



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
First Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, December 9, 2015

Day 31

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 29th Legislature

First Session

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

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

Party standings:

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

Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly

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

Executive Council

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

STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Ms Miller
Deputy Chair: Mr. Nielsen

Cyr	Sucha
Ellis	Taylor
McKitrick	Turner
Renaud	

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Miranda
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

Anderson, S.	Hanson
Carson	Hunter
Connolly	Jansen
Coolahan	Piquette
Dach	Schreiner
Fitzpatrick	Taylor
Gotfried	

Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee

Chair: Ms Gray
Deputy Chair: Ms Payne

Anderson, W.	Miranda
Clark	Nielsen
Cortes-Vargas	Nixon
Cyr	Renaud
Jansen	Starke
Loyola	Swann
McLean	van Dijken
Miller	

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Sweet
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

Hinkley	Pitt
Jansen	Rodney
Littlewood	Shepherd
Luff	Swann
McPherson	Westhead
Orr	Yao
Payne	

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Cortes-Vargas
Deputy Chair: Ms Sweet

Bhullar	Nixon
Connolly	Shepherd
Cooper	van Dijken
Horne	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schmidt

Cooper	Nielsen
Fildebrandt	Nixon
Luff	Piquette
McIver	Schreiner
McLean	

Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms McPherson
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

Anderson, S.	Kleinsteuber
Anderson, W.	Littlewood
Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
Fraser	Strankman
Hinkley	

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Mrs. Littlewood
Deputy Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick

Carson	McPherson
Coolahan	Nielsen
Cooper	Schneider
Ellis	Starke
Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	Woollard
Loyola	

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt
Deputy Chair: Ms Gray

Barnes	Malkinson
Bhullar	Miller
Cyr	Payne
Dach	Renaud
Gotfried	Turner
Hunter	Westhead
Loyola	

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Ms Goehring
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

Aheer	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	MacIntyre
Clark	Rosendahl
Dang	Stier
Drysdale	Sucha
Horne	Woollard
Kazim	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, December 9, 2015

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Hon. members, I hope that you'll give me some licence to make this introduction myself today. I have the honour of introducing a friend, a mentor to not only myself but to this Assembly. The former member is with us today in two capacities, first, as a former Speaker of this Assembly; and, secondly, as a board member for the Alberta Association of Former MLAs, which you may hear more about later today. It is my great pleasure to introduce Mr. Gene Zwozdesky, who is seated in our Speaker's gallery. If he would rise and receive the warm welcome.

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Dr. Starke: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is indeed my honour today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Ms Jacquie Fenske. Jacquie is the former Progressive Conservative caucus colleague who represented the good people of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville from 2012 to 2015. Previous to her election to this Legislature, she served a distinguished career as a three-term councillor in Strathcona, where she was a respected advocate for her rural areas. She has brought not only effective advocacy to the provincial Legislature, but she remains a strong voice for rural Albertans to this day. Despite the fact that Ms Fenske is being eclipsed by the Legislature clock, I would ask that she slide out from behind it and accept the warm traditional welcome of the Assembly.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there any school groups with us today?

I would recognize the Member for Edmonton-Rutherford.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you. Hon. members, on behalf of yourself, Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise and introduce to you and through you the Legislative Assembly Office managers. We have Scott Ellis, senior financial officer and director of FMAS; Cheryl Scarlett, director of human resources, information technology, and broadcast services; Jacqueline Breault, manager of corporate services; Val Rutherford, manager of IT planning and development; Lyndsay Tischer, human resource services manager; Jillian Tilley, manager of IT operations; Darren Joy, manager of financial services; Val Footz, Legislature Librarian; Rhonda Sorensen, manager of corporate communications and broadcast services; Al Chapman, manager of visitor services; Allison Quast, executive assistant to the Clerk. They are joined by Jessica Dion, paralegal; and Trafton Koenig, legal counsel. They are here for this historic and special day of recognition for Dr. David McNeil, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly. They have had the privilege of working closely alongside Dr. McNeil over the last several years. I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I'm pleased to meet the people who do the real work around here.

I would also acknowledge the Member for Peace River.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the great honour today of rising to introduce to you and through you Dr. Mary Machum, who happens to be our Clerk's fiancée, and his little sister, Ms Linda McNeil. Now, it says here that this is a real surprise to the Clerk, but I suspect he's kind of had a sense that this was coming. I know we're all thrilled to welcome these two women, who are able to join us today to see the Clerk in his home away from home. I would ask both Mary and Linda to rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome, guests. This is a particularly pleasant day for this House and a milestone.

I would ask the Member for Edmonton-Decore to please rise.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly some of the hard-working staff from the Edmonton North primary care network. The Edmonton PCN, located at Northgate Centre, is comprised of family doctors and health care professionals working together to improve the health of the community. Visiting us today are Leanne McGeachy, general manager; and Carly Strong, communications co-ordinator. I would ask them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Minister of Education and Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly here today the AUPE Pay and Social Equity Committee. With us observing the proceedings are Susan Slade, Phyllis Faulkner, Raminder Gill, Barbara Brolly, Janet Ansah, Val Whelen, Cassandra Campeau, Christina Misquitta, and last but not least, my wife, Somboon Eggen. If they could please rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Theresa Levasseur. Theresa joins us today because of the outstanding work she does within our city. As the founder of Smile-Edmonton Theresa spends every Sunday in front of the Hope Mission, feeding and interacting with as well as clothing the people waiting in line for the shelter. Her goal from the onset was to connect those who have enough with those who don't. I have watched Smile-Edmonton grow over the last few years, and I am very grateful for the work that they have done within our community. Theresa is accompanied today by her daughter Rachelle as well as Eve Butz. I'd ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm extremely happy today to be able to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly my cousin Tracy Douglas-Blowers. Tracy is currently the director of membership and industry relations with the Alberta Hotel & Lodging Association. She also served as councillor for the city of Lloydminster, being elected in 1997. Her election and desire to give back to her community was a huge motivation for me

to aspire for public office as well at such a young age. I'd ask that she please rise and receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.
Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise on this most special day – it's bring-your-cousin-to-work day – and introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly my second cousin Mike Shiplack. Like so many before him, he has brought his talents to Alberta, from Saskatchewan most recently. Mike, I would ask you to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.
The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

1:40

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a real pleasure for me today to introduce through you to the Assembly five prominent community members from Mill Woods, active members of the Alberta Liberal Party. I'll introduce them to you and ask them to stand as I mention their names so that we can recognize them. Sital Singh Nanuan is a successful engineer. He has been president of the Edmonton Mill Woods Liberal Party of Canada's riding association for many years. He ran as a candidate and has helped many other candidates in various capacities. Mr. Nanuan also played a major role in the water treatment system for Golden Temple as an engineer. Amarjeet Singh Grewal is a renowned community leader and has held various positions with the Liberal Party of Canada along with running for the federal Liberals in Edmonton Mill Woods in 2006. He also has a strong background as a union leader and activist.

Maghar Singh Ubhi is a very successful hotelier and leader in the Sikh community – stay standing, if you will; that's fine – and has held various positions with the Liberal Party over the past many years, also as a fundraising chair for Edmonton-Mill Creek. Parminder Singh Boparai is a successful entrepreneur and is currently serving as treasurer for the federal Liberal EDA of Edmonton Mill Woods, and Avtar Singh Pannu has served as president of the Sikh Federation of Edmonton and was one of the key members in then Liberal leader and current Senator Grant Mitchell's leadership team.

Thank you for joining us. Let's give them the warm welcome of the Legislature.

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

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Leah and Christine Allen. Leah is a proud born-and-raised Albertan from my constituency who lives in Cochrane. She lives with posttraumatic stress disorder from a former abusive marriage. She is also a mother of three fantastic girls, one of whom is with us today. Leah is a volunteer in her community of Cochrane not only as a 4-H leader but in the local schools as well. Leah's daughter Christine became interested in the Legislature a year ago after learning about government in her grade 7 social class. She also took part in a mock vote for the recent provincial and municipal elections, and she is involved with 4-H, curling, volleyball, and the chess club. I'd ask them both to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ministerial Statements

The Speaker: Hon. members, you will note that at the table today we have all of the table officers present. This Assembly has very many devoted public servants who every day assist and support us in this institution we call democracy. One of those individuals will be soon leaving us after some 28 years of service.

I will make a few additional comments, but I know there are several members of the House who would like to make some comments. I would ask the Government House Leader to proceed.

Dr. W.J. David McNeil Clerk of the Legislative Assembly

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's indeed my pleasure today to acknowledge the distinguished service of the Clerk of our Legislative Assembly, Dr. David McNeil. After 27 years and as the second-longest serving Clerk in Alberta's history Dr. McNeil is retiring. We've had six Clerks since the first sitting of the House in 1906, and only one has served longer. David McNeil has served with five Speakers and seven Premiers over that time. David McNeil became Clerk of the Legislative Assembly on August 1, 1987, the day after Edmonton's tornado, the worst natural disaster in our history, and he has weathered many storms since, deftly guiding this House through procedure in a nonpartisan, informed, and objective manner.

Now, Mr. Speaker, knowing that this was coming up, I took the opportunity in the halls on the way out of the building to look at all of the pictures – you know, they have the pictures of all the MLAs and the officers of the Assembly – and I saw that the most consistent photo in each Assembly's picture was Dr. McNeil. I could follow him back into, well, not quite his youth, but he had the most amazing pair of 1980s glasses in one of the earliest ones.

No doubt his doctorate in management science has served the House well as he helped the Legislature navigate a course through, shall we say, some rocky situations from time to time. Equally, his chemical engineering degree, unique amongst parliamentarians, prepared him to be a problem solver. He knows which things not to mix.

Whether it was ensuring that office space was provided in all corners of the province for our constituencies or tackling complex issues over caucus allowances, Dr. McNeil's approach has always been based on finding good solutions. As he described his role: my job is to look after the 87 politicians and make sure they have the office space, the staff, and all the other resources they need to do an effective job representing their constituents.

Beyond his duties in the House, Dr. McNeil's responsibilities extend to all government and opposition caucus offices, constituency offices and allowances, the Legislature Library, *Hansard*, and the smooth running of the offices of the Assembly, including the Information and Privacy Commissioner, the Auditor General, and the Ethics Commissioner.

Dr. McNeil's distinguished career has guided this Legislature through many transitions over the past 28 years, and through those transitions he has offered a steady hand and learned advice. He has also embraced technological advance so that, for example, the records of the Legislature are now available digitally to all Albertans no matter how remote. Recognizing his exemplary service, Dr. McNeil was awarded a Queen's Diamond Jubilee medal in November 2012. His prior public service includes duties with the Alberta government's personnel administration office and the government of Saskatchewan. He has been actively involved with organizations such as the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Athabasca University, and the United Way.

Hon. members, in view of his significant contribution to current and, particularly, to former members of the Assembly, it's my great pleasure to announce that the board of directors of the Alberta Association of Former MLAs this last weekend voted unanimously to make Dr. David McNeil its first honorary member. In this regard I was very pleased that former Speaker Zwodzesky, who chairs the membership committee of that organization, has delivered to me a letter confirming this, and I will later table that in the Assembly for the record.

On a personal note, I just want to say that Dr. McNeil has been a good friend. I've admired his advice and his great sense of humour. We've had some great talks about fast cars, of which he is a bit of an aficionado, and he is a big fan of NDP Christmas videos as well, I think, Mr. Speaker. I believe I speak for all MLAs when I congratulate David McNeil for this honour, thank him for his dedicated, exemplary public service, and wish him a long and happy retirement. [Standing ovation]

The Speaker: Hon. members, I know there is much more applause to come. There are a number of other individuals who would like to extend their appreciation.

The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat, representing the Official Opposition.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pleasure that I rise here to honour a great man and a great friend to all in the Assembly, Dr. David McNeil. Dr. McNeil has served the Assembly with honour and distinction for almost 30 years. Dr. McNeil has seen seven Premiers come and go from this House during his time as Clerk. Some of them went before they were ready to go, but you, sir, you always served well. The Clerk was also there to provide assistance and leadership to 392 MLAs during his tenure, and I am proud to be one of them.

I first got to know Dr. McNeil four years ago, upon my election in 2012. At that time 15 of the 17 members in our caucus were brand new. I remember thinking that Dr. McNeil would need a lot of patience with the sizable crop of new MLAs. While some might say patience, I like to think that we were just testing him to keep him sharp. I sure hope the experience working with those rookies came in handy this time around because the Wildrose elected 18 brand new MLAs, just a fraction of the 70 new faces.

1:50

All of us have done our job better because of Dr. McNeil's kind assistance. Dr. McNeil's ability to handle the demands of new members requires a special kind of patience and delicacy that he has demonstrated both time and time again. It was about a year ago that some of my former colleagues decided that Christmas would be a good time to really test the mettle of our Clerk and our entire staff. With just a day or two before LAO staff were to break for the holidays, news broke that some significant MLA office and personnel changes were required.

His service to the province and this Assembly is well known, but I want to take the opportunity to thank him on a personal level for all you did for me and the Wildrose caucus at that time. I also know that my colleagues who were here at the time share that feeling as well.

Our House leader can attest to the value that Dr. McNeil provided to our caucus as our House leader previously served as our chief of staff. I know he wishes that he could be here to speak his tribute, but he wanted me to let the Assembly know that not only is our Clerk the consummate professional; he is also one of the friendliest people on the grounds. I agree. He wanted to particularly thank the Clerk for the kindness and attention he gave to the House leader's

small children. I know that a generation of school kids have experienced that very same thing.

I am just one of the about 400 former and current members of this Assembly who could stand up and wax poetic about their experience with Dr. McNeil. Sir, you've served us all well. I want to thank the Clerk for all the help and guidance he has given me. I want to thank him for his determination to protect and safeguard democracy in this place, and I want to thank him for his wonderful sense of humour. Those are all qualities I will always remember.

On behalf of the Wildrose Official Opposition I wish Dr. McNeil all the best in his much-deserved retirement, and I know he'll enjoy much of it ripping around in cars, as the Government House Leader said, often too fast. Best of luck, Dr. McNeil, and thank you for all your service. We will all miss you.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

On the way in the Clerk did not know that his other table officers were in the line behind us. I whispered to him as we were coming in if I could have some licence to seek that other members might get a chance to speak, and he gave me the same line that he's continued to give me: "Mr. Speaker, follow the procedure. Follow the procedure."

Notwithstanding that, I will therefore ask for unanimous consent to recognize the comments from the third party and the leaders of the Liberals and the Alberta Party.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to speak on behalf of both present and past members of the Progressive Conservative caucuses that have served with Dr. McNeil in this august Chamber during his long and distinguished career as our Clerk. In speaking to my colleagues both past and present, there is a universal sense of respect and admiration for Dr. McNeil.

He has been integral to the development of the Legislative Assembly Office, the LAO, as an independent and highly professional body serving Members of this Legislative Assembly and assisting them in discharging their duties to Albertans. In fact, the LAO did not exist as an independent, nonpartisan body in this province until 1972. Since taking on the role of Clerk in 1987, Dr. McNeil has brought his professionalism, his analytical ability, and his steadfast adherence to the principles of independence and impartiality. As only the sixth Clerk, as has been noted, to serve this Assembly since 1905 – and I would say that I take a certain amount of guilty pleasure in saying that we in the Progressive Conservative caucus helped pad his Premier statistics – he has gained a national and international reputation, well deserved, as the dean of Clerks in all of the Commonwealth parliaments all around the world.

I know that people know Dr. McNeil for his unimpeachable professionalism and his calm demeanour, but he is also well known for his enthusiasm for working with the youth of Alberta, whether it's been with the hundreds of pages that have served in this Chamber, with the thousands of children that have attended the School at the Legislature program as well as the MLA for a Day initiative. Professionalism, mentorship, leadership, and devotion to duty: these have all been the hallmarks of his service to this Assembly and to the people of Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, when preparing a tribute such as this, I always like to probe for some personal anecdotes and accounts that might be lesser known about the individual. Well, I found a few. Dr. McNeil is a true Renaissance man. He keeps up to date with the latest trends in music, in art, and he also worked for many years as a ski instructor at Snow Valley. I guess it's not as little known as I thought it was, but our Clerk drives a Porsche and regularly attends,

as he did this year, the Porsche Sport Driving School. Well, finally we've answered the mystery as to who was burning doughnuts in the Legislature parking lot earlier this year.

Mr. Speaker, on a final note that is very personal to our caucus, I want to thank Dr. McNeil for his friendship and compassion on the day of the tragic accident that took the Member for Calgary-Greenway from among us. Doctor, your calm on a day when our hearts were broken and emotions were laid bare was a source of great comfort to our caucus and indeed to all members of this Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, on behalf of all of the members of Progressive Conservative caucuses past and present, our legislative staff, our constituency office staff, those present here today, and for the hundreds that have served in the past with you, we all convey our very best wishes to you for a retirement that is filled with many new adventures, very few points of order, and that your orders of the day and your daily routine include many hours of cruising around our wonderful province, that you have served with such dedication and distinction.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A real honour to stand today on behalf of the Liberal caucus and express my personal appreciation and that of many, many past Liberals to Dr. David McNeil, a gracious and distinguished Clerk, as he prepares to close his final days in service of this Assembly. For 28 years, Dr. McNeil, you have helped our Assembly do the people's work. Your time in office has seen passionate debate on issues of importance, filibusters some of us will never forget, amendments, subamendments, Orders of the Day, sittings that stretched through night into morning, and even perhaps, Mr. Speaker, the occasional violation of orders 23(h), (i), (j), or (k).

Whatever the issue, David McNeil was there to assist all of us – our Speaker's predecessors and all members of the Assembly – to operate in a productive and orderly and sometimes respectful fashion, including the very challenging renovations he oversaw on the federal building, which have been a phenomenon for all of us today.

David, your time in service to this Assembly has witnessed a sea change in technology, functionality, and ideology. You've witnessed changes in ministers, ministries, leaders, Premiers, parties, and governments, yet at all points, no matter the challenge or test, your abilities were always equal or superior to the task. Please accept my personal thanks and that of the Assembly and all Albertans, that we represent, for your wonderful service, and to you, sir, good health in the years ahead.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, in a Legislature that is filled with ever-evolving procedures, tumultuous change, robust debate – sometimes maybe a little too robust, as we've seen – there has been Dr. David McNeil, serving, as we've heard today, with five different Speakers, seven different Premiers, through eight elections, and with 392 different members. I've just briefly done some quick math, and that is 44 per cent of all members who have ever served in this Assembly.

He is a stalwart, reassuring presence within the Legislative Assembly Office, and I can say, as a new MLA and, I hope, on behalf of all of the new members who were recently elected, that he has given us comfort and assurance, answered every single question. It has been remarkable, a remarkably easy transition. But

despite those changes – the government moves to new buildings, the ever-changing uses of technology in the way we conduct business – Dr. McNeil has guided us through all of these adjustments with a steady, calm, and professional hand.

When I was elected, I assumed, like I'm sure most of us did, that Dr. McNeil was, in fact, a lawyer, but he's not, as we've heard today. He's a professional engineer, which I believe makes him absolutely unique amongst Clerks of all Assemblies in Canada and very likely the world.

2:00

Dr. McNeil has referred to himself and his processes as that of a problem solver. We give you lots of problems to solve, I think, as well. Problem solvers have a different way of looking at the world. They give themselves room to analyze, think laterally to come up with unique and innovative solutions, and when determining budgets, who but an engineer would turn to algebraic formulas to ensure a lack of bias and fairness in something that could be – how should we say it? – somewhat contentious? In tackling these complex issues with an analytical approach, gathering information and then coming up with practical, pragmatic, and fair solutions, Dr. McNeil should be an inspiration to us all, and indeed I think you are.

