency and what is similar to things that are happening across the province. Bill 6 has been a very eye-opening experience for all of us.

Since May I've worked very hard to provide a voice for issues of importance. You may remember me asking questions about that dialysis unit in Lac La Biche or the Mennonite school in Two Hills. Those are not the only issues I've addressed, though. I have met with First Nations and Métis. I've attended powwows and was on hand when the evacuations were happening due to the fires in Saskatchewan, along with my counterpart from Bonnyville-Cold Lake. I've met with municipal councillors to discuss local issues, and I have met with several government ministers to address broader provincial issues. My point is that for me and the rest of the Wildrose caucus our objective is to stand up in the Assembly and provide a real voice for constituents. Our goal is to ensure that what we do here reflects the concerns that we hear.

One of the concerns I heard at a town hall that I held on Saturday in St. Paul: one of the constituents stood up and was very concerned about the implications of OH and S. He related a story of a machine shop owner who had a drill press. The drill press was, you know, in the area of 30 years old, was out of manufacture, and the start-up switch went on it. Unable to get a proper start-up switch from the manufacturer, he called in an electrician, and they made it work. Unfortunately, one of his workers caught a finger and had a finger injury in the drill press, went through OH and S and Workers' Compensation Board. OH and S came and investigated. All of his paperwork was good. Everything was in place. They had a look at this unit and discovered that they had modified this drill press. Now, the switch had nothing to do at all with the incident. There was a foot pedal switch, and that was just a manual override on that thing. The company faced such an onerous fine by OH and S for modifying that piece of equipment that they went bankrupt and closed their doors. These are the concerns – these are real concerns – from my constituents.

We don't just stand up here and throw out ideas or questions that we make up in our legislative offices. We use what we have heard to inform our work, to inform our policies, and to inform our approach to addressing the government's proposed legislation. Bill 6 is a prime example of how out of touch this government is with respect to tax-paying Albertans. This legislation has angered so many Albertans that it makes it very clear how little respect this

government has for the people that elected them. It seems pretty obvious that the NDP government does not have the same approach to working with Albertans.

I have received many calls from concerned constituents from very many neighbouring constituencies, frustrated that their voice and opinions are not being relayed to this Legislature unless it's through an opposition MLA. They cannot get through to their NDP MLAs, and even if they do, they do not see them standing up and voicing those views in this House. They do not feel that they are being adequately represented. I have not heard one person call and tell me that they are in favour of this Bill 6. To quote the minister of jobs, skills, and labour: I've been listening to Albertans about what Bill 6, the Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act, will mean for their family farms. End quote. Well, I would suggest that the minister should have consulted with farmers and ranchers before this legislation was tabled to ensure that it contained provisions suggested by the very people it supposedly protects. Listening after the fact is not the same thing as consultation before legislation.

I very much look forward to the standing votes coming up on Bill 6 and watching as the members sit down one by one by one like lemmings jumping off a political cliff.

Farmers and ranchers wanted consultation before legislation. Now this government is having to make amendments to the legislation they tabled, again without consultation. We will be expected to vote on this new amendment, again without having an opportunity to hear from our constituents. This is unacceptable and is not democratic. We need time to get this amendment out to our people so that they can have time to look at it, and this hoist amendment would give us that opportunity. We need to understand it and provide feedback. This is real consultation. That is what hard-working Albertans deserve. Most farmers and ranchers in Alberta are second, third, or even fourth generation. They know their business. If it was as dangerous as the government would like us to believe, do you not think that they would have moved away from such a horrific industry?

I'd like to at this point bring up a survey, an online survey, on labour legislation. I'll just read you a couple of the questions. Number 1, "Hours of work for employees: Limited to 12 hours in a day except during critical times."

Question 2, "Break: 30 minute break after 5 hours of work in most situations."