I want to thank you for your years of service, for guiding us, and for teaching so many of us new members what it means to serve as a professional. Dr. McNeil, thank you, and good luck in your next adventures.

The Speaker: Dr. McNeil, I've always felt that when one makes changes in one's life, as you are now doing, there's no greater acknowledgement that can come from two groups: first of all, your family and, secondly, the peers that you work with. I've always measured that as a good, sound measurement in determining that I was successful or not successful. I think you can see, by the tone and the presence of the people here, that you truly have been successful.

I want to personally thank you. Contrary to what the hon. Government House Leader may have said, this particular transition with this particular Speaker was a unique one, and I hope I don't end up sometime in a book that you've written. I personally want to thank you for the time and effort that you've provided to me. It is very much appreciated.

Hon. members, there will be another, more formal event that will be taking place at a later date. But I would ask that we all rise again and express our collective appreciation. And you know what? The table can stand up, too. [Standing ovation]

Oral Question Period

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

Farm and Ranch Worker Legislation

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP is pulling every trick out of their book to ram through legislation that farmers and ranchers are simply asking to be consulted on, tricks that the NDP once railed against. Once upon a time the Government House Leader said that, quote, this time allocation thing is a way for the government to short-circuit democracy. Premier, we've seen consultation ignored, debate muzzled, and now democracy subverted. Is there any principle you won't sacrifice to ram through your agenda?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, to begin with and to be clear, the principle that we are actually pursuing with respect to Bill 6 is the protection of vulnerable workers, that have been prevented from accessing that for far too long. That is the principle that we are pursuing. I'd like to read a quote as well. It goes like this. "I mean, we're prepared to do anything, as long as it has an exit strategy. We're not prepared to continue on in the same filibuster that we've had all day today." That, Mr. Speaker, is the Leader of the Official Opposition when he was in Ottawa.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, the NDP have broken the trust of Albertans. The story changes all the time, and they have no interest in letting debate see the light of day. We've gone from the NDP proclaiming family farms would have to be covered to flip-flopping and blaming it on misinformation. This isn't about misinformation. This is about the government deceiving farmers and ranchers and playing fast and loose with their lifestyles. To the Premier: how could Albertans ever trust you when you operate under such confusion, secrecy, and arrogance?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I've said before, we very clearly brought in an amendment to clarify the confusion, which I said very clearly that I take responsibility for. But this bill is about protecting vulnerable, paid farm workers and ensuring that they get access to workers' compensation and have the ability to refuse unsafe work. These are fundamental human rights, and it's about time that they, like other Alberta workers, can enjoy them.

Mr. Barnes: You reap what you sow. I can promise you this, Mr. Speaker. The NDP will reap a legacy of broken trust, deafness to the concerns of constituents, ignorance of Albertan values, and a constant attack on Alberta's industries and economy. We've seen massive taxes on all consumers, burdens on the energy sector, and now they've sharpened their focus onto agriculture. It's with a heavy heart I ask: which group of Albertans will the NDP go after next?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, I think just on the issue of Bill 6 and the process, one thing that I forgot to mention previously was that the Leader of the Official Opposition, when he was in Ottawa, voted in favour of time allocation 60 times. Six, zero. Sixty times. Now, I'm sorry that we haven't given him that opportunity to vote for it that many times here in Alberta. But you know what? I think that perhaps they should consider establishing just a little bit of consistency on that side of the House on some of these issues.

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

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government continues to tear down relationships with rural Alberta and make a mess of Bill 6. Yesterday they invoked closure to muzzle debate and force Bill 6 through this Assembly without consultation and, indeed, co-operation. This is a drastic step. In the words of the Government House Leader: this time allocation thing is a way to short-circuit democracy. To the Premier: why are you short-circuiting democracy and muzzling free speech in this Legislature?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, to be clear, the Assembly has debated Bill 6 so far for 17 hours, and that's just in second reading. I'd like to just read another quote. "This motion . . . to time limit debate and to get it done today [is being done] so that

we're done in about 15 hours." That again is a quote from the Leader of the Official Opposition when he was in Ottawa justifying a time limit motion, fifteen hours. We're at 17, and we're not done, as much as I'm sure you'd like to be today. The fact of the matter is that we've given tremendous opportunity for debate in this Legislature, and we'd like to get to a point where we can introduce our amendment.

Mr. Strankman: Again, Mr. Speaker, the Premier talks about regaining trust with rural Alberta. The only way she can regain that trust – the only way – is if she sends Bill 6 to committee or kills it outright. She doesn't understand that farmers hold the notion of co-operation in high regard. We are in a constant state of co-operation. To the Premier. Farmers want to work with you, not against you. Why will you not co-operate and put the brakes on Bill 6?

The Speaker: Hon. member, again, through the Speaker if you would.

The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, as I've said before and will say again, it's very important to us that vulnerable, paid farm workers who are not related to the farmers for whom they work can refuse unsafe work should they be directed to do it and they and their families can receive the benefits of workers' compensation should they be injured or killed. After that what we are going to do is consult on the regulations extensively. We've said that over and over. Those guys don't want to believe it, but the proof will be in our actions and in our record. You can trust that we will absolutely do that, and that's my message to farmers.

Mr. Strankman: Mr. Speaker, regulations are unaccountable law.

If the last few weeks were not enough evidence that the Premier should know better than to take farmers and ranchers for granted, there will be more protests, there will be more rallies, and there will be more letters, phone calls, and e-mails. They won't forget, and in 2019 this government will pay a heavy electoral price. Does the Premier think that it is worth it, or does she want to start over, consult, and do Bill 6 right?

2:10

Ms Notley: Well, as I've said before, Mr. Speaker, what I'm very committed to doing is respecting and enforcing the basic human rights of this very vulnerable group of workers, human rights that have been ignored for far too long, and I am very, very proud that our caucus is coming together to make sure that those rights are finally being recognized in this province like every other province in the country.

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

Climate Change Strategy

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The price of oil is below \$40, and 80,000 Albertans have lost work, the majority of them in our energy sector. What's the NDP response? Bring in a \$3 billion carbon tax that targets businesses and families across the province. We know that this isn't satisfying our critics, but now we are hearing that Ottawa is about to sign a deal in Paris that will make things even worse. It's crazy to think that Alberta has both its provincial and federal government working against their main industry. How can the Premier stand for this?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's been our view and one that has been supported by an unprecedented level of consensus that it is in the best interests of future Albertans – our children, our grandchildren – and also in the best interests of our current energy industry for us to do our part in a reasonable, productive way on climate change so that we can increase our access to markets, so that we can remediate our reputation, and so that we can help diversify the economy and strengthen the energy industry. That's why we've had such unprecedented support for the plan that we have moving forward. We will continue to work with Albertans, and we believe that in the long run it'll prove to have been a good decision.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mrs. Aheer: Our children and grandchildren are going to be paying for this debt for generations.

Our energy companies are barely able to keep their heads above water, and all the NDP talk about is this new way to further strangle our economy. Companies are cutting wages and shedding 500 jobs a day. If Ontario manufacturers were getting hammered like this, they would be talking about bailouts, but because Alberta has now lost its voice, they're talking about how they can make things even worse. A Trudeau government sticking its nose in Alberta is bad news. Can the Premier tell Albertans why the government isn't fighting back?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, in fact, our climate leadership plan is a practical, made-in-Alberta solution that will protect Alberta's interests. That was one of the reasons we moved forward so ambitiously with this plan. We knew that if we put a practical solution in place that enjoyed the consensus that this one does, we could then say to the federal government: "We've got our plan. We're doing our part. You do your thing, but that's what we're doing here." That's what we did. We're standing up for Alberta. We're standing up for Alberta industry, and we're making sure that we all move forward in a way that builds our economy here in this province.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. It's clear that when the Premier called us embarrassing cousins, she meant it. That's why they're bringing in a \$3 billion backdoor PST, it's why they don't take these threats against our industry seriously, and it's why they're forcing through a royalty review. The carbon tax brought Alberta goodwill for less than a week. ForestEthics is back to campaigning against pipelines. Ottawa is blocking tankers on the west coast, and now we're talking about even more risky policies coming from this Trudeau government. Why are you standing up for everyone but Albertans? Why, Premier? Why?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, as we move forward with our climate leadership plan, we will continue to work as productive partners with industry and with other civil society leaders in Alberta. At the end of the day this plan will help our industry. It will help our access to markets. It will help all Albertans. It will help our kids. At the end of the day, you know, ignoring climate change is not the solution to a low price of oil. I know that those guys think that laying off nurses, laying off teachers, and ignoring climate change is a solution and that somehow the price of oil will come up if you

do that, but that's not the solution. We need to take action, and that's what we've done.

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

Farm and Ranch Worker Legislation (continued)

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the Minister of Municipal Affairs, when talking about Bill 6, stated: "We will move forward on [changes] with Bill 6 because they're very basic and a small piece of the big picture moving forward." Minister, given your government's ongoing fondness for legislating first and hastily consulting later or not at all, please elaborate on what the big picture is for farmers and ranchers in the future.

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciate the opportunity. What the member was referring to yesterday was the fact that what we are doing as of January 1 is this very basic thing where we are giving vulnerable paid farm workers access to the right to refuse unsafe work and ensuring that they have access to WCB. As we've said over and over, as with any sector of the economy, whether it be agriculture, oil and gas, manufacturing, any one, there is a lot of work that has to be done to negotiate the specific health and safety standards, and that is the work that we will do in consultation with industry stakeholders going forward.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. McIver: So, Mr. Speaker, it's about WCB. On May 16, 2013, the Premier decided to absolutely trash the WCB. During her drive-by smearing of WCB she stated, and I quote: employers pay almost half the national average of what employers in every other province pay into the workers' compensation system. To the Premier: if you really believe this to be true, after you are done forcing WCB onto farmers and ranchers, can they expect their premiums to double under your direction?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What I have said is that certain issues that the WCB deals with can be improved, and we're going to move forward with that because we think injured workers deserve fair compensation. The other thing, to be clear, is that those farms that will be adopting WCB will be those farms who have paid farm workers, not unpaid neighbours, not family members, and not even paid family members. So to be very, very clear about that because the member misstated the presumption in his question, overall what we're going to do . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. McIver: Brace yourselves, farmers and ranchers.

Just yesterday a minister of the Crown, while answering a question from the opposition, turned and taunted hard-working farm and ranch families who were seated in the gallery. This comes after the Premier, shortly after winning on May 5, stated, and I quote: Alberta has voted for change; they voted for a new kind of respect and a renewed relationship with their government. To the Premier: is your minister's rudeness to guests of this House yesterday indicative of the respect that Albertans can expect from you and your government?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, I completely disagree with the untrue characterization of the answers that were given by our ministers yesterday as they were struggling to be heard over the din over there. What is indicative of the respect of this government is the fact that our ministers have gone to 8 consultations across this province in the last two weeks, and they have met with Albertans. They have gone to rallies of people that were very angry with them and talked to them one on one. They stood on benches in the middle of rallies to try and get their point across. They've made themselves accessible in a way that members from the former government couldn't even begin to imagine because they never ever did it, and that . . .

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

Members' Accommodation Allowance

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, we as MLAs get a pretty fair deal. We have stable income at a time when many Albertans are losing their jobs, and our travel and living expenses are taken care of. MLAs are allowed to claim \$1,930 per month, irrespective of what it actually costs us, for a living allowance. In my case that's nearly \$700 a month more, or \$10,000 a year more, than it actually costs me. Now, I've found a way around the rules to claim less, but the system is set up to allow MLAs to actually claim more than it costs them for rent every month. To the Premier: do you feel that's fair?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. With respect, I believe the question is not in order as it deals with a matter that has been delegated by this Legislature to the Members' Services Committee. It is not a matter for the government to answer.

Mr. Clark: Mr. Speaker, I'll keep trying because the Members' Services Committee, in fact, is not . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, I believe that the Government House Leader is correct. This is a matter for the administration of the Assembly. Do you have a first supplemental question?

2:20

Mr. Clark: I'll ask the second question, Mr. Speaker. I think I know what the answer is going to be.

One of the first things that I did as an MLA, even before I was sworn in, was in fact to request this of the Members' Services Committee, that the rules change to allow MLAs or require MLAs to claim only up to the \$1,930 cap, not absolutely that amount. When that does come before the Members' Services Committee, Madam Premier, will your members support my motion?

The Speaker: I believe, hon. member, that if that line of questioning continues, you are out of order with respect to this question.

I would like to move on to Red Deer-South if I could.

Promotion of Alberta's Energy Industry

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituents know that if we want to gain access to new markets for our energy resources, we need to improve our international reputation when it comes to the responsible and sustainable development of our energy resources.

To the Minister of Energy: how will a climate leadership plan help our energy producers access new markets for their products?

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, it's been up to us to demonstrate to people that we're taking climate change seriously. A few weeks ago that was proven to us when President Obama made his decision on Keystone. When it comes to market access, we need to improve our reputation environmentally and work on those markets to get our product to tidewater.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that building and maintaining positive relationships with other provinces will be crucial to ensuring the future health of our energy industry, to the same minister: what are you doing to improve relationships with your energy counterparts in other provinces when it comes to Alberta's energy products?

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, we continue to meet with industry, and many of our industries are multiprovincial, in fact multinational. Last June I met in Halifax with my minister counterparts. Recently I met with the Minister of Natural Resources, and in the last few weeks I've met with four pipeline companies to talk about how we can work together as government and industry to make those pipelines a reality.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that promoting Alberta's energy industry to oil and gas investors is of particular importance given the current economic situation, again to the Energy minister: what are you doing to assure energy investors that we are open for business and to encourage investment to stay here in Alberta?

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, first of all, from day one I've said that we are an energy province, and we will continue to be an energy province. We meet constantly with industry. We've conducted talks back and forth with industry on their concerns with business and markets, and we have worked with investors, talking to them both in Calgary and across the country to discuss knowledge. We're also putting money into ATB and AIMCo and Alberta Enterprise Corporation.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Farm and Ranch Worker Legislation

(continued)

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to be an MLA for a riding that represents so many farmers and ranchers. They are the pillars of their community, the hardest workers I know, and they embody what being an Albertan is. The NDP's handling of Bill 6 has been a complete slap in the face to these tens of thousands of Albertans, and they won't forget how you've broken their trust and how they have been treated. To the Premier: why do you insist on pushing forward with this bill without consulting the very Albertans whose livelihood you are destroying?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We certainly have heard a number of concerns, and we've honoured those. We wanted to make sure that the intent of our bill, which was the intent from the beginning, protecting vulnerable paid farm workers, was going to move forward. In terms of the specifics that have been raised, a number of them will be fleshed out in collaboration with different types of industry experts in the months and years to come because we want to make sure that we get this right, but we aren't going to stop standing up for vulnerable farm workers in the meantime.

Mr. Nixon: Given that the yells and chants of thousands of Albertans who have showed up at rallies all across this province won't make the Premier listen and use common sense, maybe this will. Given that last night as we debated Bill 6 in this Chamber there were farmers and ranchers up in the galleries listening closely and all they heard from the NDP was the deafening roar of silence, I'd like the minister of agriculture to answer this question. What does he have to say to the two ladies who drove all the way from Nanton and listened with tears in their eyes?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our government is incredibly proud of our agriculture minister for his leadership on this initiative. Yes, there have been times that he has had to enter into difficult conversations, but he has stood strong to the principle of supporting and standing up for people when they are killed on the job, injured on the job, making sure that they have basic protections and that they have compensation. That is fundamental. He has to answer to the family members of those people who die on the farms in unsafe workplaces if we don't move forward with this legislation. He's not willing to do that, so he's going to make sure that he continues to work in collaboration with farmers and ranchers and industry while protecting workers.

Mr. Nixon: What they did, Mr. Speaker, was taunt them.

Whereas the NDP know full well that they have dug themselves into a hole on Bill 6 that they are too stubborn to climb out of and given that their treatment of farmers and ranchers should be a rude wake-up call to all Albertans about how this government is willing to govern, I would like to give the NDP one more chance. For the thousandth time, will you do the right thing, listen to Alberta's farmers and ranchers, and kill Bill 6?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know that members opposite may find it difficult to actually think about when you promise you're going to do something in an election and you get elected, you fulfill that promise. We promised that we were going to move forward on protecting farm workers and ranch workers. We heard that there are concerns about how that is going to happen and protecting neighbours who want to help out with neighbours and ensuring that there can be 4-H going forward, ensuring that family members who may get paid through the corporation can still do that without having to be part of this legislation. It isn't intended to cause any concern. It's intended to protect vulnerable workers, and that's exactly what it's going to do.

Climate Change Strategy (continued)

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Speaker, we applaud the government's enthusiasm, but we're more concerned with their inexperience: the climate

change strategy, Bill 5, Bill 6, Bill 8, and growing concerns from the energy companies, school boards, nurses, doctors, teachers, of course farmers, taxpayers in general, and we're also hearing from their own appointed government experts. To the Premier. The head of your climate change panel has recently stated that if Alberta is the only player in the game trying to achieve the climate change goal, we will run the risk of losing all future investment in our energy sector. Premier, wouldn't it be wise to start listening to the people and slow down?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that question. I think, unfortunately, that he has the comments out of context. The head of our panel has said that were we to move beyond what is currently recommended in terms of carbon pricing and other initiatives, we would then run into difficult problems with respect to emissions leakage and trade-exposed industry. But it was the opinion of that panel, which achieved great consensus as you know, that the carbon pricing mechanisms and the other mechanisms included within the recommendations are sufficient to get us to emissions reductions while ensuring we don't experience emissions leakage or . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Fraser: Given the fact that Germany has already surpassed Alberta's targets in terms of green energy delivery and given the fact that they have just commissioned 16 coal-fired energy plants to get up and running and that here in Alberta we don't even have that green energy yet or the transmission lines to feed the province's energy and the current government is in a rush to shut down coal-fired generation plants, to the Minister of Energy: can you please articulate the plan moving forward so that Albertans won't literally be left in the cold or the dark?

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, in our plan we are moving forward to work – we've described the what; now we're working with industry on the how. We will be shortly appointing a facilitator that will work with the coal industry, the communities, and the workers for a plan. We have 15 years to transition these folks, and we will be doing that in a thoughtful and collaborative manner.

Mr. Fraser: Given the fact that the information coming from the Paris climate change summit is telling us that the federal Liberals have deferred to the Green Party's Elizabeth May to represent Canada around further discussions and now the Liberals are setting a target of only a 1.5 degree increase in global temperature versus the 2 that Alberta has set, experts are saying that if we follow this, it will be catastrophic to Alberta. Premier: will you stand up for Alberta and ensure that you will listen to your own experts and put a stop to this idea?

2:30

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that question because that's exactly what we're going to do. As I said before, the reason we developed this plan was so that we didn't have a different plan from Ottawa or elsewhere imposed upon us. We have confidence that this plan represents real action with real progress and real, measurable outcomes, and we will stick to this plan because it is what represents the best balance between environmental issues, civil society issues, and industry leadership and it preserves and protects the integrity and viability of our economy, including the energy industry. So that's what we will do. We will take a balanced

approach, and we'll move forward in a way that protects Alberta's interests.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

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

Northern Alberta Concerns

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For weeks we have been warning NDP MLAs that rural Alberta is upset and that they feel they are being ignored. This is especially the case in northern Alberta. They've been forced to drive hours just to try to get someone to listen. In Vegreville farmers and ranchers were either furious or have been driven to tears with their opinions being completely ignored. When is this NDP government going to start listening to the people of northern Alberta instead of ramming through misguided legislation?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Certainly, the first consultation meeting we had was in northern Alberta, and we did not feel that the information being shared through official channels was in line with what the bill and the intention of the regulations were going to be. That's why we changed the structure of the meetings. We've had cabinet ministers at every single meeting since then. I was in Medicine Hat. We've got members in northern Alberta. We've had members consulting throughout Alberta, and we are certainly happy to take their feedback into consideration as we move forward in partnership on supporting vulnerable farm workers and protecting the family farm.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Northern Alberta is tired of being ignored. Given that northern Alberta, where one-third of government revenues come from, has been plagued with many issues along our main transportation corridors, from road bans to crumbling highways, loss of rail services, when will this government stop ignoring northern Albertans, stop hurting our economy, and start listening to us on issues such as Bill 6 and the job-killing carbon tax?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I'm proud of the fact that I grew up in northern Alberta. Many of our caucus members did, and we are certainly engaged in collaborations with communities. We have strong representation in our government caucus as well. I've also visited the hon. member's riding and taken concerns that he's raised about local health care desires into consideration as we continue to move forward in partnership. We're elected to serve all Albertans no matter where you live, and that's exactly what this government is doing.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Whether it's in Lac La Biche, Athabasca, or the Peace Country, northern Alberta farm and rural families are feeling shunned. Given that no one in any of the northeastern Alberta Wildrose ridings was even offered one of your come-and-be-told consultation sessions, are northeastern Albertans correct in assuming your government doesn't care to hear the real concerns of our farmers and ranchers and oil field workers?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. As I said, I, for example, attended some of these consultation meetings. It certainly was a lot of time that the government was there paying attention, listening, and honouring the concerns that were being raised. That's exactly why they said: "Put it in writing. Put it in writing, Minister, that this isn't going to apply to me and my family if we don't have any paid farm workers on our farm." That's exactly what we plan on doing when we finally get to the committee stage and can introduce our amendments.

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

Emergency Medical Services in Willow Creek

Mr. Stier: Mr. Speaker, in 2013 the MD of Willow Creek entered into a pilot project with AHS to provide emergency ambulance service in southern Alberta due to inadequate coverage, the non-emergency interfacility transfer issue, and the ambulance flexing problems from region to region. To restore service, the municipality purchased three ambulance units. However, seven weeks ago the executive director of EMS suddenly decommissioned these units, rendering them useless. To the Health minister: will you take control of this bureaucratic disaster and restore the authorization of these crucial emergency units today?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. We certainly want to make sure that no matter where you live in Alberta, you get the right care in the right place at the right time by the right health professional, and that, of course, includes having confidence that you've got adequate emergency response services in your own community. That's why, certainly, one of Alberta Health Services key priorities is making sure that that is a driving value moving forward. I have certainly been holding them to high account in that regard and look forward to collaborating with the hon. member in terms of the specific community that he refers to. I have received some information about the matter, and I'll be happy to follow up with him offline.

The Speaker: Through the Speaker, hon. member.

Mr. Stier: Well, Mr. Speaker, this has become an enormous safety concern for patients and their families in southern Alberta. Given that rural ambulance service is a vital artery to getting patients into emergency care and that residents cannot trust this government and this faulty system and given that, unlike AHS, the MD of Willow Creek recognized the desperate plight that local residents face with unnecessary risk caused by this inadequate system, why is the minister punishing and not rewarding Willow Creek for picking up these pieces where her government failed?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I guess at this point in the discussion today it's going to be a spend day – why won't you spend more money? – when we spend hours being told how we need to be cutting billions of dollars from front-line services, that go towards supporting things exactly like EMS. I have to say that this is very surprising to me, that today we're being asked to spend more money. We are, of course, in collaboration. Alberta Health Services receives an allocation from the government of Alberta, and they are responsible for emergency medical services. I'll be happy to provide more details to the hon. member.

The Speaker: Through the Speaker, hon. member.

Mr. Stier: Well, Mr. Speaker, to the minister: they sent you a letter; they think they deserve an explanation for their dedicated efforts.

Given that the adjacent community on the Blood reserve found themselves in similar circumstances due to AHS mismanagement and the lack of adequate services and seeing as they were allowed to keep the emergency unit they purchased whereas Willow Creek's remain in a storage facility collecting dust, will the minister and AHS stop bullying the MD of Willow Creek, exercise a little common sense, and reinstate the authority to utilize these units. They spent the money. They are the ones that are making the effort, Minister; you're not.

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question and for the opportunity to clarify to everyone that it doesn't matter where you live, you deserve to have access to the right care in the right place at the right time by the right professional. We do this in consultation with communities throughout the province. I actually met yesterday with two different municipalities to talk about their concerns and with members of the hon. member's own caucus to discuss some of the issues there. We're working to make sure that we can maximize the opportunities for local communities to meet local needs. In terms of this specific situation I'll be happy to follow up afterwards.

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

Primary Care Networks

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Crowfoot Village Family Practice is one of the great innovators of health care delivery in Alberta. They have developed a unique model to provide a high quality of care to Albertans. This PCN provides service to 2 per cent of all Calgarians, including myself and my entire family and 25,000 other people. It saves the government up to \$17 million a year in hospital costs, so I was surprised to hear that Crowfoot might be facing a sizable reduction in their funding for the coming year. To the Minister of Health: is it true that CVFP is facing a 20 per cent cut?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. When I moved into this portfolio back in May, I learned about the cuts that were being proposed by that very same government that had been in previously that were far greater than what we've discussed with PCNs to ensure that we have stability of front-line services. There are a number of PCNs that have millions of dollars in surplus. We've said that having money sitting in the bank when you have patients who need to be cared for is not the right way to spend taxpayer money. So what we've done is work in collaboration with PCNs to discuss ways that they can use their reserves to offset this year's current operations so that money isn't sitting in the bank.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again to the same minister. We can appreciate the issues around cash reserves. However, given that the work done by Crowfoot has resulted in significant reductions in ER visits and hospital admissions and given that we have heard from constituents that Crowfoot was already denied the 2.5 per cent increase in physician funding that was approved in 2015 and given the government's stated goal to ensure stability in

the health care field, can the minister explain the rationale as to why Crowfoot might be penalized?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. As the House is well aware, I launched a financial review of PCNs because I wanted to make sure – a number of them are being very responsible with their allocations, spending them on primary care within a reasonable time frame, a year or two years of when they received those allocations. Others have been sitting on millions of dollars of reserves. That certainly isn't in the best interests of Albertans. The financial review is in the process of wrapping up. I've been working in collaboration with the PCN leads to make sure that they have an opportunity to give their feedback on the report. I'll be happy to share an update with this House, likely in the early months of the new year, around specifics of how we're going to be moving forward in partnership with PCNs.

2:40

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm assuming that you're insinuating that Crowfoot is not being responsible. I just want to be clear on that. It's worrisome that primary care networks like Crowfoot, who are showing such great results, would face these kinds of cuts. Given that the government has prided itself on standing up for front-line services and with Crowfoot providing world-class service to the community, can the minister tell us whether she supports the work of PCNs like Crowfoot, and if so, will she reverse these cuts?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The budget that was proposed by the party that the member opposite is a part of would have had all of the reserves taken back, and that was rejected. That was seen as being rash and short-sighted. What we've done is work in partnership with the PCNs to find ways that we can be responsible with the money that's sitting in the bank, working in collaboration. Every PCN receives \$62 per patient per year towards operating the PCN. What we've said is: if you have significant reserves, we want you to help offset that allocation this year. Of course, everyone knows what a difficult financial year this is for Albertans and for Alberta families.

The Speaker: Edmonton-South West.

Student Assessment

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We need to be able to assess and provide proper feedback to our students so they can excel as they progress through the school system and on to graduation. We know that assessments in Alberta have been controversial in the past. I've heard from my constituents, from teachers, from students, and from parents about this. To the Minister of Education: what plans do you have to evolve how we assess students so we can ensure that they have the tools they need to succeed?

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. Certainly, I've been working with our education partners, with parents and students and teachers, to ensure that we improve our methods for assessing students. For example, the SLAs, or the student learning assessments, at the grade 3 level: we ran a second

year of pilots, and it was very successful, a made-in-Alberta construction for assessment at the beginning of the year rather than at the end of the year. These are the sorts of innovations that we're using to ensure that all of our students get a high quality of education.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now that the minister has brought up the SLAs, given that these SLAs, or student learning assessments, in particular, were criticized by some during the first year of the pilot, what have you changed this year to improve the program, and what has been the feedback on that?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, in response to feedback from teachers and from parents as well, we have put in different evaluation models. For example, with the SLAs we reduced the time to administer the evaluations by half this year. I still made it optional for each of the school boards, and I had 59 out of 61 school boards participate, expressing the value of this SLA testing. The feedback is very positive, and I'm working together with partners to make it even better next year.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Second supplemental.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the SLAs will help ensure that our students have the building blocks they'll need to succeed and given that students are required to write diploma exams before graduating high school, to the same minister: how are these assessments going to be conducted going forward?

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Yes. Thanks for the question, Mr. Speaker. We know that there had been consensus amongst our partners, amongst teachers and parents and students, that we needed to reassess the weighting of the grade 12 examinations. We know the importance and the value of those diploma exams – indeed, I was a diploma teacher myself – however, we did see the utility of reducing those to 30 per cent. It allows teachers greater latitude for their assessments to come into play. Certainly, it's important to note that we've seen our high school completion rates increase by 5 per cent in recent years, and we'll continue to push that.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Farm and Ranch Worker Legislation (continued)

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Battle River-Wainwright is a provincial hub of agriculture activity. The people I represent are honest and fair, but they simply can't believe the way this government is ramming through Bill 6. The mayor of Bashaw wrote me yesterday saying that she wants the same level of collaboration and consultation for farmers that she gets as an elected official. To the Premier: will you put the brakes on Bill 6 and take the time to collaborate and consult with farmers?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We are committed to making sure that we move forward with the most basic human rights protection for farm workers and ranch workers. That includes, if you are in a work situation that you feel is unsafe, the right to say: I can't do that; I don't feel safe in that situation. It includes, if you are injured or you die on the work site, your family having compensation, your being able to provide for your family because it wasn't your fault and it wasn't your employer's fault. Certainly, we are moving forward with the very basic protections, and we'll be working in collaboration with industry, with farmers, with ranchers, and with the workers to make sure we get the regulations right moving forward.

Mr. Taylor: It's not just Bashaw.

Now, given that I'm getting flooded with letters and calls from mayors and reeves who want this government to kill Bill 6 and I'm sure the members opposite are flooded with letters and calls opposing Bill 6, too, and given that we know that the NDP government took the time to consult with union bosses and failed NDP candidates, why does this Premier think they know better than the farmers, the ranchers, and the officials who represent them?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and for the question. Certainly, just in NDP ridings alone there are 11,000 farms, and we've been working to make sure that the concerns that have been raised are honoured and reflected as we move forward with the legislation. That's why we hope to get to committee stage so that we can introduce the very clear amendment that the farmers and ranchers, who own the industry, have actually asked us to do, to bring forward in writing the specific protections. This is about protecting workers. This is about also making sure that we protect the family farm.

Thank you.

Mr. Taylor: Given that last week I held a Bill 6 town hall meeting at Killam and I saw over 300 people in attendance and given that the room was unanimously against Bill 6 – in fact, the rooms were unanimously against Bill 6 at town halls right across Alberta – when will this NDP government get the picture that people in rural Alberta understand this bill and what it is? Why are you forcing this through on farms without consultation?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, we've been at meetings throughout the province, and I think that what we've heard very clearly is that we want to make sure that farms are safe places for Albertans. I think all members of this House agree with that. We want to make sure that we move forward in collaboration, but I also know in my heart of hearts that nobody wants to deny a family member who is left widowed with no means of providing for her family because her husband or her other partner has died on the work site. That's why we're moving forward, to make sure that we have the most basic human rights protections for farm workers and ranch workers. We'll work in collaboration to get the rest of the details right moving forward.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Coal-fired Electric Power Plant Retirement

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, this government is intent on irresponsible acceleration of coal phase-out while attacking jobs, communities, and the Alberta advantage of safe, reliable, and

relatively inexpensive electricity for consumers and businesses. Ontario's NDP leader has stated, and I quote: people are paying more for electricity because this government arrogantly chose to ignore the advice of experts. To the minister of environment specifically: how will you assure Albertans that the rejection of responsible, industry-proposed, dial-down, dial-up strategies will not also lead to overpriced green energy, unsustainable government intervention, and unreliable service in our province?

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, since we unveiled our climate leadership plan, where I said that we created the what, we have met with industry. All of our electrical partners have agreed that there's a lot of work to be done but that it is doable, and we will move forward in collaboration to do that work.

Mr. Gotfried: Work to be done, indeed.

Again to the minister: given that the Auditor General of Ontario issued a damning report outlining that taxpayer costs associated with attracting investment under a flawed, uneconomical, unsustainable coal-reduction plan could reach \$170 billion by 2032 and given that this government has rejected a responsible dial-down, dial-up strategy proposed through industry consultation, can you tell Albertans and Alberta businesses today how many more billions of taxpayer dollars it will cost them for your irresponsible plan?

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, we have committed to take action on renewables, and we have committed to take action on coal phase-out. We are working with the industry, we're working with the Alberta Electric System Operator and the Alberta Utilities Commission to make sure that this is done in a responsible manner, keeping prices as low as possible, keeping the lights on, and working with industry, workers, and communities.

2:50

Mr. Gotfried: Given your party's leadership in a world of unintended consequences, this government has not delivered a concrete plan on how to attract investment to replace the dependable, peak-generating baseload that coal provides, nor have you been honest with Albertans on the likely cost to taxpayers of compensating stranded capital. Minister, can you give us at least a rough estimate in the billions of dollars of the costs to taxpayers of industrial compensation related to accelerated coal phase-out?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll tell you what's irresponsible: being in power for 44 years and failing to act to protect our environment, to protect our jobs, to protect our international reputation. We are absolutely committed to making sure that we move forward in partnership. That's why there were so many people supporting us and standing on stage at our carbon announcement. I wish members opposite would stop standing alone.

Public Service Compensation Disclosure

Dr. Turner: Mr. Speaker, this government is committed to being open and transparent, a big change from the previous government. Part of that means ensuring that Albertans are made aware of salaries for management positions. To the Minister of Justice: how will the public-sector transparency act impact agencies, boards, and commissions?

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I'm very proud to say that the disclosure of those earning more than \$125,000 per year – this goal focuses on higher income earners – will apply to agencies, boards, and commissions since this bill passed with unanimous support from the House. The ABCs under the Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act will also have to disclose all compensation of their board members. We think that expanding public-sector disclosure will give Albertans a better idea of where their tax money is going.

Thank you.

Dr. Turner: Given that medical professionals and physicians are compensated through a variety of rules and given that we are hearing different opinions about the disclosure of salaries of hard-working physicians in our community, to the same minister: how is your ministry ensuring that their voices are heard?

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, of course, the act only brings in the general enabling provisions with respect to physicians because, as the member has noted quite correctly, their compensation is incredibly complicated. Going forward, we will be working with physicians and with the AMA to ensure that we get it right on physician compensation disclosure. I know that my colleague the Minister of Health has already been in contact with the AMA to discuss their concerns, and we will be working closely with them to develop regulations going forward.

Dr. Turner: Given that there are also concerns about publishing names of those over the threshold, to the same minister: can you explain why we are doing this and how safety concerns will be addressed?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, of course, this bill just expands salary compensation disclosure to agencies, boards, and commissions. As we're all aware, whether rightly or wrongly, some of those positions have been criticized as being patronage appointments, so by disclosing the names, this bill will ensure not only that the taxpayers know how their tax money is spent but that the government is hiring the right people and putting the right people in the right positions. In addition, the legislation allows for people to make an application for personal safety exemptions.

Thank you.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, before continuing with Members' Statements, I wonder if I might ask for the unanimous consent of the House to continue the Routine past 3 o'clock.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Members' Statements

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

Referral Amendment on Bill 6

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans from Nanton were sitting up in our gallery yesterday. They are honest people, they live off the land, and they don't ask for anything special from the government, just to be listened to and, for the most part, to be left alone as they conduct their business. They are moms and dads who

care more than anyone about keeping their family farms safe, and like almost everyone in their province, they're worried about their livelihoods.

Imagine how the farmers and ranchers in Banff-Cochrane felt when their MLA stood up on a referral motion that we put forward and said that it was silly. Imagine the consternation of those people in that area and the family from Nanton, who left in tears. This government should be ashamed of themselves – these men and women feed us; they keep our province moving – and what this government's arrogance is doing to our province. What a proud moment for the constituents of Banff-Cochrane to see their MLA stand up, but instead of defending farmers and ranchers in his riding, he chose to call the referral, that will engage stakeholders and shed light on how to make this legislation successful, silly. The farmers have clearly said: do not ram Bill 6 through. Listen to their concerns and consult them. That's why we put the motion forward to send Bill 6 to committee. It's what farmers wanted. It would allow them to be consulted on all aspects of this ominous omnibus bill.

The NDP response has been absolutely appalling. I beg of the government to please listen to farmers, to please listen to us over here, and to please consider putting this bill to referral to consider all of the aspects that have been put forward by the members of this side of the House.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

War Horse Awareness Foundation

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise and recognize the efforts of Deanna Lennox of Fort Saskatchewan, who joined us here in the House last week, and the great contributions she has made in establishing the War Horse Awareness Foundation. As a 16-year veteran of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Deanna has dedicated her time and efforts in support of first responders who suffer posttraumatic stress disorder and other occupational stress injuries. For her contributions Deanna was nominated and awarded the Stars of Alberta volunteer award just this past week.

Being a first responder in our province is a noble cause that brave women and men take up the charge to do every day. The price they pay can be very high: divorce rates as high as 84 per cent; 1 out of 4 struggles with alcoholism; life expectancy is reduced by an average of 15 years compared to the general population; between 10 and 30 per cent, depending on the department, suffer from PTSD; and these responders are twice as likely to die from suicide as in the line of duty.

This is where Deanna Lennox has worked to bridge the gap. Her foundation provides something very unique, the opportunity to engage with horses as an effective means of therapy. In addition to facilitating horse therapy, the foundation is committed to getting front-line service providers and their families connected with the resources and programs that best suit their needs. Deanna Lennox and her work through the War Horse Awareness Foundation is rightly recognized by the province, exemplifying community service, demonstrating exemplary initiative, leadership, and creativity. Deanna serves as a role model to her family, her community, inspiring others and improving the quality of life of Albertans.