Then they go on to where you can check off: "Please indicate the impact you feel providing employees with a break after 5 hours of work would have on farm or ranch employees." You know, I've been involved in a lot of harvest activities where people are working, driving combines, driving the grain trucks, and mom and auntie and grandma come out to the field with a table and set it up, and everybody stops. They're not punching clocks or looking at clocks, Madam Speaker.

11:20

"Rest days: One day of rest for every full week worked (7 consecutive days)."

"Overtime: Overtime pay of at least 1.5 times the hourly rate" or banked time "for hours worked in excess of 8 hours a day or 44 hours in a week." It gets onerous there. Then, again, they ask you how it's going to affect farm or ranch employees. You know, I have been a union member in my past. This reads just like a collective bargaining document to me.

Getting back to my question about the generations of farmers, if agriculture was so dangerous, I'm surprised that farmers and ranchers survived for four generations to be here today with all of their limbs intact. It's an absolute miracle.

Had the government listened first and done a true job of consulting with farmers and ranchers, they would not now be faced with the embarrassing reality of having to amend their own legislation coming forward. I certainly hope that they get it right this time. But we know that until we hear from the people, they will not get it right. To quote the Premier from *Hansard* in June of this year: "I think that's a good start to show that we're all going to be working together. But we'll do that transparently, and we will consult with . . . Albertans to make sure that what we do works." She seems to have forgotten her own statement. Even though at the time she was talking about working on a climate change policy, her supposed commitment to consultation certainly fell short when it came to Bill 6.

Only after continued pressure from average Albertans and the Wildrose Official Opposition has this government decided to have a second look at this bill. Unfortunately, again, we will not likely have the opportunity to bring it to our constituents for consultation first. The Premier seems to be blaming public servants for miscommunication and confusion about the contents of this bill instead of taking responsibility, which she actually finally admitted to here in the House a few days ago, for the shortcomings of the legislation itself. Had she simply followed a proper consultation process, we would likely be a lot further along with a lot less trouble from our farmers and ranchers.

This government tabled a bill that impacts over 45,000 farms. The resulting public backlash is pretty clear. This bill does not reflect the concerns of farmers and ranchers across this province. This government and the Premier need to own up to the fact that her government is trying to rush through legislation that will have negative consequences for a major piece of Alberta's economy.

There was a clear attempt to try to cause a division amongst farmers over the last weekend by reports that the Hutterite colonies would be exempt from this legislation. Well, it didn't work. Farmers stand united in this fight against Bill 6, and the Hutterite leadership has spoken publicly against accepting any form of exemption that does not include all family operations equally. You will not divide family farming communities.

Farmers in my area that attended a quickly formed town hall in St. Paul this weekend were unanimous in supporting putting Bill 6 to committee, where they can have their input. It is time for real consultation on this matter. We need to support this hoist amendment and get this bill stopped for at least six months.

I wonder how many NDP MLAs in rural ridings held town hall meetings over the past weekend to find out what their farm and ranch families really think. That many: quite likely zero, as they do not want to hear what the farm community has to say. Easier to ignore people and hope they go away. They're not going to go away. They have asked me to fight this to the end, and that's exactly what we're doing as an opposition.

The fact that the government may propose amendments to clarify this bill speaks more loudly than anyone ever could that this legislation is ill-advised and misinformed. The fact that they have to make corrections on the fly further supports our concern that the government really does not know much about the potential impact of their legislation and probably not a lot about the industry itself. If they had gone about this properly, they would have spent time working with farmers and ranchers to ensure that the legislation they tabled actually made sense and addressed necessary safety issues properly in a way that actually supports the industry. While there is definitely the need to bring improved regulations for large operators, we are disappointed that there is no recognition of the special nature of the family farm.