I thank Deanna for her service, and I look forward to seeing the fulfillment of her future plans for the foundation.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Government Policies

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's only been seven months, but the list of accomplishments of the new NDP government already includes passing legislation that could take Alberta to an unprecedented \$50 billion in debt; clandestine borrowing of an additional \$6 billion while reversing all spending restraint; increasing all sorts of taxes, including a \$3 billion carbon tax that was never even hinted at before the election; drawing every last cent out of the multibillion-dollar contingency fund; failing to deliver on the promise of balancing the budget by 2017; failing to deliver on the promise to build the new cancer centre by 2020; cutting millions of dollars from addiction and detox centres during this fentanyl crisis; a regrettable list of world-class officials who've been let go, including the chief medical officer, the addictions and mental health officer, the cancer control chief, the AHS CEO, and dozens in other disciplines; promoting a job-creation plan that has created no jobs; proposing a raise for the budget of the officers of the Legislature while thousands of Albertans are losing their livelihoods; declaring that coal has no future in our electricity system; and turning a blind eye to U.S. Senators visiting the oil sands while referring to Albertans as Canada's embarrassing cousins; throwing their own employees under the bus and delaying the opening of partisan constituency offices for months; selling access to the Premier and her cabinet at a fundraiser; creating a sunshine list that they admit may never see the light of day; leaving an untold number of decisions to be made behind closed doors on cabinet-approved regulations; offering lip service at best instead of real consultation; launching a three-minute briefing lecture on Bill 8 to school boards but not allowing any time for questions; invoking closure on Bill 6, which tells ranchers and farmers that they are not worth talking about. Sadly, there is so much more, but I only have two minutes, Mr. Speaker.

I'll say this in conclusion. Albertans are left to wonder who this new NDP government is targeting next, but I can assure you that our PC caucus will defend the quality of life of every Albertan every step of the way.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

3:00 Farm and Ranch Worker Legislation

Dr. Turner: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak about one of the greatest opportunities we have to make a real impact in preventative medicine in this province. As a practising physician it's my professional responsibility to be alert to these opportunities. Similarly, we as legislators have a responsibility to recognize and remediate our laws and associated regulations so as to reduce preventable deaths in Alberta.

Examples of far-sighted past legislation include pasteurization, highway speed limits, and clean water acts. Another example is our stringent food safety rules. These rules are enacted at the slightest possibility of food-borne illnesses, resulting in recalls, investigations, and mandatory remedies. Public health investigations can enter an agribusiness on a report that the business may be a cause of food-borne illness because it's widely agreed that it's important that farm businesses be accountable to the customers and the marketplace.

Recently large restaurants have also indicated that they expect farm workers to be safe. However, current Alberta law doesn't allow for OHS inspectors to review accidents in order to prevent them from recurring. In presenting the Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act, we legislators have an opportunity to ensure that paid farm and ranch employees work in as safe a workplace as possible. This is not a new idea. Every other province

does it. A 2008 Alberta fatality inquiry explicitly recommended it. At least two previous Premiers promised it.

In April 2015 the journal *OHS Canada* reported that the chief medical officer of Alberta said that there were 17 work-related deaths on farms and ranches in 2014. It also reported, “The progressive parties, the Liberals and New Democrats, are full-square in favour of equality for farm workers.” That was before the general election, and I was proud to run on that promise, which appealed to the many nurses and doctors in Edmonton-Whitemud who are concerned about the injuries they see every day in our hospitals.

I ask that my MLA colleagues all work together and pass the Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act to reduce the toll of preventable deaths.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Calgary-Hawkwood.

Postsecondary End of Semester

Mr. Connolly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It’s the most wonderful time of the year. No, I’m not talking about Christmas but about the end of the fall semester, which means final exams and papers. I want to wish all postsecondary students in Alberta good luck in finishing their fall semester. If you’re watching this right now, you’re either in political science or desperate for a reason to procrastinate or, as was the case when I was in university, a nice mélange of both. Nevertheless, I sincerely hope that the tuition freeze our government announced earlier this year has made completing your studies a little less stressful.

Calgary is home to the Alberta College of Art and Design, SAIT Polytechnic, Mount Royal University, Saint Mary’s University, Ambrose University, the University of Calgary, and numerous other institutions. My riding of Calgary-Hawkwood has almost 1,500 students at the University of Calgary alone, and I couldn’t be prouder to help represent all of Alberta’s students, who are pulling all-nighters along with us here at the Legislature.

Soon you’ll all be free to deck the halls, be jolly with friends and family, and catch up on washing your gay apparel. Once again, good luck, merry Christmas, and happy holidays.

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

Farm and Ranch Worker Legislation

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Democracy: rule by and for the people. Good governance is the result of citizens coming together to ensure that the decisions, the laws under which they will live, are created by them, that the laws that will govern civil society are not created by an elite that thinks they know what is in the people’s best interest. As MLAs our most basic responsibility is to represent our constituents, to speak and vote in such a way that we represent those that have elected us to this public office. It is clear to all Albertans that the NDP government has abandoned this most basic requirement of an elected official.

When we review this past session, and especially their actions on Bill 6, the facts are clear. The NDP decided that they knew better than the people they serve, who are farmers, ranchers, and farm workers. Alberta’s farmers and ranchers were not asking for Bill 6. The NDP did not campaign on Bill 6. The NDP did not consult with farmers ahead of time and only created a consultative process as an afterthought. In spite of massive protests across the province, they refuse to listen and kill this bill. In spite of farmers listening respectfully and crying in the gallery, they will not kill this bill. In spite of opposition questioning and protests, in spite of the petitions

that have been tabled, the letters of protest that have been read into the legislative record, this government refuses to either kill Bill 6, send it to committee for proper consultation with the people, or amend it in any significant way.

The facts are clear. This government will invoke closure on Bill 6 and silence the debate. This government will end debate in the people’s Assembly. They will shut down the meetings which so imperfectly allowed the people to voice their opinions on Bill 6, and the people of Drayton Valley-Devon have spoken. This MLA will vote against Bill 6.

I leave this government with one last thought. In a democracy a government that wishes to stay in power must always remember that the people always have the last word.

Presenting Petitions

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

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today in order to table almost 30,000 names on petitions for this Legislature and to show the resolve of farmers and ranchers unified together to stop Bill 6. This is the message they’ve given us. I have all the petitions here for Parliamentary Counsel.

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

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, stand to present petitions against Bill 6 from my local riding. I have 900-plus signatures on here, and I will table those.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I also rise today to table a petition to this Legislature. These petitions have been approved by Parliamentary Counsel. Farmers, ranchers, and constituents right across my constituency have signed about 1,000 names here with regard to Bill 6, which has been debated for a short time in this House. More petitions are to come from my constituency next time.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, have a considerable number of petitions, almost numbering 2,000. One that touches my heart dearly is from 15-year-old Tanner Madge from Youngstown school. He writes in one paragraph, “We are the next generation that are going to put the bread and meat on the tables of many, so don’t rush this bill.”

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Strankman: Apparently a miscommunication, Mr. Speaker.

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mr. Rodney: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Last night, when Madam Speaker was in the chair, she asked me to table the requisite copies of three letters, one from the Calgary Catholic school district, one from Golden Hills school division, and one from the Calgary board of education board of trustees urging the government to delay the third reading of Bill 8, the Public Education Collective Bargaining Act, until such time as appropriate consultation may

occur with key stakeholders, the publicly elected school boards of Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table letters sent by my constituents in opposition to Bill 6. Again, there are 278 letters here from my constituency alone, and I wish to table these for Parliamentary Counsel.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Drumheller-Stettler, let's try again.

Mr. Strankman: Practice makes perfect, Mr. Speaker. I'm sorry. I'm starting to wear thin here. Yes, I do want to table the letter from my young constituent, Tanner Madge, from Youngstown. He writes, "We are the next generation that are going to put the bread and meat on the tables of many, so don't rush this bill." That's included with almost 2,000 letters.

Mr. Ceci: Mr. Speaker, today I have three reports to table, beginning with the requisite number of copies of the Report of Selected Payments to the Members and Former Members of the Legislative Assembly and Persons Directly Associated with Members of the Legislative Assembly for the year ended March 31, 2015.

Also, in accordance with the Gaming and Liquor Act I'd like to table the 2014-15 Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission annual report as well as the Charitable Gaming in Review report. Over the past year the AGLC has continued to provide gaming and liquor choices that Albertans can trust, ensuring that revenue generation goes hand in hand with high standards of integrity, security, and social responsibility.

Last fiscal year, members may be interested to know, the Alberta charities in this province raised over \$342 million through charitable gaming activities. These charities worked hard for numerous causes, including nature conservation, arts programs, and seniors' services.

Thank you very much.

3:10

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

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, I rise to table the appropriate number of copies of letters from constituents in my riding in regard to Bill 6, clearly indicating that they would like to see Bill 6 killed.

As well, I would like to rise on behalf of the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock to table the requisite number of copies of a reasoned amendment that he had planned to introduce before the government took away his right to speak on behalf of his constituents. This amendment shows very clearly that the government did not consider an exemption for family farms prior to introducing their bill.

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to take this opportunity to table the requisite number of copies of a letter from the Alberta Association of Former MLAs, signed by Karen Leibovici, president; and Gene Zwozdesky, chairman of the membership committee, to Dr. David McNeil, granting him an honorary membership in the association. They wish to do that, recognizing his outstanding contributions as Clerk and his untiring efforts to

help former members who had the honour to serve with him. I suspect they also are hoping that he will give them a spin in his Porsche.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand to submit the requisite number of copies of 130 letters and correspondence from constituents against Bill 6 and also stand for the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock. He has 117 letters as well from his constituents. We're looking at a total of close to 260 letters here.

The Speaker: Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I stand today with two tablings. First of all, I have several hundred e-mails here, that I've received from constituents all across the province, actually. These e-mails all have one common theme, and that is farmers' and ranchers' concerns regarding Bill 6. There are several hundred more to come, but there are about 300 here, and the next one will have to wait till next time. I have the requisite number of copies here.

The second tabling is five copies of eight e-mails that I read while I was involved in debate on Bill 6 last evening, and I told you that I'd have them here.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to table the following letters, the requisite number that is required, that represent that the people of Alberta are trying to speak through the Wildrose and express their views about Bill 6.

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

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour today to present for the Leader of the Official Opposition letters regarding the concerns for Bill 6.

I also have tablings for both Highwood and Livingstone-Macleod, that have had letters sent in to them, that I'm tabling as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the following letters from constituents with their concerns with regard to Bill 6 and would pray that they would be listened to by the government.

The Speaker: The Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I, too, have two tablings. The first one is copies of letters, the requisite number of copies, that I've received from around Alberta from constituencies held by the government members, people that are also against Bill 6. Here are the requisite copies of that.

Mr. Speaker, I have copies of 193 of the over 2,000 letters I have received in my constituency office that are absolutely against Bill 6. I will table the requisite copies of these 193 letters and forward the other almost 2,000 to the government electronically.

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

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of an online article from the *Western Producer* that I referenced yesterday in debate entitled *What the Other Provinces Are Doing about Farm Worker Safety*. It talks about the rules and exemptions that exist in three neighbouring provinces to Alberta.

The Speaker: Hon. members, any other returns or reports?

Mr. MacIntyre: I have two tablings, Mr. Speaker. First, the requisite number of copies of two letters that I referred to yesterday.

As well, I have the requisite number of copies of letters that I have received in opposition to Bill 6, and I might note that a significant number of these came from NDP-held ridings, who apparently are not getting responses to their mail from their MLA. So I submit those on their behalf.

The Speaker: Battle River-Wainwright.

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, thank you. I rise to table these copies of letters from my constituents and from Albertans that are in opposition to Bill 6.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the House that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Ms Hoffman, Minister of Health and Minister of Seniors, pursuant to the Health Professions Act the Alberta College and Association of Chiropractors 2014-15 annual report; the Alberta College of Optometrists 2014 annual report; the Alberta Dental Association and College annual report 2014; the College of Alberta Dental Assistants annual report 2014-15, June 1, 2014, to May 31, 2015; and the College of Opticians of Alberta 2014 annual report.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

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

Bill 6

Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act

The Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Madam Chair. We recognize our province has long enjoyed the many contributions of farmers, ranchers, and their workers. Thanks to their commitment to the land, the livestock, and the lifestyle, Alberta continues to benefit, both socially and economically. The people in this industry deserve our utmost gratitude and respect. They also deserve the same basic workplace protections enjoyed by workers in every other industry.

As a government we have said from the very beginning that farm and ranch employees should be safe at work and that when they have an incident that prevents them from working, they should be compensated for that. The statistics are clear, Madam Speaker. On average in Alberta 18 people die in work-related farm incidents. For every one of those deaths, 25 more are hospitalized as a result of a work-related injury. Laws to protect wage-earning employees on

farms and ranches work in other provinces, and they can work here, too.

Madam Chair, it's a fact that since laws to protect farm and ranch employees were introduced in British Columbia, the farm fatality rate was reduced by 68 per cent, the farm injury rate was reduced by 52 percent, and the serious injury rate was reduced by 41 per cent. That's why we're extending OH and S protection and mandatory WCB insurance coverage to nonfamily wage employees who work on Alberta's farms and ranches.

3:20

Madam Chair, many ministers and government members have participated in eight town halls held across the province. These town halls gave the government the opportunity to hear from producers and share information with them about the proposed changes. We heard loud and clear that we needed to clear up some misconceptions. That's why I am introducing amendments to confirm our intent to exclude farm and ranch owners and their families from OH and S and WCB.

The Chair: This will be amendment A1.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Madam Chair. These amendments will also make it clear that volunteer assistance on the farm will be exempted from OH and S and WCB. It's not right that Alberta has the least protection for workers when compared to all other jurisdictions in Canada. Other provinces make it work, and Alberta will, too. Extending protections to farm and ranch workers, as I have outlined, is the right thing to do.

This important conversation has only begun. We will continue discussing other elements of this legislation with industry in the new year. Those elements include employment standards, labour relations, and technical requirements for occupational health and safety.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Are there any hon. members wishing to speak to the amendment? Sorry. I didn't see who stood first, but I'll go with Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to speak to this amendment as I believe it does not fully nor accurately reflect the message that farmers and ranchers have been saying about Bill 6. It's because of that that I do not and cannot nor will I support this amendment. In the letters that we tabled today, in the petitions that we tabled today, if you took the time to read them, the farmers and the ranchers of Alberta have clearly spoken. This does not go far enough: they've clearly spoken. If you stood on the stairs of the Legislative Assembly and you heard that they want us to kill this bill, you didn't have to have ears that were very wide open to hear that.

The government cannot see itself through to killing this bill. We can see that this amendment does not go even as far as referring this bill to committee, where ranchers and farmers and farm organizations would be able to present, would be able to provide suggestions, would be able to ensure that their voices have actually been heard, that their recommendations have had a fair hearing, and that they would be able to see by the actions of this committee that they are responsive to the concerns of the farmers and ranchers of Alberta.

This amendment is sadly lacking. It's clear that Alberta farmers and ranchers do not want these amendments for they do not address in enough detail their concerns. It is clear that Albertans, whether this amendment is passed or it's defeated, do not want closure in

this House. They want further consultation. They want further debate, of which this amendment is only a part.

This amendment, while it may exempt family members from WCB and OH and S, does not address the many other issues that arise when they hire even one part-time worker. Once a farm has an employee, then the full weight of OH and S and the WCB will fall upon the already burdened shoulders of the average Albertan farm family.

I read yesterday into the record some of the concerns that a constituent of mine had brought to the table and that I have brought into this Legislature with regard to OH and S and WCB and just how many of these regulations these farm families would actually have to comply with and how burdensome those would be.

Regulating work hours in a situation where, when you're farming, you cannot predict when a cow will calf, when a cow will have problems in calving, when, Madam Chair, you have no idea exactly when the rains are going to stop or begin – farming by its very nature is unpredictable. The hours will be unpredictable. I think of all the farmers in my family, and I have seen them combining through the night. I have seen them getting up at all hours of the evening and the day to be able to check the cattle. I have been out in the fields with the farm families of Drayton Valley bringing in calves when it's minus 40, rubbing them down, making sure that they will survive. That's not something that happens between 9 and 5. I have been out helping farm families when they are on the verge of exhaustion, because farming never really stops. I believe this amendment, while probably well intentioned, does not go far enough.

I would like to read a portion of a letter that was sent to me by one of my constituents that, I believe, speaks to this issue of OH and S and the WCB and their concerns with regard to Bill 6.

Although I agree that safety should be paramount in handling equipment and animals, I do not agree with the way the bill wants to instate it. It should be done through education, not OH and S.

Also, in regard to regulating the hours worked, farm and ranch schedules are not run by the clock. They are determined by the weather, the seasons, circumstances, and the animals themselves.

A person with a horse down with colic cannot just take a break in caring for that animal because OH and S says so. I stayed up 24 hours with my mare when she had colic. You cannot tell the cow not to calve because it is time for you to take a break, nor can you take a day off from feeding your stock and let them go hungry just because OH and S said so.

See, Madam Chair, if I hire even one employee, my farm now falls under those regulations.

3:30

This farm family, my constituents, has an issue with this. You cannot take a forced break during a cattle drive when you've just worked to get the cattle organized and where you want them or finally have them moving nicely. You have to make hay while the sun shines and take advantage of the long summer day hours. Days, hours are dictated by season, not the clock. I think a fair-minded person can understand that the amendment that we're debating right now does not go far enough to meet the needs of this farm family. They're not being unreasonable, and they're not trying to be unsafe. They are trying to ensure that they can continue to farm.

You see, Madam Chair, for many farmers mandatory WCB just makes no sense. It makes no sense when private insurance is often a better option for the farm families and for their farm employees. I know that I attended a rally just outside on the steps here, and I had at least one farm family, one mother, approach me. She couldn't understand why they would have to go with WCB, which they saw as completely inferior to the private insurance plan, which would

cover their employees 24 hours a day. To expect them to have private insurance and WCB would be an unnecessary and burdensome problem in an industry where the margins are very narrow to begin with.

This amendment does not recognize the realities of the farm families that we have in our constituencies across this province. This is bad legislation. This needs to go back. It either needs to be killed or it needs to go back to committee, where it can be studied, where you can do more listening.

I have a second letter that I would like to read portions of.

My father came to Canada as a small child with his family in the 1930s. They settled in southern Alberta where they were sugar beet farmers. As a grown man, Dad moved his family to the Drayton Valley area where we continue to farm today. Our farm consists of beef cows and feeder calves. We also grow our own feed barley and oats in addition to canola. Mostly, I manage this operation with my adult son. We farm together as a family as we have always done.

There are busy times of the year, though – calving, silaging, harvest – that we hire on additional staff. I believe I treat all of my staff fairly. They receive a fair wage – until recently we had fierce competition from oil field salaries.

That's something that I think sometimes we forget. If we've never been in the farming industry and if we haven't lived in rural Alberta, perhaps we don't understand how fierce the competition for labour has been in Alberta over the last 10 years. When I can make \$17, \$19 – well, I believe my son made something like \$24 the last time he worked in the oil industry as he was going to university. Most farm families can't afford to pay that kind of a salary. They've had to compete for people and for workers, so they've had to treat them properly. They've had to ensure that what they were doing was safe, or they would not have those workers because usually they had to pay them a smaller salary than what they could get in the oil industry.

I never ask my workers to do anything I would not be prepared to do myself. Sometimes, they must work long days, but I can guarantee you their days are hours shorter than my own. Sometimes, they must work on holidays. Easter usually falls in the middle of calving and Thanksgiving during harvest. But my staff has always been invited with their families to enjoy turkey dinner with my own family.

I can support a requirement for producers to have a certain level of insurance coverage for their workers. But mandatory WCB coverage is not the best choice for producers or for farm workers. Many workers will have less coverage under WCB come January 1 than they currently have under their employer's insurance coverage.

See, I will readily admit that I perhaps don't understand all of the ins and outs of WCB or OH and S regulations, but the people that are on the farms are the experts. Why is it that you're not willing to listen to those experts? I don't understand it. They are coming to you right now, today, through this letter, and they're saying to you that WCB is not necessarily the best way of going through this and that you shouldn't have to have WCB put on yourself as a farmer. It's clear. But this amendment doesn't recognize that. Why would you support the amendment on either side of this House when you can clearly hear from the farmers themselves that this is not a good enough amendment?