This bill is much more important than partisan politics. This government is trying to rush through legislation that will undermine

the industry that impacts approximately 60,000 people in this province. You need to get it right. Wildrose is strongly urging the government to take our advice, slow down this bill, vote for this amendment, and send it to committee for authentic consultation with the agricultural community of Alberta.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments for the hon. member under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I will recognize the hon. leader of the third party.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise on the amendment before the House. You know what? The first thing I'm going to do is start out by agreeing with the Government House Leader. He said some things that are important. This is normally what's called a hoist amendment, and it's normally what is designed to get rid of a piece of bad legislation or what the opposition thinks is a piece of bad legislation. This is a little unique in that this is actually an opportunity for the government to get it right. As the hon. House leader for the government said, this is to bring it back in six months. Six months from today, June 9, is a Thursday. Between now and June 9 the government could, if they decided to do the right thing and serve Albertans, use that time wisely, talking to farmers, talking to ranchers, getting it right, deciding what the rules and regulations will be around new legislation for safety for farmers and ranchers, and come back into this House and force us on this side of the House to bang our desks in approval and vote for it and cheer the government on. They have that ability right now if they love Alberta enough to do the right thing and only if.

I can only imagine, Madam Speaker, the joy that the government would have in forcing us on this side of the House to bang our desks in approval after all we've gone through in the last week or two on this particular bill. I think members on this side of the House, while we don't expect it, actually will agree with me that they could force us to do that.

The government has done something almost impossible, Madam Speaker. They have united the far right, the medium right, the centre right, the centre, and even a good part of the left against what this government is doing. You know what? Unfortunately, without the consultation this is completely disrespectful of all farmers and all ranchers in rural Alberta. In fact, this government has actually united rural and urban Alberta against this government. I can tell you as a Calgary MLA that people are not happy. I'm getting e-mails and phone calls constantly, and they cannot believe the heavy-handed, high-handed – sorry to say it – arrogant way in which this has been handled. What's most disappointing, Madam Speaker, is that the opportunity to make it better is so easy.

You know what? I'm not going to name where the member from the government is from because they're not a minister and I think we're here to hold the government to account, and private members, of course, are not part of government, but there was a private member from the government side this last week that stood up in front of 500 of that member's constituents and said: no, we're not going to listen to you; we're going to ram this through even though you pretty much all want us to not do that. Wow, Madam Speaker. The member signed the member's own political finish line. I'm trying to avoid using overexaggerated words, but really she set the expiry on her political career to the next election. It doesn't have to be that way. It doesn't have to be that way.

You know what? The Progressive Conservative Party – our members have tried every which way to get the government to do the right thing, to listen to farmers and ranchers, to let the family

farm survive and work with them to put safety regulations and legislation in place with their co-operation. They've made it quite clear, the farm and ranch community, that they want to co-operate. They do. I say: let them. Let them. We could do this together. What a great day that would be.

Madam Speaker, I could go on. There's an hour. We've gotta share it between all of our colleagues. Out of respect for this House, out of respect for my colleagues, out of respect for the farmers and ranchers and all Albertans that may be listening, I'm going to sit down saying that I will be supporting this motion, and I implore the government to do the right thing between now and June 9. There is still time.

11:30

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

If not, I'll recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Klein, followed by Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's been stated ad nauseam in this Assembly that we have regrets, the government has regrets, about how Bill 6 was initially communicated to the public and to farmers. However, I am proud to be part of a government working to protect the rights of vulnerable working people and to provide them with the basic protections that they deserve, and I'm not prepared to delay these rights for another minute.

I appreciate that farm families have concerns, but let's be clear, Madam Speaker. This government and this bill will delineate between what it means to be a parent and what it means to be an employer on a farm. There is no desire to change the way family farms operate and how farm families raise their children. The only goal is to protect paid employees and give them a financial safety net in the event of injury or death.

Madam Speaker, I always appreciate the sage input from our loyal opposition. What's been missing from their input, however, has been the positive aspects of this bill and the positive aspects that it will bring to families who make a living hiring themselves out for farm work. This is primarily the peace of mind that comes with the financial safety net and the ability to be able to refuse unsafe work and working conditions. We've heard the stories over the years of paid farm workers being killed and leaving their family without any means. We've heard the stories of how these families have to litigate to receive any type of compensation. This bill will give peace of mind to these families and will also help to protect farmers from the aforementioned litigation.