This letter ends with this comment.

I believe in doing things right the first time, even if that means it takes longer. I'm concerned about the government's haste in introducing this legislation without genuine consultation from the agricultural community. We are talking about mere weeks before this bill becomes law.

We're talking days now, maybe even less.

I urge the government to truly think about the consequences of their actions. We all want safe, viable family farms, but Bill 6 puts a huge regulatory burden on farmers and ranchers without achieving these goals.

What more do you need to say? This farmer has given you the advice that we've tried to present to you over the last four, five, six, seven days. What was that advice? Take the time and do this right. Your goals are laudable, but the means and the way that you're doing it are not going to end up doing what you want to have done.

3:40

It's a mystery to me. It truly is. It's a mystery that we can speak the same language, we can live in the same province, we can love the same people, want at the end of the day many of the same things, yet we can't seem to break through to get good legislation on this bill.

You know, it's clear that we make exemptions for all sorts of jobs and for all sorts of occupations when it comes to WCB and OH and S. Traditionally, farming has been one of them because that recognized the realities of farming. This amendment doesn't recognize those realities. This amendment doesn't recognize that farming has a legitimate reason for being exempted from these pieces of legislation as they stand right now.

Some of the jobs and occupations that are exempted: agricultural financial services, animal grooming. I've been around enough farm animals, horses, et cetera, to know that you can get bruised pretty quickly when you're working around animals and trying to groom them. I hazard a guess that if any of you good members in this Legislature were to see my first day of castrating and branding, when they threw the city slicker out into the middle of the barnyard and said, "tackle that calf and put him on the ground," you'd have laughed yourselves silly, and you would have laughed if you saw all the bruises at the end of the day on my shins and my forearms and a couple on the top of my head, where a cow gave me a kick in the head as I was trying to be on the back end of that calf.

You know, we don't dispute that some of these jobs that you do on a farm are dangerous and that you can get hurt, but there are times when we understand that in the real world, when you've been given the experience and you've been given the ability to learn, these jobs become far less dangerous.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I've been trying to get through this amendment. Again, the unfortunate part is that we have no opportunity to go back to our communities and go through this stuff and talk to them. It's been the problem through this whole debate on Bill 6. Yesterday, against my better judgment, I voted in favour of the amendments to Bill 8, again, without being able to consult with the four school boards in my area. I'm hoping that they were for it and they don't lynch me when I go home.

This amendment is almost there. You know, it starts to address the exemption for family farms, and then it ties their hands behind their backs if they need to hire somebody to help out with calving or with fall work. I'm still having some issues with the WCB. I've dealt with it with employees of my own and people that worked for me over the years, and it can be quite a problem.

I had an e-mail from a constituent up by Plamondon. He sent it to me at 19 minutes after 12 today, as a matter of fact. He started talking about some brushing that he wanted done on a road. He had contacted Transportation, and they kind of brushed him off: oh, there's no money. He kind of sank that around to: everybody's concerned about farmer safety. The most dangerous part of anybody's day is driving down our roads. You can read any newspaper any

day of the week or listen to the news. There are wrecks all over the place. He was trying to get a corner on his property brushed so that people could see when they came up to a stop sign and see what's coming and going.

In his fourth paragraph he mentions that, you know, his concern is that everybody is concerned about farmer safety, yet there's no money when it comes to actual, real safety issues. Then he brings up a point and says that he's been paying into workers' compensation as a rancher for years and years and years. He says that just recently he got kicked in the shoulder and broke his arm. He went to put a WCB claim in, and they denied his claim. They said that he wasn't covered. It was only after him digging and pestering and digging and pestering to a very, very frustrating end – I wish I could find the e-mail here so I could read you the exact words – that they finally said: oh, yeah; I guess you are covered. I've got it now. I'll read it for you. It says:

Alberta Transportation's response to my request for financial assistance has been that there is no money to help with the clearing of brush along [the] roadside to [my] fence line. This is an outrage because Bill 6 is all about safety for farms & ranches in Alberta, and it seems to me that getting this section of road is not being seriously considered to clear & brush.

This is a contradiction to Bill 6 – all about safety and WCB coverage for Farmers & Ranchers. I have recently been injured (broken arm) from being kicked by a cow, and when I put in my claim for benefits, WCB informed me that I was no longer covered. I have been paying premiums for Ranching WCB coverage for many years and my claim was declined benefits . . . on that I phoned to complain and asked how all of a sudden I was no longer covered.

Just as a sideline I wonder how many other people phone in and get the runaround that they're not covered and then just walk away from it. This is a real heck of a good deal for the Workers' Compensation Board and the managers' bonuses.

I'll carry on here.

Upon their research, and my persistence they found that I was covered for benefits. This recent experience with WCB has not been pleasurable and Bill 6 is pushing WCB coverage for ranches & farms.

I just want this situation to be taken seriously because we Ranchers & Farmers work hard to keep our operations going and safely. If Bill 6 wants us to take them seriously I need to see more effort when needed to keep our roads safe for all.

I have contacted the Lac La Biche Post regarding the road allowance stated above and they are interested in my story. You may contact me . . .

And he gives his name and phone number at the bottom.

You know, there are going to be ongoing stories. People in the opposition have stood up and said that the number one concern that our constituency offices have to deal with is Workers' Compensation Board issues. What are they going to do when they have another 45,000 farm families dumped on them? They're already run ragged.

They held a training session for our constituency staff here last week. They didn't have any idea what the legislation was going to be, what the amendments were going to be, so we wasted our people's time coming into Edmonton for this training session. They got absolutely zero benefit out of it. Another waste of government funding.

Farming coverage. This is a document that I think I might have tabled already, but if not, I can table it again. It was on the WCB website but has since disappeared. It talks about the farm rates that people will be paying. You know, if you're claiming \$50,000 a year in revenue, you're going to pay \$1,485 per year. Well, that's pretty

small potatoes these days when it comes to even a medium-size or a small farming operation.

Now we'll look at a couple of the work related and nonwork related. This is where it gets very confusing. It's going to be very confusing for doctors. It's going to be very confusing for people that work at the Workers' Compensation Board. One of them: "Sue is driving a quad to check on the fence line. She hits a large rut and flips the quad, injuring her head." That's a work-related injury. And it says: "Sue is riding along on a tractor as a passenger, without any specific duties to perform. As the tractor hits a large dip, she falls off, injuring her head." That's nonwork related. I'm getting very confused as to where the farming operation starts, where recreation starts and ends, and where your house and property starts and ends. I think that this is one of the very confusing issues that's never been defined in any of the, well, lack of debate and lack of consultation that we've had with this government over this bill. This is the confusing part.

3:50

This bill has been put forward here. There are currently down in Olds over 800 people at a town hall. They are opposed to this bill. They are opposed to this amendment. I will not be supporting this amendment. Last weekend I held a town hall in the town of St. Paul. People were very adamant. They want this bill put to committee for consultation and discussion with them. They told me that whatever I had to do to oppose it, they would be behind me a hundred per cent. I have not had one phone call telling me to back off at all. Everybody wants us to keep going. Of the people out there that are watching – and there are a lot of them that are watching – not one of them has phoned me and said: "You know what? We're probably going to be okay with this. You guys can probably pull back a little bit." Not one. The people down in Olds right now: no; keep going, guys. They want this thing pushed off, the bill killed, and to start some real debate on it.

There is almost unprecedented outrage over the bill. This amendment is not far enough. As I said before, it ties farmers' hands as soon as they happen to hire somebody. There has to be some real distinction put forward here about what constitutes a small farm and what is a medium farm and what is a commercial operation that should be put under OH and S and workers' compensation coverage.

Like I said, I've talked about this one farmer and rancher here. He's been with WCB for years. A lot of people have been doing it voluntarily. Why do we have to force it down their throats? There's absolutely no reason for this bill. This is nothing more than a money grab and an increase in bureaucracy in the Workers' Compensation Board.

The amendments to the bill – my goodness – were six pages.

Mr. Rodney: Yeah. It's longer than the original bill.

Mr. Hanson: Is that longer than the original bill? Are you serious?

Mr. Rodney: It's hard to believe.

Mr. Hanson: That is hard to believe. Isn't that something? A bill that was perfect.

The Chair: Hon. member, through the chair, please.

Mr. Hanson: I'm sorry, Madam Chair. I just get a little carried away. It's been a long couple of days.

A bill that was so perfect that it did not require any consultation with farmers, ranchers, or the opposition. A bill that was so perfect that it did not require any consultation with farmers and ranchers.

Now, after a bunch of outcry and people getting a little bit nervous on the other side, all of a sudden we have an amendment that's longer than the original bill. Does that make sense to you, folks? Sorry. Does that make sense to you, Madam Chair? No, it doesn't.

Let's have a look at this. Section 1 is amended

- (a) by adding the following after (k):
 - (k.1) "family member", in relation to a shareholder, sole proprietor or partner, means
 - (i) the spouse or adult interdependent partner of the shareholder . . .

Interdependent partner of the shareholder. Okay. That's legalese that we're going to have to get clarified. You see, this is the thing. How can farmers understand this? We need to sit down and consult and get this stuff clarified, put it into common terms.

It goes on.

- . . . sole proprietor or partner, or
- (ii) whether by blood, marriage or adoption or by virtue of an adult interdependent relationship, a child, parent, grandparent, sibling, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew or first cousin of a shareholder, sole proprietor or partner or of the shareholder's, sole proprietor's or partner's spouse or adult interdependent partner, . . .

Oh, my God. This is very confusing.

- . . . and includes any other person prescribed by the regulations to be a family member.

That's incredible. That covers a lot of people.

Section 2(b):

by repealing clause (s)(i) and substituting the following:

- (i) farming and ranching operations that are specified in the regulations and in respect of which
 - (A) no wages, as defined in the Employment Standards Code, are paid to persons for the performance of farming or ranching work, or
 - (B) wages, as defined in the Employment Standards Code, are paid only to the following persons for the performance of farming or ranching work.

Again, you know, now we've got to dig out the Employment Standards Code so that we can get to the bottom of this clause.

We need time to talk to farmers and ranchers to see if they're going to accept this amendment. We're not given any time. Just like yesterday with Bill 8: whammo; here's your amendment; you've got one hour to debate it, and we're going to vote. Like I said, I hope that those of us that voted in favour of that don't get lynched by our school boards when we get home.

Okay.

- (B) wages, as defined in the Employment Standards Code, are paid only to the following persons for the performance of farming or ranching work:
 - (I) shareholders of a corporation engaged in a farming or ranching operation of which all shareholders are family members of the same family;

Well, that's fairly clear.

- (II) family members of a shareholder of a corporation engaged in a farming or ranching operation of which all shareholders are family members of the same family;

That's kind of a double, family members of the same family. Nice wording, for sure.

- (III) family members of a sole proprietor engaged in a farming or ranching operation;
- (IV) family members of a partner in a partnership engaged in a farming or ranching operation where all partners are family members of the same family.

There we go again, family members of the same family. Incredible.

The next one is (c):

by repealing clause (bb) and substituting the following:

(bb) “worker” means a person engaged in an occupation, but does not include, except for the purpose of section 2(2), the following persons engaged in a farming and ranching operation specified in the regulations:

(i) a person to whom no wages, as defined in the Employment Standards Code . . .

Okay. Now we’ve got to go back to the Employment Standard Code and find out what that means.

. . . are paid for the performance of farming or ranching work;

(ii) a person referred to in clause (s)(i)(B)(I) to (IV) to whom wages, as defined in the Employment Standards Code, are paid for the performance of farming and ranching work.

Very confusing. Again, six pages of legalese that we don’t have time to debate properly or talk to our constituents about and get their input.

Madam Chair, this amendment to the bill is almost – almost – as bad as the original bill itself. I can’t support the bill. The people I represent don’t want me to support the bill. They want this bill brought back to committee, not Committee of the Whole. They want it brought back to committee, where they will have time to consult with the government and get it right. Personally, I think this is a waste of our time to even debate or look at this bill, but I mean, we can continue.

You know, we get to a bunch of the businesses that are being struck out here.

(3) Schedule A is amended by striking out

“agrology and agronomy . . .”

“apiary . . .”

“artificial breeding services . . .”

“breeding of animals, birds, fish, or reptiles;”

“collection of urine from pregnant mares;”

I don’t think that’s even happening anymore. Is it?

Mr. MacIntyre: Oh, yeah.

Mr. Hanson: Is it?

Mr. MacIntyre: A little bit.

Mr. Hanson: A little bit. Oh. Okay.

“dude ranch . . .”

Operation of a dude ranch.

Mr. Strankman: How do you define a dude ranch?

Mr. Hanson: How do you define a dude ranch? Is that just for dudes?

“egg producer, commercial, carrying on business as;”

I mean, there are some egg producers that are pretty big businesses.

“farming, carrying on business of;”

What all does that include? Is that a small farm? Is that a big farm, Madam Chair? We need some clarification on this.

Some of these things that are being removed, while they may make sense, need to be defined. How big is a family farm? Is a Hutterite colony a family farm? It’s all family, you know, families of the same family, as I’d stated. There are a lot of family farms that are third and fourth generations at home, that grandpa is still there. Grandma and grandpa are still there and help with the cooking and help with the machinery, right down to the great-grandchildren. But as soon as they hire somebody, it changes everything.

4:00

I mean, I could go on and on and on, but in the interest of having some of my fellow members get a chance to speak, I’ll just say that I’ll be standing behind the decision that was given to me by the people in my constituency that are against Bill 6. All the hundreds of letters that we turned in today, all the thousands of names on the petitions that we turned in today: the people are against Bill 6. They want us to kill Bill 6, and I can’t wait to watch the lemmings stepping off the political cliff.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: I’ll recognize the hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane, followed by the hon. leader of the third party.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just a question to the members opposite. [interjections] Well, I can speak freely, though, right? You know you’re not obligated to speak, but I’m just giving you an opportunity to maybe elaborate, either for the member who just spoke or any of the members opposite. I’ve heard this, WCB, referred to as a cash grab. I just want to know from people over there: what is your understanding of how the WCB premiums are handled and how those funds are managed? Just a simple question.

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

Mr. McIver: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. You know what? I think WCB does a good job, but there’s room for improvement. That’s one thing I’ll agree with the Premier on although the Premier goes a lot farther than saying that they need room for improvement. As I said in the House today, the Premier has done some pretty severe drive-by smearings of the WCB, claiming that they are severely favouring the employers and that the rates should be twice as high as they are. At the same time she says this, she’s trying to force all farmers and ranchers into WCB, after which time, we can only assume, she’ll double their rates because that’s what she suggested she’ll do. These are the Premier’s words. The gentleman was asking about what kind of a job the WCB does. Maybe he should ask his own party leader because she is extremely uncomplimentary of the WCB. You know what? I know that they’re imperfect.

Here’s the problem, Madam Chair. Again, my colleague there talked about how there’s a six-page amendment to a five-page bill, which absolutely is a complete indictment of how bad this bill is. There’s just no getting around that. There’s no defending your position. There’s no saying: yeah, but this is a little bit of an adjustment. This is an absolute admission that the job was botched. Yet the government is taking the position that they don’t need to talk to farmers and ranchers until this is already passed, because now they’re so sure they’ve gotten everything right that they need to seal this in legislative authority before going back and trying to adjust it to something that makes sense to farmers and ranchers. If they were so right about that, you would think that we’d have 2,000 farmers and ranchers out on the front steps of this Legislature saying: “Pass this bill. Pass this bill.” But you know what? That’s not what they were saying. They were saying: “Kill Bill 6. Kill Bill 6.” Clearly, there’s a big disconnect between what the government is saying and what Alberta people want, a complete divergence, 180 degrees, opposite directions.

I’m on my feet to make sure that I know that Albertans know that I and our members of the PC Party are aware of this and will continue to fight against the government arrogance that would have them drive a bill through the Legislature that is so at odds with what the will is of the people of Alberta.

You know what, Madam Chair? It's not just the farmers and ranchers. City people, towns and villages, urban people in Alberta, are getting almost as unhappy with this bill as our rural people. Why? Because Albertans respect each other. City people respect rural people. City people know that all the wealth in Alberta is earned in rural Alberta and that that allows us, we people that live in the city, to make our livings administering that wealth. It's how it works. That's how Alberta works: mutual respect between rural Alberta and urban Alberta, everybody doing their part, working together, which is why a good part of urban Alberta is as upset as rural Alberta is. They care about their fellow Albertans.

What does drive them crazy is that the people in government don't seem to have that connection. They don't. I'm not calling them bad people. I think they're good people across the aisle, Madam Chair, but they're not connected, clearly, or they would be taking a different position than they're taking. It's a lack of connection, and really it points, unfortunately, to the fact that, well, some people here are just probably not suited for this line of work. Nonetheless, I respect democracy, and those that get elected should get to do the job, suited or not. I've always respected democracy, and I think the voters should have the representative that they elect. That includes all of us. It includes me, it includes the other opposition parties, it includes everybody in our party, and, yes, it includes everybody in the government. Everybody that's here has the right to be here, and I support that. It just makes me crazy that the connections between those people that the voters have selected and the best interests of those people are so at odds, and the government just refuses to accept that obvious fact.

Now, if this was a good bill, the government wouldn't need to roll out a bunch of misdirections in order to do it. I'm not going to call them half-truths, because I'm going to talk about some things that they said that are true. It's just not the whole truth. I've heard several members on the government side stand up and talk about how British Columbia put in legislation and their injury and death rate dropped dramatically. That's true. I'm not calling anybody a liar here. I'm saying, in fact, that they're telling the truth. The problem is that they're not telling the whole truth. Even after that, the fact is that without this legislation Alberta's injury and death rates are as good as B.C.'s already. They say half the truth, hoping that Albertans will think, by them passing this legislation, that nobody wants, that it's going to save a whole bunch of lives and injuries on Alberta's farms and ranches when the fact is that Alberta's farms and ranches are as safe as British Columbia's already.

In fact, Madam Chair, I'm looking at a document here dated November 17 from the Alberta government. It's on the Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act. Here's another truth in there. At some point in this document it talks about the average number of deaths in Saskatchewan being 13 and Alberta being 17. The Premier said 18, but I won't quibble with her; it's a rounding error. I'm not saying – you know what, Madam Chair? That's the truth, but once again it's not the whole truth. The whole truth is that Saskatchewan has a million people and Alberta has 4 million people, so when you look at 13 deaths versus 17 deaths, Alberta's death rate on farms is way better than Saskatchewan's is. Yet the government has selectively chosen true facts but not the whole facts. If the legislation was so good, they could actually tell the whole facts, and the legislation would still look good. Folks, you know what? If it's a good piece of legislation, you don't have to play those games. You don't have to stand up in the House.

I also hear members from the government side talking about how every worker needs to be covered by workers' compensation and every worker needs to be covered by occupational health and safety. They wave the flag and wrap themselves in the flag of safety, and

they say: this is the way it's got to be, or Alberta farmers and ranchers will be dying by the dozens or the hundreds. But you know what? Then in the next breath – let's read – they're exempting Hutterite colonies, and they're exempting family farms. One minute everybody has got to be covered, and the next minute 40 per cent don't need to be. They don't seem to see the inconsistency. Albertans, though, see the inconsistency, city folk see the inconsistency, and rural folk see the inconsistency because they're Albertans and they're intelligent and they listen and they care. That's why I'm so proud to represent all Albertans, why our whole PC caucus is so proud to represent all Albertans, urban and rural, because they are hard-working people that deserve to have the truth told, the whole truth, not half the truth, and deserve to be supported by their government.