Madam Speaker, the lack of rights for paid farm workers is a black hole in Alberta's legislation. When I read the OH and S Act, with all its protections around refusing unsafe work, et cetera, and I see that there's an exemption for farm workers, it makes me sick to my stomach. This exemption is disturbing, antiquated, and long overdue for change. With this bill we'll be able to provide paid workers with basic protections, and through consultation we will be able to provide the exemptions necessary to run a farm such as hours of work, days of work, et cetera. Other occupations have these types of exemptions, made in consultation, and the same will be true for farms. We've heard in this Assembly over the past week that when labour and OH and S legislation was first crafted, workers were given basic protections first and that the details such as hours of work were worked out in consultation after the basic protections were in place. That's what will happen with this bill.

There have been a lot of alarmist things said both inside and outside of the Assembly, and one of those things is that our government is trying to unionize all farms in Alberta. Well, Madam Speaker, that's not true. No government in Canada has this ability. While the ability for paid farm workers to organize is available

through this bill, the Supreme Court of Canada already gave them this right in a decision. I well know that groups that do organize unions do so when they feel unsafe and unhappy about their working conditions. Well, Bill 6 just may give paid farm workers the say that they need for good working conditions, that may remove the need for these workers to organize.

I read a quote recently from the leader of the third party from January 2015, and I believe it was an interview coming on the heels of the death of a paid farm worker. He was asked why his government wasn't moving to protect farm workers with legislation. His response – and I paraphrase – was that it's an Albertan tradition that we don't want to change. A tradition, Madam Speaker? Hazing on kids' sports teams used to be a tradition, but it's dangerous, so it's not done anymore. Tradition is not a reason to put paid farm workers and their families in danger or leave them without a means of livelihood.

I encourage everyone in this Assembly to move past the early miscommunication and move forward with the work of protecting all of Alberta's workers and developing the necessary regulations to make it work through consultation.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Westhead: Well, I'd really like to thank the member for his take on this subject. He talked a little bit about changing traditions and, you know, sort of sometimes breaking from the status quo, so I'd like him to maybe expand a little bit about what that means to him and maybe about what his motivations were for running for election to do some of these kinds of things.

My other question. He talked about occupational health and safety, and I'd like him to, if he wouldn't mind, elaborate on how our occupational health and safety system here in Alberta contemplates a joint relationship between the employer and the employee, to work together in a collaborative manner, to determine and create a safe workplace.

Mr. Coolahan: I'm sorry, hon. member. What was the first part of that question?

Mr. Westhead: You talked about sort of challenging the status quo and breaking from tradition. You know, some of us here ran for election for the purpose of making some positive changes for the people here in Alberta in the best interests of the public, and I wonder if you want to talk a little bit about that.

Mr. Coolahan: Certainly. I've been advocating for rights for paid farm workers for many years. I think it's something that's been sorely lacking from Alberta's legislation – there's no question – and that was part of the NDs' platform during the election.

OH and S legislation says that we have joint health and safety committees. That's usually run between the employer and, if there's a union, a union rep there. If there's not, then there'll be a representative from the workers. They're great at maintaining safety. You know, there's been a lot of talk about education being a source of protection. It's very true. I mean, you need education to make sure that people are safe. What's missing in that piece is the compensation piece, that I think is very important with this bill. Education is not going to compensate a family whose breadwinner died.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Cardston-Taber-Warner under 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Hunter: Yes, Madam Speaker. I find this absolutely rich. We have had a debate about this. Now we've been time allocated to one hour, and all of a sudden now the NDP decide to start getting up and talking about this issue. It's absolutely hypocritical. Absolutely hypocritical. Now what we're going to find here is that . . .

Mr. Schmidt: We've got lots to say now.

Mr. Hunter: Yes, they have lots to say after we have one hour to be able to discuss this. "Okay. Now we're going to add insult to injury." We have a situation where we have one hour to be able to talk about this now, and they're going to take and make sure that they use up that hour. It's absolutely hypocritical that they would do such a thing.