Again, on the November 17 document it talks about immediate impacts, mandatory workers' compensation – of course, with the amendment that changes that – employers protected from legal action. Well, isn't that interesting? The Premier was talking before about how she's all fired up about protecting workers, yet their own document says that they're worried about protecting employers. Well, actually, I think that you need to protect both. It's just that the government has chosen one side, and the documents they produce seem to support the other side. It would be better if they were more consistent, and that points to the problem, that this bill is not ready to be passed and it's not ready to be proclaimed.

It talks about how certain regulations would apply related to equipment, general protection of workers, duties of workers, and safety training. All of that sounds good. It also talks about how occupational health and safety officers could visit work sites to investigate serious incidents. There's been conflicting information from the government here, too. In some cases they say that the inspectors will only come when there is a serious incident. At other times they'll say that they'll drop in and see.

4:10

Well, you can just imagine how concerned farmers and ranchers are about that. Certainly, they don't have anything to hide, but farms and ranches are not like other businesses in Alberta. The fact is that if you're running a shoe factory or a button factory and the safety inspector shuts you down for six hours, you fire up the machine and you start making shoes or buttons. It's not like that during seeding. If you missed the weather window, you're done. You may lose a whole year's revenue. If you don't make the harvest window – and sometimes it comes down to six or eight hours before the hailstorm, before the snowstorm, before the rain, before the wind, before whatever the good Lord sends to this wonderful land called Alberta – you might miss the harvest window. The government is not giving farmers and ranchers assurances that that will not happen. So you can only imagine how reasonable farmers and ranchers are when they're upset about the government ramming this down their throat before they've sat down with them and agreed on a set of reasonable regulations and rules that they could live by to, yes, keep them safe.

You know, then you get toxic attitudes from the government, the labour minister talking about how we're going to create a culture of safety, and I heard it from another government member today about how we're going to create a culture of safety, an absolute, amazingly huge insult to farmers and ranchers. Suggesting that for the last hundred years they haven't created their own culture of safety: it's an absolute insult, absolute disrespect, absolutely talking down to the people that we should be answering to and respecting. It's disrespectful, and that is not the way that Albertans, whether they're rural or urban, whether they're farmers or engineers or doctors or lawyers or labourers, deserve to be talked to by their government. Yet that's what's happening.

It says here – this is really good – that the government will be consulting in the late fall, after the busy harvest season. Well, apparently, they're going to consult not only after the busy harvest season but after the busy political season, after it's too late to actually change the legislation. It's despicable.

You know, the document talks about how Alberta is the sole remaining jurisdiction that has not made the adjustment to include occupational health and safety. It says that there are four Canadian jurisdictions without mandatory WCB. Again, Madam Chair, the government continues to tell the truth, just not the whole truth. They have. And you know what? They talked about a couple of cases where a farm worker has been injured or killed on the job and they or their family have not been compensated, have not been looked after. They are right about those cases: shameful, despicable, unfortunate.

But here's the thing. What they're offering is not the solution. They're saying that if you put everybody on WCB and OH and S, it's all going to go away. Well, I can tell you that I was the labour minister not that long ago, and I had a parade of people coming through my office with WCB coverage and occupational health and safety coverage that had the same thing and more happen to them, where they lost their home, they lost their family, and they couldn't support themselves. So the government, unfortunately, trotting out terrible examples of real victims and suggesting to Albertans that we will fix all of this with occupational health and safety and the Workers' Compensation Board is absolutely not believable. Yes, the tragedies that they rolled out are tragedies. But you know what? There are just as many tragedies or more from families and individuals that have died or been injured with occupational health and safety coverage or Workers' Compensation Board coverage that to this day are complaining because they can't get paid, they can't get their families supported, and those are tragedies, too. They are.

So while I agree with the government that we need to make some improvements to workers' compensation and occupational health and safety, when you tell Albertans that this won't happen anymore with this change, that is the farthest thing from the truth that the government could possibly tell to their citizens.

Why would they do that? It does say in the document – and I'll give the government credit for this – that this is about unionizing farm workers. You know what, Madam Chair? There was a Supreme Court decision that says that farm workers should be able to unionize and that the government is required to put legislation in place to do that. So good. I agree with that. But if the government wants to do that, why don't they just tell the truth? "We are going to comply with the Supreme Court decision and allow farm workers to unionize." Albertans would say: "Great. That's what the Supreme Court said, and Alberta is law abiding." But why would you hide it behind a bunch of safety things that don't make sense that are supported by half-truths?

Mr. Rodney: A secret agenda.

Mr. McIver: A secret agenda, as my colleague says.

You know what? Whether the government has a secret agenda or not, you can hardly blame Albertans for thinking that the government does because of the way they're operating. Albertans know the difference between the whole truth and a half-truth. They just haven't had the whole truth from their government yet, and it's shameful. It's shameful. That's why you get thousands of people.

You know, there are members on the other side that proudly said that they should be proud for protesting because that's a right that all Canadians have. But the people that were out front here with the protestors: a lot of them were, like, weekly protestors or monthly

protestors or regular protestors. I applaud them, too, for doing it, but I can tell you that what's really powerful is when you get 2,000 people from all over Alberta that have never protested before in their entire life coming out for one issue. That's powerful. That tells you the government is on the wrong track and that they're not listening, and people are trying to drill it through their heads to remember who works for whom. The PC Party knows that the people of Alberta are our bosses. Some of the opposition know that. It's time for the government to get on the program, Madam Chair. It really is.

When you add all of this up – and there's more. I'll be back up here speaking before this is done. I'm going to leave some time for my colleagues in the opposition and for the government members, if they're tired of warming their hands, because that's what happens when you sit on them, to get up and talk and defend your bill.

Tell the whole truth, not half the truth. Tell Albertans that the tragedies that you trot out, the real tragedies, the ones we should all feel bad about, that it will not solve that. Occupational health and safety and WCB will not guarantee it won't happen again. Tell them that. Look them in the eye and tell them the truth. They'll respect you more, and they might even think about whether you're on their side or not. Tell them that your leader says that the WCB rate should be doubled, so one day we're going to force farmers and ranchers onto WCB, and the next day our leader is going to consider doubling your rates. Tell them that. They might respect you more. They might actually think that you've listened to them.

Madam Chair, you can tell I'm wound up. You know why I'm wound up? Because it is painful to hear and see such a lack of feeling for the people of Alberta by the people they have elected to represent them, and until that changes, I just can't help but be wound up. You'll have to forgive me because I just care that much, and I just want everybody to.

The Chair: Leduc-Beaumont.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Chair. Bill 6 is framework legislation. The details that are going to be applied will be worked out in consultation with the very stakeholders that it's going to affect: we've said this time and again. I don't think we can wait to enact basic safety provisions for paid farm workers. I'm not saying that farmers are unsafe. I don't say that they don't care about them. I have never said those words ever. This amendment stems from listening to these farm families that were talking about the exemption they're looking for.

Madam Chair, I know first-hand what kind of effect workplace accidents can have on families. A lot of my family is from Vancouver Island or in the forestry industry and a lot of my friends as well, and that's a tough and dangerous industry. When I was six years old, I lost my grandad to an accident at a log-sorting facility because the safety standards weren't quite as good as they are today. While he and another fellow were tying down the logs on the back of the truck, the chains came loose. The logs back on my island aren't small. They came down, and they crushed my grandad, Ernest Joseph Anderson, our patriarch, our rock. It was hard for us. But he was covered by the laws, and my grandmother was taken care of.

4:20

Just 10 years ago I lost my best friend, Robert Arthur Strang, in a logging accident. Forestry is dangerous, but for some it is a calling. My friend was a faller. For some who don't know, that's, I guess, what some people would call a lumberjack. They work hard day in and day out in all types of weather and in dangerous situations out in the forest. Safety is key, but you can't account for

everything, and the trees are big on my island. My friend was cutting down about a 250-foot-tall tree. Unbeknownst to him, about halfway up the tree was dead. All we can know is that maybe he heard the crack, looked up, threw his saw, and he ran. He didn't make it. The tree hit him, and he was killed instantly, thank goodness. He was found lying there peacefully in the bush, but he was gone. He had a wife and a young son, and his wife was pregnant with their unborn child. But he had coverage, and his wife and family were taken care of. Madam Chair, I apologize for getting emotional about that.

There are just a few things that I think need a little bit of clarity. The bill isn't going to interfere with the family's ability to teach their children about farming and pass on their way of life. This is a way of life that is cherished and will remain alive and well, as it always has been. Neighbours can still lend a helping hand, whether it be for harvest or the birth of a calf. Kids can still do chores and help out on the farm, so, sorry, kids; you're not getting out of those. The bill won't interfere with the 4-H clubs and all the good that they do, and 4-H clubs are an amazing part of rural life. It's not going to interfere – and I have a lot of friends that are happy about this – with the recreational activities on farms such as hunting, quadding, snowmobiling, and more.

Yesterday I was at a round-table discussion in my constituency of Leduc-Beaumont. I heard stories of second- and third- and fourth-generation farmers, and I heard and saw their fear and their pain. I saw strong men and women bare their souls and tell me about how they thought that the government wasn't listening to them. But that's what I was there for, and I wanted to tell them all that I was listening. I heard them tell me about how they buckle up their grandkids on the combine and that they treat their employees like family. They're worried about how they're going to manage when the growing cost of producing in the world favours large corporate farms. I heard that. They love their way of life, and they'll do anything and everything to protect it, and I have the absolute, utmost respect for that. I'm here listening, and I want to work together on this.

While we do this, I'm glad that farm workers will have more rights under the law and that farmers will have added protection for those nonpaid, familial employees under WCB. Now, I'm bound to represent you, just like all my other constituents, and I'm bound to uphold the law of the land, including passing legislation that brings the same labour standards to employees on farms as in the rest of the country. I'm bound by the Supreme Court of Canada ruling that gives all workers the right to organize – the right to organize – not forced but the right. I'm bound by my conscience in knowing that this bill is a good bill. I'm part of a team, a caucus, a party, but I am not a lemming, and I never will be.

Some members might say that we on the government side are being pushed or bullied into voting for the bill, but that's not the case. It's not true. We have free will and the right to voice our opinions, our concerns, and those of our constituents. I feel that in good conscience I have no choice but to support this bill to give farm workers the basic labour rights afforded in every other industry. I promise this to the farm and ranch constituents of Leduc-Beaumont, that as we move forward with consultation, I will hold this government to account for its actions. I will be a tireless advocate for your way of life, and I won't stop speaking out for you even if it makes me a black sheep in my own party and even if it means that I have to ask tough questions and ruffle feathers.

I'm not going to make excuses for our lack of clarity in communicating this bill. It was an error on our part, and it led to a lot of unnecessary worry, anxiety, and fear. I'll do my best to make sure that we have open and clear communication going forward, and I will be a voice in this government. You have an advocate and

a partner in making these regulations work for you, not making you work for the regulations.

We need to take the emotion and the partisanship out of this debate because it's not about politics. I don't have any political agenda here. This is simply about doing what's right. Madam Chair, I will stand up for what I believe is right. These lines to a song kept going through my head this morning as I was driving here, and they say: "You've got to stand for something or you'll fall for anything. You've got to be your own man not a puppet on a string." I won't be played by anyone from either side.

Madam Chair, I do stand for something, and that something is the basic rights of all workers in this province. Thank you.

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

Dr. Starke: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would just like to start by thanking the hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont, who just spoke. I appreciate his comments, I appreciate his very clear sincerity, and, you know, I appreciate his opinion, that he articulates very well.

What I will say is that if this bill was just about and if this bill only did what we are repeatedly being told, you know, certainly in question period, if this was just about vulnerable farm workers receiving some form of compensation in the event of an injury or a fatality, if that was all this was about, if all of it was about whether or not accidents can be investigated – you know what? – there wouldn't be protests. There wouldn't be 800 people in Olds today, there wouldn't have been 500 people in Vegreville yesterday, and there wouldn't be 1,500 people on the front steps. If you talk to farmers, if you talk to people around the province, they say: that's not what it's about.

The problem is that this ham-handed piece of legislation tries to take it all, tries to do it all. It is doing surgery with a butter knife instead of a scalpel. The problem is that there is nothing surgical about the government's approach to this. This amendment that we're discussing right now is a very desperate attempt to improve a very, very bad piece of legislation, a piece of legislation from which, while its intentions are good, while it intends to offer and provide to farm workers some basic protections that they deserve to have – and I acknowledge that they deserve to have them – there is so much collateral damage to the innocent, I'll say, that in its attempt to protect farm workers, quite frankly, the collateral damage of this is astounding.

Now, speaking to the amendment, I am, quite frankly, a little bit torn as to how to vote on the amendment, and I'll tell you why. The bill is awful. The bill is, flat out, poor legislation. It's been poorly executed, it's been poorly communicated, and it's been poorly put together. It tries to do everything all at once instead of having a surgical approach. It is a mess, or as we would say on the farm, this thing is a wreck. In a desperate attempt to salvage this piece of legislation, this poor, poor, poor piece of legislation, the government a couple of days ago came out with six pages' worth of amendments to amend a five-page bill. You know, I will tell you that there are some really, really basic things about writing legislation. If you need six pages of amendments and your bill was only five pages, there's a problem. There's a very basic and a very large problem.

Now, what I will acknowledge is that in the amendments the government is making an attempt to at least provide some clarity as to who is and who isn't covered by the legislation. That clarity should have been there from the outset. That clarity should have been there right from the get-go. A lot of this discussion and a lot of this, you know, miscommunication I lay squarely at the feet of the government, and they have in fact said that it is their

responsibility. This lack of clarity is their fault, and now they have to try to fix it. The amendment does make an attempt at fixing it.

Because we know that the government has a majority and because we know that they are even resorting to closure to ram this piece of legislation through regardless, my quandary is that I think the amendment, quite frankly, slightly improves, slightly clarifies a very bad piece of legislation. Since we know that we're going to get this very, very bad piece of legislation because the government has promised that to all of us, my quandary is: well, are we better off with a bad piece of legislation that is at least clear or a bad piece of legislation that is unclear? Frankly, Madam Chair, I don't think either one is particularly good, but I'm leaning towards supporting the amendment because at least it provides some spelled-out clarity within the legislation, which is what farmers and ranchers have indeed been asking for. Now, don't fool yourself. That doesn't mean they like what's in here. At least, though, they're somewhat more clear as to what's in here.

4:30

Let me give you an example of some of the miscommunication in clarity. Just yesterday – just yesterday – I attended the government-sponsored information session in Vegreville, and at that session there were brief opening comments, and then the Minister of Economic Development and Trade and the Minister of Jobs, Skills, Training and Labour as well as the Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville were on hand to answer questions. There was a question from one attendee that asked to define what is meant by wage-earning employees, which is the term that's used in the amendment, and the Minister of Economic Development and Trade stated that a wage-earning employee in terms of who would be exempt would be family members and neighbours. Any family member or a neighbour, whether it's calving season or harvest, that comes to help: they are exempt. I said: well, wait a minute; neighbours? This doesn't talk about neighbours; this just talks about family members. It gives the list, and it defines it. You know, there's clarity in terms of who is defined as a family member. It's very broadly defined. I was glad to see that, too. We're talking sisters and nieces and nephews and cousins, you name it. That's good because it creates a fairly broad definition. But the whole thing with neighbours?

Then the question was further asked: well, what about a paid neighbour? The Minister of Economic Development and Trade said: well, whether it's a payment under the table or some work that's done in exchange, it would be exempt. So, once again, there is a lack of clarity. If the neighbour is paid and given a T4, is the neighbour exempt or not exempt? I have it on tape. In the space of five minutes the minister said two different things.

Now, the minister may have misspoken – that's fine – but at least 500 people in Vegreville heard him yesterday and heard what he had to say, so now there is confusion as to whether neighbours are included with this in this act, included in this amendment or not. I've gone through the amendment. There's nothing about neighbours in the amendment. There's certainly a lot about family members.

Madam Chair, this is the problem. This is the problem. I will say – and it's not something I'm necessarily proud of – that I've been in the position of the members of the government. I've been in the position as a cabinet minister; I've been in the position as a private member, not in cabinet. It is a feeling of tremendous discomfort when you know you've got a crappy piece of legislation. It is a feeling of tremendous discomfort when you are being called on to vote and to support, because it is well intentioned but poorly executed, a piece of legislation that is not a good piece of legislation. I could name off some of the ones from the past terms, but

I'm sure that because they're so interested in what's happened for the last 44 years and some of our failings, we'll hear about it from over there, so I won't waste our time.

This is poor legislation. This amendment makes the poor legislation somewhat clearer, so I'm inclined on the basis of clarity to support it, but I will tell you, Madam Chair, that this is still tremendously poor legislation. The amendments that are here do answer some questions. They do provide some clarity, but there is so much in this bill that is still unclear, that is still unanswered. You know, there were two hours' worth of questions, and people were still lined up at the microphones yesterday wanting to ask questions to get some clarity. It is so clear and it should be so obvious to this government that this piece of legislation is poorly executed, poorly written, and really needs to be taken back to the drawing board, but when we gave you two separate opportunities to do that, a referral motion and then a hoist motion, you defeated both of them. We are giving you every lifeline that is available under legislative procedure to correct your errors, and you refuse. This is problematic.

Now, you know, some people will say: "Well, let them dig their own grave. Let them hang themselves politically." But, quite frankly, we are legislators. Our job as legislators is to produce the best legislation that we can here in this Legislature. What happens three and a half years from now: that will sort itself out. We have to worry about what we are dealing with right now. Right now we're dealing with poor legislation, and right now, perhaps more importantly, we're dealing with the broken trust of Albertans across the province: rural, urban, and right across from north to south. That is a problem for this government because when you've broken the trust of the people, I can tell you that it makes it that much more difficult to govern on a lot of different areas, not just on whether you're talking about farm safety but a whole wide range of issues. Whether they're economic issues or social issues, this government will have an increasing level of difficulty governing because they simply are not listening to people. They have demonstrated that they will forge ahead with something that is so clearly being opposed right across this province.

Madam Chair, I'm going to actually listen to the rest of the debate on this amendment. As I said, I'm a little bit torn. I think I'm probably going to support it, which seems odd, but it does provide some clarity to an otherwise very poor bill. You can rest assured that when it comes up for third reading, I will be against the bill. For however long it takes this evening in Committee of the Whole until this government once again invokes closure and cuts off the democratic process, I will be listening and most likely supporting most of the amendments that attempt – attempt – to try to fix, to patch, to amend, to alter the poor elements within this bill that still remain. I can tell you that one night, quite frankly, isn't enough time to do it, but we will work however late we need to tonight on the amendments to try and pass them to make this legislation at least somewhat more palatable to the people of Alberta.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Madam Chair. I will be brief because I think that we will talk a lot more about some of the subamendments that are coming as we attempt to fix this legislation. Just briefly, on behalf of the Wildrose caucus, specifically on this amendment, the issue with this amendment is that it doesn't fix nearly enough problems with Bill 6. This government has shown itself to be totally deaf to what voters wanted in this regard leading up to this, and now they might be starting to become partially deaf. Now they're

starting to slowly listen, but the problem is that because they're trying to ram this through so fast, I don't think that we're going to have time to make them fully listen to what voters want. So they're going to take this half-measure, and that's disappointing.

First of all, Madam Chair, the amendment itself leaves room where cabinet can later change regulations, which will affect the people whose protection under legislation we are going to take away if this bill passes. Now, for the farmers and the ranchers that I'm speaking to back in my constituency and across the province, that's not acceptable. The reason that it's not acceptable is because they don't trust this government anymore. They don't trust this government because this government tried to put in legislation that would totally disrupt their way of life. Their own website shows it. They tried to put in legislation that would put WCB on kids working in chicken coops on farms, put in legislation that would have affected kids using 4-H cows in their parents' barns or corrals. That's a fact.

Now they've changed that. There was outcry. There were protests, letters. We've seen all of my colleagues bring forward all the letters that have been coming from their riding. We've seen the protests on the Legislature steps. So now the government is panicking, Madam Chair. They know that they're in trouble. They know that they're in trouble in rural Alberta. Despite being known as an urban party, they do actually have a lot of rural seats, as you know full well, and they know they're in trouble in rural Alberta. So they have to try to bring forward this amendment, but it does not go far enough. It still leaves a blank cheque, which Albertans will not accept because they do not trust this government. Let's be very clear on that.

Now, there are several things that we are going to try to do, as my colleague the House leader for the third party articulated very well, I believe. We are going to try tonight, but we know that the government is only going to give us so much time, unfortunately, because they are going to take away our democratic right as MLAs to fight for our constituents. We are going to try to help them fix this legislation even more. We know that they're going to take their majority and they're going to try to force this through, but we want to try to help our constituents back home as much as possible. We're going to go through it. We're going to try to fix it. We're going to start that shortly.

4:40

I want to be clear, Madam Chair. I couldn't be in Olds today for the government no-tell session, as we like to call them now, and it sounds like it was about the same, from the reports I'm getting from there today. My wife went. Several members of my family went and several friends, and they spoke with many, many farmers. I know that the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills was there today. He spoke with many farmers. We talked specifically about this amendment, and the message was loud and clear from our constituents: this amendment is still not acceptable. The bill itself is not acceptable, and they were very clear that they expect us to stand up in this House and vote against this amendment, vote against this bill, and stop this outrageous behaviour on farmers and ranchers.

While I respect the Member for Leduc-Beaumont – and I do respect him very much, and I respect him for standing up and having the courage – you know, we have not seen many of his colleagues stand up and defend this bill. He had the courage to do that, and I respect that, but I also respectfully disagree. I was sent here by my constituents to vote for them. Now, along the way, with the burden of office it's going to be tough to decide sometimes what your riding wants. Many of the veteran MLAs in here can probably confirm that there are going to be issues along the way where you're

not going to be sure what your riding wants, but I can tell you right now that there's no doubt what the people of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre want. Thousands of phone calls, thousands of e-mails and not one person from my constituency, from my riding, has come to me and said: vote for this.

Madam Chair, I can tell you that I and my Wildrose colleagues are going to do what our constituents sent us to do. We're going to follow their instructions, and we are going to vote against this bill.

I thank you very much for your time, Madam Chair.

The Chair: I'm going to go next to the hon. Member for Calgary-Bow and then Drumheller-Stettler.

Ms Drever: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm glad to have the opportunity to rise to speak to Bill 6 today. I'm pleased to vote for this amendment, which I believe clarifies the original intent of this bill, which is to offer workplace protections to paid farm and agriculture workers. Although my riding of Calgary-Bow is not considered a rural riding, I have had some constituents who have formerly lived on farms who have contacted me to share their opinions on the bill, which is why I rise to explain my support.

Agriculture represents a vital industry to our economy here in Alberta, and our farmers and ranchers work hard to put food on our tables every day. That's not all, Madam Chair. Our farmers and ranchers are also some of our key job creators in this province. We are a proud province, with workers who realize that a day's work means showing up far before the sun rises and going home far after it sets. What this bill seeks to accomplish is to ensure that we as a government are offering the same level of protection to a vital industry that we as a government offer to every other industry.

Alberta is the only province without employment standards coverage for farm and ranch workers. Our farm workers here in Alberta are currently exempt from occupational health and safety laws and have no right to refuse unsafe work. To clarify, what that means is that if a farm worker refuses to complete a job due to safety concerns, they have no legal protection. We as a government need to ensure that we are protecting all Alberta workers while also ensuring that we are respecting the preservation of family farm traditions and that do-good Alberta nature of neighbour helping neighbour.

This amendment accomplishes that, and for that reason I support this legislation. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Madam Chair. For those of you and even for myself, the understanding of *Robert's Rules of Order* is going to be important as we go forward. I'd like to give notice of a subamendment to Bill 6, the Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act. I have the required number of copies here for that.

Madam Chair, could I proceed through it, or do you want to wait till they're distributed?

The Chair: Just let me get the original. Is this an original? I need the original.

Mr. Strankman: I guess this is the original. Sorry. Thank you.

The Chair: This will be subamendment SA1.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that amendment A1 to Bill 6, Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act, be amended in part A in the proposed section 5(2) as

follows. Under (a), in clause (b), in the proposed subclause (i), by adding the following after paragraph (A):

(A.1) the operation does not pay wages, as defined in the Employment Standards Code, to more than 5 persons not including family members for the performance of farming or ranching work, or

Under (b), in clause (c), in the proposed subclause (bb), by adding the following after subclause (ii):

(iii) a person employed by a farming or ranching operation referred to in clause (s)(i)(A.1);

Madam Chair, if I could speak to the amendment briefly within the allotted time. I'm presenting the amendment in an attempt to – as we've heard many times today from the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre and from the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster and even in a somewhat cordial fashion or amenable fashion, I'll say, from the Member for Leduc-Beaumont, this legislation is in need of improvement. This is a way that, hopefully, we can try an improvement.

I have great consternation about the fact that we are left to try and make these improvements in this Chamber to the best of our abilities because, Madam Chair, I have great consternation about unintended consequences. I think that's what's come forward in spades, if you will, to this legislation and the fact that when it was presented, it was a small number of pages. Then the government, after some feedback, I'll say, from the public and from opposition, came forward with five more pages of amendments.

With that, I looked into legislation that's prevalent in Saskatchewan. In my earlier presentation, speaking to this legislation, I spoke about the options in Saskatchewan. It's actually considerably different from what we have here or what this bill is proposing in Alberta. I find it significant that they talk about it in an interesting fashion. They give several exemptions. It exempts farming. It prescribes that farms and ranches over 10 employees must have an occupational health and safety program. It prescribes that farms and ranches with more than four or less than 10 employees must have an employee representative and must set out in writing who is the supervisor of the work site. These are options that easily could have been presented to the legislation in Alberta. That is for the OH and S portion of it.

Part of the major contentious issue in Alberta is the WCB mandate. The Wildrose has heard significantly from many, many constituents across the province about the unsatisfactory performance of the WCB and about their request for the provision of choice, whether that be any sort of a provider, not unlike what many of the citizens of Alberta are allowed under public liability and property damage, commonly referred to as PL/PD, for their automotive insurance. They have and are able to receive multiple sources or multiple options for that coverage.

In Saskatchewan the WCB exclusion act excludes dairy farming and feedlot or livestock yard operations that are not in connection with an industry within the scope of the act. They go on to list fur farms; grazing co-operatives; land clearing, brush cutting, or stumping that is not in connection with an industry within the scope of the act. Madam Chair, it includes livestock brokers, mobile farm feed service, portable seed-cleaning plants, piggery farms, poultry farms, trapping. There are many options in this other jurisdiction that are brought forward.

4:50

What I'm trying to do with this subamendment is to simply increase the designation beyond a single hiree, a temporary farm employee such as what we use on our farm, where we normally hire a single operator to help bring in the harvest, that would require the extent of ongoing OH and S requirements for the whole rest of the

year. Fall protection, OH and S designated sites, et cetera, are all required for the short season that that operator would be there, but those extensive and expensive requirements are the unintended consequences of this government's legislation in its present form.

With that, we're trying to achieve some small form of an option and, as the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster pointed out, trying to extend a lifeline to the government to bring forward improvements to their own legislation. We're doing this with the full comprehension and understanding that there may even be unintended consequences to what we're presenting here. It's a dangerous precedent that we're in, but we're trying to work with what's handed to us. It's simply something that's the only option that we have left and are presenting. We're trying to work with the government in many ways to bring these things forward.

Madam Chair, I'm anxious to hear what the comments are from members opposite and from others in regard to this subamendment. At the risk of being complicated and bringing this to a further amendment of an amendment of legislation, it's something that we're trying to do, hopefully in good faith – and, hopefully, it will be received in good faith – to bring forward positive legislation. As representatives of Albertans and representatives of our constituents the onus is entirely upon us to try and do this.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I rise to speak against the subamendment today. This subamendment essentially proposes to amend the definition of our amendment. The amendment was proposed to ensure that family farms were exempted and that a certain way of life was protected, but this subamendment increases the exempted people for farms that employ five or less paid workers.

The entire intent of the legislation is to defend paid farm workers. These people have been without protections for a number of years. Like every other employee in the province, they have the right to be able to refuse unsafe work. You know, if someone says, "Stick your hand in that live machine and take out that block of wood that's stuck," they should be able to say no. That is what our belief is, and that's how we're proceeding forward.

We also think that paid farm workers should have access to compensation in the event that they are grievously injured and unable to work for the rest of their lives. In the event that someone is tragically killed in a farm accident, we feel that their family should have access to that compensation.

You know, it was always our intention to exempt family farms, and we've brought in amendments to clarify this, as we have been asked to do by numerous parties. I think the Official Opposition, in bringing forward this amendment, is really indicating that maybe everything wasn't all about the family farm because this would exempt more than just family farms. An operation with five employees, while being a small business, is not a family business. It's a small business. Like any other small business, they will now be required to be subject to occupational health and safety and to be subject to WCB. This is the case for every other small business across the province, so it's not unreasonable to think that vulnerable workers in this particular sector should also be included in this case.

I'd also like to point out while I have risen here that back in March it seemed that the Leader of the Official Opposition was, in fact, in favour of extending rights to farm workers, so I am surprised now that the Official Opposition is taking the position that they are taking. I understand that there have been some concerns about family farms, and I believe that our amendment makes it absolutely clear what our intention is with respect to that going forward.

You know, this amendment would increase that exemption. It would increase it beyond family farms. It would increase it to include paid employees, the very same paid and vulnerable employees that we are acting to protect and that our party has pretty much throughout its history indicated that it will act to protect.

Madam Chair, I will be voting against the subamendment, and I would urge all members to do the same. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. First of all, I do support this amendment for a couple of reasons. The first is that this bill is going to cost farmers jobs. It's already happening. We're already hearing from the Olds rally today that ranchers are not going to be able to afford to do what the requirements are if they have hired hands now, to be able to keep up with families that don't need as many hired hands. So we've broken farmers into two different groups, which is extremely unfortunate. People are going to lose jobs, and that's tough in my community.

Again, we just watched a minister stand in this House again and accuse farmers, Madam Chair, of forcing people to do unsafe work and say that she wouldn't support this thing because she actually thinks some farmer or rancher somewhere is going around and forcing people to do things that they do not want to do, forcing people to do things unsafely, and that's not true. It's the same thing her Premier has said. Then they wonder why Albertans won't trust them anymore. This is what they keep standing up in this House and saying. They keep standing up and saying: farmers and ranchers are trying to hurt people; they're trying to kill people. That's what this government is saying. Shame on the minister for saying that, and shame on the Premier for continuing to allow it to happen.

Farmers and ranchers are not trying to hurt people, and the quicker we all get that through our heads, the quicker we can try to get some proper legislation done. But saying that you will not vote for this amendment because you think a farmer or rancher would now force somebody to do something and it takes away their protection to not do it is unacceptable.

I can tell you that back home all the farmers and ranchers I'm talking to are outraged, and that is one of the reasons that they will never vote for this government again. This minister should stand up in this House and apologize to farmers and ranchers.

Mr. Mason: I would hope that the hon. member would be able to hear the response to that nonsense that he has just spouted. In all industries there are safe and unsafe situations that arise from time to time. They are not usually or almost never or completely never a deliberate attempt by the employer to force somebody to do something that's dangerous. To suggest that if you talk about the existence of unsafe working conditions from time to time in the agriculture industry, it's somehow an attack on farmers is completely twisting the words of the minister and is attempting to further fan the flames for people who don't understand the legislation. It is not adding any clarity to this discussion whatsoever. It's misleading, Madam Chair.

Every year in Alberta 17 people die in work-related farm accidents, and for every one of those deaths there are another 25 that are hospitalized as a result of a work-related injury. These kinds of accidents occur in all industries, Madam Chair, not just on farms.

To say that if you talk about the injuries, for example, in oil field drilling or deaths in industry, you're somehow accusing those employers of deliberately sending people to their deaths, you know, is an absolute outrage and an insult. For the hon. member to stand here and then have the gall to stand up further and demand an

apology from this side when it's that hon. member that actually owes an apology for twisting and misleading and trying to inflame the situation further, deliberately, I might add, Madam Chair, by misleading farmers about what this government is saying and about what the intention of this government is – he is the one, frankly, that should apologize.

5:00

The Chair: I'll recognize the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka first.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have no intention of inflaming this. But I want to take you to a farm, in a way. I received this very long text message, pecked out on a phone – I don't know how many hours he spent doing it – sharing his story with me, a young family farm. The reality is that he expresses things that I think maybe are not understood about the nature and the reality of the farm world.

The truth of the matter here is that the nature of the farming world has changed in recent years. If you look at commodity prices versus expenses, what farms earn hasn't really gone up in 10 or maybe even in some cases 15 years. Costs have continued to rise. The truth of the matter is that farming margins are so thin right now that many of them are actually going bankrupt. The reality is that almost all farm families, every time they get a break in their farming schedule, go off farm and have to work somewhere else, usually in the oil field, so that they can make enough money to keep their farm alive.

Part of that reality is also that – and this is in relation to the amendment; in fact, it relates directly to SA1 here – I don't think people understand that most multigenerational farms don't get it handed to them on a silver platter for free. What happens is that one generation buys it from the next so that they have money to retire, so that the older people have money to live. It starts over with every generation, with this incredibly massive cost factor that comes in, and then the costs of operating have escalated while the incomes haven't. The reality is that for many farmers it truly is a lifestyle; it isn't a business.

In regard to the business side of it, which is what this relates to, farms that have not grown, farms that have not increased their size are not able to earn enough revenue off their operational expense to actually keep a family alive. There isn't enough income left at the end of the day for a family to live on, hence working outside, hence trying to get bigger so that they can create enough revenue and get a thin margin of 5 per cent or so to try and live on. This is something that really becomes difficult for them to do.

The price of land has escalated to the point where, in my area, land is costing between \$4,500 and \$12,000 an acre. Farming business analysts have pointed out that you can't cash-flow on that kind of purchase price. You have to fund it some other way: working outside, trying to get bigger. The reality is that about \$2,000 an acre is all you can actually earn on a farm.

So this young man, who's been through all of this experience, bought his father's home quarter then had to borrow money to buy two more quarters to try and get a little bit bigger. He says:

I totally get safety. One thing you need to understand is that we just don't hire masses of people. We hire people who are just as passionate as we are. There are lots of farmers at heart that can't afford to farm because of the incredible costs that are related to it. They can't afford to farm themselves, and these are the people who we usually hire. If it's about the money or safety, they wouldn't work for us, in truth. But truth be told, the guys that work for me and all farms will never be a number. They become family. They eat dinner with us every day. They're over for all the holidays. Do you really think we don't care about their safety? Truth be told, my guys are more upset . . .

Now, these are the farm workers.

... and worried than I am now. They know that I don't have a lot of money. I've shown them my books. They will tell you that they are paid more a month than I am. To a very small group of employees that have gotten hurt in the past, gone to the government to complain...

Et cetera, et cetera.

The reality is that in many cases, yes, we need to protect the rights of the farm workers, but what if the farm workers don't want it? Will they have the right to say no, or will it be forced upon them? And I understand that, yes, there are cases where some farm workers need help, but that's where this legislation needs to be fine-tuned and not steamrolled over everyone else. The reality of the farming economy these days is that it's not possible to operate on a one- or two-person operation and actually survive, and family farms have been forced to get bigger in order to even survive. They do care about their people, and oftentimes it is the neighbour's son or somebody from across the next quarter. So there is an extremely important point to this that actually makes it possible for the family farm to survive.

Unless you understand those economics and those realities and those generational passings on, how it is that they even get to become the next generation that farms, I think you don't understand why it is that we are getting so inundated. I mean, we didn't make this up, friends: 30,000 signatures presented today. We didn't go out and con those. We didn't go out and beg people to sign it so we could hand something in here. Thousands of letters were sent to us.

Yes, there are people who need some protection, but this protection needs to be wisely thought about and carefully administered, and that is not what's happening with this legislation. That kind of careful thought has not been put into this. Quite frankly, the partial solution to a very, very bad piece of legislation is in this subamendment, and I have to encourage you, based on one farmer's testimony and experience, that the reality is that without some consideration for being able to do these things in the community of farming, quite frankly, you will drive many of these operations out of business. They will cease to exist, and what you will end up with is big corporate farms. That's what will be left.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Just in regard to the dispute between the House leader and our opposition whip with regard to comments made by the minister, the wonderful thing about this House is that all words are recorded in *Hansard*, and we'll get somebody to pull those statements and just make sure that there's clarity on that.

Anyway, getting back to the amendment, I find it interesting that the government can put forward a six-page amendment on a five-page bill, and everybody jumps up and rags and says how wonderful it is, and then when the opposition puts through a very small, half-page subamendment to it, all of a sudden, you know, that's got to be rejected.

All it does is to provide some clarity as to the size of a family farm and give them – like I said before, in my previous speech, this six-page amendment, although it is an improvement on the bill, isn't quite clear as to what size a family farm is and kind of ties their hands behind their backs if they do need some help. Sometimes a small family farm is just a couple. I have family members that calve out 350 to 400 head of cattle every year, and it's a 24-hour job. It's tough. They're both, you know, in their 60s, and to be up 24 hours a day checking on calves is just beyond their capability, so they hire a hired man, that comes and stays with them for a couple of months

while they do their calving. So all that is that we're just trying to eliminate that. This person that they hire sleeps in their house and eats breakfast at their table, so he is like a family member, but he's not. He's a hired hand.

So I'm pleased to rise and speak in support of the subamendment to the Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act. This amendment will provide more stability and security to family farms by excluding them from mandatory OH and S due to the fact that they only employ a handful of paid employees. Again, sometimes it's on a part-time basis, only for a month. It's the paperwork involved in providing WCB coverage and OH and S coverage. A lot of these families already have insurance that covers their employees. It's blanket coverage, and it comes and goes. They're not in the market to have their employee or the person that comes and helps them on a yearly basis get hurt so that he doesn't come back and they have to look for someone else. It's not in the cards.

5:10

Nobody disputes the fact that safety is important; however, we seem to disagree on the fact that those most concerned with safety are the moms and dads operating farms. Moms and dads are not only concerned with the safety of their children but also of the workers that they may have. It's a small outfit, so these employees may not be blood relatives, but they're treated as though they are. Like I said, they sleep in the house, they have breakfast, they have lunch, dinner, and supper with them, and sit and watch TV at night together. Moms and dads do everything within their power to ensure the safety of everyone on the farm while also introducing their children to the joys and, at times, burdens of farm life. By broadly instituting OH and S on all farms, the government is in effect saying: "You're not doing it right. You're not looking out for your family, neighbours, and employees. We know better. We can do better. We will do it."