Now, under the rules, from what I understand, I have to ask a question, so I will ask a question. You talked about miscommunication. Here's a miscommunication for you. Madam Speaker, the Premier said that the Hutterites were going to be exempt from this. The Hutterites never asked for that, but let's just go with this for a second, that the Hutterites are exempt. The Premier also said that every Albertan deserves to be able to come home safe. Now, she can't have it both ways. Do Hutterites have the right to come home safe? If she's saying that they're exempt, then she's saying that they don't deserve to come home safe. They're one of the biggest farmers in Alberta. I would absolutely love to see the spin on this one.

11:40

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. Member for Calgary-Klein, did you wish to comment?

Mr. Coolahan: Sure. My colleagues are telling me that the Premier didn't say that, for one, and that Hutterites are not paid farm workers.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Madam Speaker. To the hon. member. In your speech you mentioned hazing, one of the extreme forms of bullying. I found that interesting during this discussion, this time-shortened discussion, on Bill 6. I'd like you to clarify, please.

Mr. Coolahan: I was only using it as an example of tradition, Madam Speaker. That's all. If it was a poor analogy related to bullying and the hon. member takes it that way, I apologize.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am in support of this hoist motion, and I'd like to speak about it. "Peace, Order, and good Government" is the introductory phrase of section 91 of the Canadian Constitution Act, 1867 – "Peace, Order, and good Government" – generally stating the scope of the legislative jurisdiction of Parliament. In the eyes of some of the Fathers of Confederation this clause was a general power enabling Parliament to enact laws. When we as legislators sit in this House, we must remember the foundations on which our representative democracy is built. "Peace, Order, and good Government" is not just a phrase; it is a responsibility we have when we make our decisions.

I want to quickly lay out the process for the hon. members of this Assembly. Madam Speaker, here is what we know as absolute facts. Bill 6 was tabled in the House on November 17, 2015. Consultation, this term used very lightly, was done, whereas some have dubbed it

as the come-out-and-be-told meetings, where the bureaucrats kicked out opponents to the bill and failed to listen to the concerns. I don't know if this is considered as consultation. Thousands of farmers have come from all over this province to protest this piece of legislation through rallies in every way that they know how, yet this government has still not listened.

To abate some of these issues, the Premier has thrown the bureaucrats under the bus – I would hate to be a bureaucrat under this government – offered divisive, politically charged exemptions for certain groups such as Hutterite colonies, and is now haphazardly amending their own legislation. The law was five pages, and the amendments are six pages. Obviously, there hasn't been enough consultation amongst themselves on this issue. The NDP have denied that they meant to include children on family farms despite a government-issued document where they clearly state that this is their intent.

This morning the government not only said, "No more debate in this House" – we don't get to debate this anymore in the House; I guess you could say that one hour is a debate – but now they're saying that farmers and ranchers no longer get any representation on this issue. That's the most deplorable part about this, Madam Speaker. In this House we will differ – that's the democratic process that we have signed up for – but this isn't about us. This isn't about an individual person. This is about 65,000 farmers and ranchers that have not been consulted on this issue. They have not had the right to be able to say yes or no. It will take time to be able to get that information. If they don't get that information to the government, how will the government know what they want? Do they represent the people? Do they represent the farmers and ranchers? They say that they do, but if they're not willing to consult on this issue, really, where is the representation?

Madam Speaker, farmers are confused, and so am I. I'm confused as to why this government insists on trudging through on an ideological piece of legislation without fully considering the effects it will have on our farmers. I'm confused as to why this government has not properly consulted with stakeholders, the people who are in the trenches. They deserve this. I'm confused as to why this government cannot get their story straight, their facts right, but I am even more confused as to how they can honestly expect us and all Albertans to trust them from now on.

Madam Speaker, this is not a democracy; this is a party running off ideology and refusing to listen to its citizens. They're telling rural Albertans how to live their lives and how to get paid doing it and how much they can make. This is a government that does not create peace. It creates disorder. But, most importantly, they have shown that this NDP caucus is not a good government.

I urge the members opposite to follow these tenets of our parliamentary system and respectfully ask them to vote in favour of this hoist amendment so that the bill, that all of our farmers have been asking for, can be killed.

Now, one of the members across the way mentioned their work experience dealing with federal bills. If I understand the member's underlying message, it was that government should take things to committee. She referred to the federal government. At the federal level all bills go to committee to ensure proper consultation, Madam Speaker. All bills. Here we have seen a few bills being sent to committee so that we can get proper consultation and proper direction from our stakeholders. But on the ones that really matter, such as Bill 6, for the farmers and ranchers, the 65,000 that are represented here: no consultation. That is shameful.

At the federal level they consult. They don't rush things through. They do their due diligence. Hearings are held. These are special meetings, where different people inside and outside the government

can comment on the bill. They ask government officials and experts, also known as witnesses, to come and answer questions. These special meetings are called committee meetings. These committees can suggest changes or amendments to the bill when it gives a report to the House. They then go to a report stage. This is where the committee reports the bill back to the House. All parliamentarians can then debate the bill. The bill then goes to third reading, where it is debated again. Madam Speaker, this is the proper process. This is the Westminster process, that has taken hundreds of years to develop because it is the right approach, because if you do it this way, you have the best chance of being able to get the legislation right for the people you're supposed to be representing.

Now, the message from the farmers and ranchers has been clear, and they have chanted it on the steps of our Legislature over and over again: kill Bill 6. I don't think you can miss that message unless you're not listening. I didn't see a lot of our members opposite out amongst the crowd out there.

Now, this is the worst part, Madam Speaker. While farmers and ranchers sat in these galleries over the past two weeks, they wrung their hands, they shook their heads, and they shed tears because of what this government is doing. The most deplorable part about it is that I've sat back here and looked over to the other side, and I've seen the smirks, the smiles, and the absolute disrespect for the farmers and ranchers and the plight that they're in. This is the sort of thing that is so unclassy, absolutely unclassy. I would hope – I would absolutely hope – that the members opposite would think about their actions, think about the people that they're going to be affecting by this legislation, that they're ramming through, and remember that if the tables were turned, would they appreciate this kind of behaviour towards them? I highly doubt it. I highly doubt it.

The people of Alberta, the farmers and ranchers that we have talked to have spoken clearly and have told us their message. We have over 30,000 petition names that we will be presenting. The parliamentary secretary has been overwhelmed by the names. We only have 20,000 that we can present today, which we will. We have over 10,000 more that we will present as soon as we can have them go through the proper processes and be checked. We have letter after letter that concerned Alberta farmers and ranchers have presented to us. I have no doubt, because I've seen who they've CCed these letters to, that they have sent them to the members opposite. I have never heard you read one of those letters. That is deplorable. Do you represent the people in your riding? If you do, then you should read the letters. You should represent the face of them.

11:50

This is the sort of thing that we in the opposition are opposed to. We are opposed to this government and the NDP caucus not representing their people, having the courage to be able to say that this is bad legislation or at least the courage to say that we need more consultation for the people we represent. We have not heard that, Madam Speaker, and the question is: why is it so silent on that side?

Improving safety on farms is critical, but these changes are coming too fast against our second most important industry and without consultation. The small family farm, the people who put the bread on our table, deserve to be better consulted about these changes. We are calling on the government, through this hoist amendment, to stop this bill and consult thoroughly before making any changes. The hoist amendment will postpone the passing of this bill for six months, which effectively means that it will not pass. This will also allow time for the government to really think about

the best amendments, the best way to approach this issue. It will also allow time for farmers and ranchers to be heard, to come to Edmonton to discuss their concerns, and to digest the proposed changes. Hopefully, the government will realize that an omnibus bill is the wrong way to go and break it up into maybe four bills and consult properly on each of those.

While we understand the need to bring in improved regulations for larger commercial operations, we are disappointed that there is no recognition of the special nature of the family farm. B.C. allows this special recognition for family farms. Alberta farmers are now at a competitive disadvantage to our neighbours.

The pace that this government has set will allow only 45 days to consult and pass a law that will make massive changes and bring in big costs and red-tape increases to our agricultural industry, especially for small farmers. Madam Speaker, we are in a situation already in this province where young children of farmers on small family farms are struggling with wanting to take over the family farm. Do you honestly believe that adding more red tape, more regulations, more cost to small family farms would incentivize young children to want to take over family farms? In fact, what you're doing is that you're actually saying, "Let's get rid of small family farms, and let's make the big corporate farms bigger," because you'll drive small family farms out of the industry. This is the sort of thing that we don't want to have.

We live in a province that has one of the highest per capita family farms in Canada. Do we want to stop that? Do we want to inhibit that? We should be proud of that. That's something that we should be proud of. This government needs to recognize this. Had they done the proper consultation, they would have recognized that. They would have seen that. But because they're pushing this through because of ideological reasons, they have not given this the proper due diligence that they need to, and farmers are upset because of that.

Farmers that we have talked to across the province do not feel consulted and were looking for more flexibility to achieve the desired outcome of improving safety on farms. If the government was serious about getting the legislation right, they would have actually consulted with stakeholders, not dropped wide-ranging omnibus legislation that will have an impact on the 45,000 farms and ranches across Alberta. The NDP has already aggravated Alberta's largest industry, energy, gas and oil. Now they're going after the second-largest . . .

The Deputy Speaker: I hesitate to interrupt you, hon. member, but pursuant to Government Motion 26, agreed to earlier this morning, the time allotted has now expired.

I must put the hoist amendment motion to a question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment H1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:55 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Hunter	Pitt
Anderson, W.	Jansen	Rodney
Barnes	Jean	Schneider
Clark	Loewen	Smith
Cyr	MacIntyre	Starke
Drysdale	McIver	Stier
Ellis	Nixon	Strankman

Fraser	Orr	Taylor	For the motion:		
Gotfried	Panda	Yao	Anderson, S.	Goehring	Miranda
Hanson			Babcock	Gray	Nielsen
12:10			Carson	Hinkley	Notley
Against the motion:			Ceci	Horne	Payne
Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Nielsen	Connolly	Kazim	Renaud
Babcock	Horne	Notley	Coolahan	Kleinsteuber	Rosendahl
Carson	Kazim	Payne	Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Schmidt
Connolly	Kleinsteuber	Renaud	Dach	Loyola	Schreiner
Coolahan	Littlewood	Rosendahl	Dang	Luff	Shepherd
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Schmidt	Drever	Malkinson	Sucha
Dach	Luff	Schreiner	Eggen	Mason	Sweet
Dang	Malkinson	Shepherd	Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Feehan	Mason	Sucha	Fitzpatrick	McKitrick	Westhead
Fitzpatrick	McCuaig-Boyd	Sweet	Ganley	McLean	Woollard
Ganley	McKitrick	Turner	Against the motion:		
Goehring	McLean	Westhead	Aheer	Hunter	Pitt
Gray	Miranda	Woollard	Anderson, W.	Jansen	Rodney
Totals:	For – 28	Against – 39	Barnes	Jean	Schneider
			Clark	Loewen	Smith
			Cyr	MacIntyre	Starke
			Drysdale	McIver	Stier
			Ellis	Nixon	Strankman
			Fraser	Orr	Taylor
			Gotfried	Panda	Yao
			Hanson		
			Totals:	For – 42	Against – 28

[Motion on amendment H1 lost]

The Deputy Speaker: I will now call the vote on Bill 6 in second reading.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for second reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 12:13 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

[Motion carried; Bill 6 read a second time]

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, the House stands adjourned.

[The Assembly adjourned at 12:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.]

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