Come to think of it, that's exactly what the Premier said last week, that this bill will be passed. No discussion. This bill will be passed prior to Christmas: no ifs, ands, or buts; no thorough consultation; no consideration. Is that what we've come to in this province? The idea that government can better take care of farmers' families is categorically false. So is the idea that the government knows better on this issue.

Furthermore, at this point OH and S executives don't even know what implementation will look like. According to Ross Nairne, the executive director of occupational health and safety, speaking in Grande Prairie, "Answers will be unclear until technical rules are developed and implemented in 2017." That is as reported in the *Western Producer* on December 3. What we're doing here is attempting to pass legislation, and it seems nobody knows what the final product will look like, Madam Chair. This kind of uncertainty for at least one full year and likely more is not helpful to anyone, least of all to those family farms who will be stuck in limbo while they await confirmation of what implementation will look like for a small operation. Do they invest? Do they try and grow bigger, knowing that down the road they're going to get legislation that could cripple them?

I don't think it's asking too much for there to be a minimum, basic framework in place. That's all we're asking; that's all this amendment does. It adds to the six pages of the amendment one little section that dictates how many employees you can have before this legislation goes into effect. I think a small farm with five employees on a part-time basis or even on a full-time basis is not going to cripple the government.

Farmers and ranchers have questions for which neither the government, OH and S, nor WCB have answers. That's the problem. That's a problem of more than just misinformation. That's

a problem of lack of information. It's also a problem of lack of foresight and, as I'm sure the government is tired of being reminded, a lack of consultation. To address this, in this last-minute amendment the government re-exempted family farms so long as they don't hire a single employee for any part of the year. All we're trying to do is clarify that a small family farm can hire up to five employees. It's not that onerous. [interjections] That's better, but it does not actually exempt family farms; it only exempts the family members themselves, so we still have the same host of problems, just on a smaller scale. But this error can be fixed. That brings me to this amendment, which would actually exclude from mandatory OH and S those family farms by letting them hire a few seasonal employees without suddenly having their homestead treated like a factory.

Questions abound for family farmers. They're asking if they're able to continue operating. They're asking if they'll be able to continue to hire the additional hand or hands that they need to ensure that their family farm runs smoothly and safely, above board, not under the table. They're asking if they'll be able to afford whatever upgrades an OH and S inspector might demand on their 80-year-old farm. They're asking these questions, and they're not receiving answers. In my previous statement I alluded to the machinist company that went bankrupt after being fined close to \$300,000 by OH and S because they had modified a switch on a drill press. How many farmers out there have modified a piece of farm equipment?

An Hon. Member: All of them.

Mr. Hanson: All of them. You buy a piece of equipment, and you tinker with it to make it work better. Sometimes you add a little bit. You know, if something happens, is the farmer going to lose his farm because he's added an extra plowshare to a 50-foot cultivator?

Farm families are not large enterprises that bring in big money. They're not large corporations with dozens or hundreds of employees. They're small. They operate on a tight budget, and they do it for the love of the job and the love of the accompanying life. In order to help things run smoothly, they sometimes need to hire only a few people to help out for a season or on a long-term basis.

Exempting family farms from this mandatory OH and S makes sense. It doesn't mean in regard to safety that any corners will be cut. It doesn't mean that safety suddenly flies out the window. Not at all. These farmers are already concerned with safety. For years, without legislation in place, they've already been doing everything within their power to mitigate any injuries. Safety is already being considered and being acted upon on family farms. Nobody wants to see injuries anywhere, least of all families, and 90 per cent of them that we've talked to do provide insurance for themselves and for people that they hire on a part-time basis.

Passing this amendment is one of the best things this government can do, outside of killing the bill completely or referring it to committee, to ensure that proper, thorough consultation can take place. Passing this amendment would only mean that the government stands up in front of all Albertans and says that it recognizes that family farms are different. That's all we're asking for, just some clarity on: what is a family farm?

It would mean that the government is beginning to gain an appreciation and an understanding of the variation that exists in the agricultural community. Passing this amendment would mean that the government is prepared to start listening to Albertans and start taking their concerns into account. In fact, it would show Albertans that the government is not just prepared to start listening but is actually listening to them, which, let's be honest, this government could use a little bit of help on.

In an economy already shaken, fragile, and despairing, the last thing that we need to do in this province is pass legislation that will further hurt our economy. Worse, the last thing this government should want to do is hurt more Albertans by bringing about further job loss and insecurity.

I'm not fearmongering here. I know that the other side of the House enjoys accusing us of that on a regular basis, but that's not what I'm doing. I'm stating facts, and I'm supporting the people in my constituency that have asked me to do this, every day, every letter, every phone call, every e-mail. Not one for Bill 6. Not one.

Numerous farming families have raised their voices and have spoken to MLAs and media about the fact that the potential costs associated with instituting OH and S are very concerning, inhibiting, and unaffordable. Let's read between the lines. That means closure, and that's closure not just of a family business but of a way of life.

Before I finish speaking on this amendment, I'd like to ask a few questions of the government members opposite. Over the past weeks this House has spent some time debating Bill 202, the Alberta Local Food Act. Has the government considered what effect passing Bill 6 may have on the implementation of Bill 202? As far as I can see, we have two bills which share something of a relationship. In previous days a number of members opposite have spoken on shopping locally and speaking with farmers. Have those same members asked those farmers how this bill will affect them? Probably not. They don't want to hear it.

Or consider the implementation of the unpopular carbon tax. The monies that will be owed by small family farms on this will already serve to raise their costs. How will Bill 6 on top of the carbon tax affect the costs imposed on family farms? Has the government, have members opposite asked that question?

These questions are important to answer when you're considering family farms with only a few employees. The intent should be to promote business and employment, not stifle it and not put it under the table, as was suggested in Vegreville.

As mentioned before, safety is a high priority for the moms and dads who run these farms. However, if they see increases in costs, not only from the carbon tax but also barriers from extensive OH and S implementation, there's a possibility that they will be unable to hire those few employees that they need to help maintain operations. That puts extra stress on the family.

If they can't afford to hire some additional people to help, that could, in turn, have negative consequences of making the owners take on even more responsibility, even longer hours, which could affect their safety. Passing this amendment, therefore, promotes safety on family farms by letting them hire the help they need when they need it. Safety is important for everyone, and passing this amendment will not diminish the application of safety measures for anyone, nor will it put people at risk.

5:20

In closing, I'd like to reiterate my support for this amendment to exempt family farms that employ fewer than five workers from mandatory OH and S. I don't think it's that difficult to do. I encourage all members of this House to take some time to consider what Bill 6 would look like and what it would mean to family farms both with and without this amendment. Once that has been truly and honestly considered, I believe you will understand the importance and necessity of passing this amendment. Again, I'll add: all we're asking is to add half a page to your already six pages of amendments on a five-page bill.

Thank you very much.

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

Mr. MacIntyre: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak in support of this subamendment from my esteemed colleague. It would be truly amusing, if it wasn't so insulting, that this government expects Alberta farmers to believe that they had planned to exempt farm owners and family farms all along when everybody, especially farmers, know that that is absolutely not true. Documentation proves it's so.

Although we have heard time and again empty rhetoric about how this government is listening – we hear it all the time – their actions are speaking louder than their empty rhetoric because we still see no formal process in place for farmers to have concrete input into Bill 6. There's nothing there. There's been talk and no concrete process put in place.

Now, this amendment that we have is a good amendment intended to protect family farms. The reason why the members opposite are having a struggle with this is because they do not understand farming. For example, a family farm during harvest time needs an intense amount of work to be done around the clock for a short period of time to get that harvest in.

Same thing at roundup. When it's time to bring the cattle in, they are scattered all over the countryside. I worked for a cattleman. We had cattle in three different locations. I think that the closest location was a mile away, and the farthest location was about 15 miles away at a pasture. When it was time to round up the cattle and bring them back – and there were at any given point in time between 500 and 600 head – we were going to need help. For that short period of time it's not uncommon for family farmers to hire some people to come on over and get that job done and to take as long as it takes to get that job done.

Now, going back to harvest time as an example, you're always fighting the weather when you're a farmer. Of course, at harvest time, the way seeding is done today, the intention is to have all that grain come ready at the same time and get it off the field and into the bins. When a family farm has only two or three family members, quite often they will hire out to get enough manpower there for that short amount of time, and they give 'er all day, from sun-up to sundown. Well, actually, when you're taking grain off, you will combine until the dew doesn't let you anymore. It's called when it gets "tough." That's a farming word. [interjection] Yeah. It gets tough, too. But the last thing you want is dew-laden grain. It will heat up and just go to rot on you.

In this intense operation you're working from as early in the morning as you possibly can till as late at night as the dew falls. That means you have a really short window that day and maybe the next day and however many days it's going to be until that weather comes against you. You need lots of people, lots of machines, and lots of times a family farm will hire out for this short period of harvest. It may only be six or seven days, and that's it for the whole year. There will be no more hired workers needed. So because of this, if a family farm has to hire these workers temporarily for these few days – whammo – they are now subject to everything in this bill although they are, indeed, a family farm.

Because of the way this bill has been so poorly crafted, because this government did not talk to the experts on the farm, you don't know that. You don't know farming. You don't know the cycle of farming and the different kinds of farming that there are, whether it be grain farming, whether it be cattle, whether it be poultry. You don't understand it, but you're trying to legislate it. This is patently wrong, and that is the reason why in our parliamentary system we have standing committees, so that legislation that politicians think is great can go to the standing committees and the standing committees can bring in the experts, the farmers in this case, and the farmers can come to the standing committee and tell you in far

greater detail than I'm telling you all of the very unique but complex aspects of farming in the prairie provinces.

There's nothing like it. You can hardly compare this even to, you know, orchards in the Okanagan. I have experience with that. I also have experience with cattle from out here and grain farming and haying and all the rest of it. There are these moments of intensity where the family farmer has to hire out, and when that happens under this legislation as it is now – whammo – that family farm comes under the whole breadth of this legislation, and that's wrong. It shouldn't be that way.

If your intention was to exempt family farms, you haven't done it. I'll say it again. The reason you haven't done it – and I'm not being facetious or malicious when I say this – is that you don't understand farming. You don't understand prairie farming. Since you don't understand all of the complexities of farming because you haven't sent these things to committee, you haven't brought in the farmers – we keep suggesting to you that you do that – since you won't do that, well, okay, we're going to have to introduce a subamendment to your amendment.

Your amendment is an admission by you that your original bill was flawed, and you refuse to admit just how flawed it was, calling it mistaken communication. But, frankly, just think about this. If the farmers had not demonstrated and protested as loudly as they have, if the opposition had not protested as loudly and long as we have, you would have passed Bill 6 as it was, thinking that it's just fine, when in fact it is so flawed that you finally brought forward your own amendment in an attempt to fix it.

Again, the people who brought forward the amendment in an attempt to fix a flawed bill still didn't send it to committee and still didn't invite in a few thousand farmers to come and tell us from their expert testimony the different complexities that we need to know as legislators to draft sound legislation. Again, you relied on politicians and bureaucrats to fix a flawed bill developed by politicians and bureaucrats and not the farmers themselves. That is the fundamental flaw of Bill 6. It was not created by farmers, and it needs to be. There wasn't enough consultation. If you're really serious about farm safety, there are no better experts than the farmers themselves. They have not created this bill, and neither have they created this amendment. That is still your fundamental flaw.

We just keep hearing rhetoric about, "We hear; we hear; we're listening; we're listening," and what have the farmers been telling you? Kill Bill 6. It's a universal statement that you see at every rally, all over Facebook, all over Twitter, all of these e-mails, all of these letters. You know, earlier today my colleagues here in the Wildrose opposition put out – I don't know – five or six dead trees' worth of paper from our constituents and your constituents protesting Bill 6. The one thing that I noticed was: none from you.

5:30

Where were your stacks of petitions, of 30,000 names in support of Bill 6? Where were your stacks upon stacks upon stacks of thousands and thousands of letters from your constituents in support of your Bill 6? You don't have them. But I know that you have a lot of the same e-mails that I got, because I can read the header. I know that it was CCed to you, to these members. I also know how many I got in support of Bill 6, and I presented every single one of those letters that were in support of Bill 6: exactly none, not even one.

My constituency assistant in Sylvan Lake has been run off her feet. The phone just keeps ringing and ringing and ringing: we don't want Bill 6. We have letters from the Alberta federation of rural electric associations. They're saying: we don't want Bill 6. Rural Alberta has been pleading with this government, saying: kill this

bill. It was flawed from the get-go. No Band-Aid is going to successfully repair it.

We are going to try to propose amendments in an attempt to help repair this thing because this government is so doggedly determined to ram this bill through without listening to the very farmers whose lives this bill is going to impact. That is rude, and it is insulting to the democratic process and every Alberta farmer that's out there and has to be subject to this kind of totalitarian treatment. It's shameful.

Then we've had some statements from the other side that demonstrate clearly the lack of understanding that this government has about farmers, farm safety. For example, we have heard this government state that Bill 6 gives farm workers the right to refuse dangerous work. News flash: all Canadians have the right to refuse dangerous work.

Some Hon. Members: No, they don't.

Mr. MacIntyre: We can all say no. There is no person that can force me to do a dangerous job. Nobody. No one can force me to do a dangerous job. Nobody. So now you're accusing farmers of purposely, consciously ordering their workers to do dangerous work? Is that what that member is suggesting? [interjections]

The Chair: Hon. members, through the chair, please. Innisfail-Sylvan Lake has the floor.

Mr. MacIntyre: Yes, ma'am.

Charging Alberta farmers with forcing their employees to perform dangerous jobs: that deserves an apology. At 2:11 today, approximately, the Premier said that farm workers' "human rights . . . have been ignored." That's a quote, that farm workers' "human rights . . . have been ignored" for years, I believe she said. By whom? The farmers that employ them? Are you charging farmers who employ farm workers of ignoring farmer workers' human rights? Show me one. Show me one farmer who has ignored the rights of their workers. What a shameful accusation. It is a baseless charge and deserving of an apology from this Premier.

At 2:25 today the Minister of Health called farm workers "vulnerable." I was a farm worker. At no time did I feel vulnerable. Insinuating that farmers who employ them are purposely mistreating or taking advantage vulnerable employees, again, charging Alberta farmers with mistreatment: this is absolutely unacceptable. It deserves an apology from this government. Good grief.

Again, I really believe that it comes down to a genuine ignorance on the part of members opposite as to what farming is all about, the complexities of farming, and especially family farming. You just don't get it. You know, consultation is supposed to be a discussion where both parties speak and listen and – here is the key – respect the wisdom of both. This government has not demonstrated any respect for the wisdom of Alberta's farmers.

They've been farming this land for over a hundred years. I had the pleasure this summer of participating in a celebration at the McAllister farm. I believe it was the 125th anniversary of them farming the same dirt, 125 years. They've been on that dirt longer than this province has existed. That farm is an amazing operation. They have been farming continually, safely, generation after generation, and I was just blessed to be able to take a photograph of four generations of McAllisters: great-granddad, granddad, the dad, and the child. It was a wonderful moment.

I have neighbours who have been farming the same land for 105 years; others, 100 years.

Dr. Turner: What does this have to do with the subamendment?

Mr. MacIntyre: Everything. The subamendment goes to protecting those family farms from this legislation, that simply doesn't understand the family farm. That's what this is all about. We brought this subamendment to you because you're just going to have to accept that the family farms who tilled this province's earth for generation upon generation know a thing or two more than you.

You've rushed in with a Band-Aid amendment brought forth by a government that still fails to get to the core of the problem with this problematic legislation, which is that you still think you know more about farming than the farmers of Alberta. It's not unsurprising given your refusal to slow this process down, to properly consult, to put this thing into committee. You've got an amendment that is proposing to plug some holes, but there are too many holes. You don't have enough fingers and toes to plug them all.

You're claiming that your intention was never to impose this legislation on the family farm, and you've gone so far as to accuse Wildrose of spreading misinformation, but here we are with an amendment that fundamentally fails to exempt family farms, really. As I've just described to you, during harvest family farms are going to have to hire for that little window, and as soon as they do: wham.

Farming is seasonal work. You will be hard-pressed to find family operations that do not at any point require seasonal, additional paid help to do things like get the crops in or branding. These farm hands often live on site. They become part of the family. They come year after year. These relationships are symbiotic. The owner of the farm needs the farmhand just as much as the farmhand needs work from their farmer.

Dr. Turner: And a safe workplace.

Mr. MacIntyre: Are you saying that are farms are not safe, that farmers don't have safe workplaces? There are just more charges against our farmers. Goodness sakes. You need to go work on the farm. You need to learn a thing or two about farming.

Dr. Turner: I own a farm. I actually own a farm.

Mr. MacIntyre: I'm not talking about the computer game. I'm not talking about the app.

The Chair: Hon members, can we have order. The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake has the floor.

Mr. MacIntyre: In a province like Alberta, where the harvest season is short and demanding and there are options for work on any one of Alberta's nearly 50,000 farms, the power dynamics between a farmer and their help are far more balanced than this government would imply. We cannot help on this side of the House but to hear in the words of the NDP what amounts to a fundamental mistrust of the farmers' intentions. The NDP seems to believe that farmers are some type of selfish, oppressive owner of the means of production looking to take advantage of their employees. This legislation and the government rhetoric around it is laced with the notion that farmers are somehow abusing their employees or denying them human rights. It is simply not true, and frankly hundreds of farmers and ranchers whom I've spoken to find it insulting and inflammatory and deserving of an apology. Farmers only ask that you acknowledge that 9 to 5 office hours are not functional or tenable during calving and harvest season or most of the year on a farm.

5:40

More than just farmhands, what about contract workers? This legislation says that this only applies to ranch and farm work. But

what exactly constitutes farm work, then? Even with this amendment from the government it is still not clear to many in the agricultural community whom I have consulted with that a family farm can bring paid or unpaid workers.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak today against the subamendment. I have spent many hours, many days visiting, calling, e-mailing, and learning from the constituents of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville and their concerns. Among those concerns has been that the people are afraid that the government wants to tell parents how to raise their children. I don't want that for Albertans. I have seen how many issues around provincial legislation in our history have stirred the hearts of parents worried that the government did not believe that parents have the fundamental right to raise their children as they see best.

My father raised me and my sister as a single dad. As an owner of his own painting business, builder of trailers, engineer of geodesic domes, and overall inventor extraordinaire, he believed it was the most important thing to teach his children how to work. I held a paintbrush at the age of nine or 10. I had small hands, so I was well suited to cutting around doorknobs and light switches, and I would take the tape and I would tape off the baseboard, and I would wash windows. As I got older, I carried wood and scaffolding, helping my dad build geodesic domes, which he shipped all across the globe. I helped him build his dream house. It is a geodesic home in Wetaskiwin, and this is how we spent our time. Over that year that was how we bonded. This is what makes me the better IKEA builder between me and my husband.

Sometimes it felt like work, but more often it was just how we spent our time. Sometimes I was paid a few bucks. Sometimes, most of the time, I was not, but I helped my dad. I freely gave of my time to help my dad build his home because of the love of the work that he raised me to have and the love of my dad.

The original amendment speaks to what is fundamental about being Albertan and Canadian, protecting the right to raise your children in the traditions that you choose, whether it's the religion that you choose or the education that you choose or the home that you choose. I have visited hundreds of people across the region since May. I have gone walking in their fields to do crop checks. I have seen first-hand the difficulty of what it means to sow a new crop and wait and see through the season's changes to find out what you will actually get out of that yield come harvest time. I have met many, many families that have deep roots in our province, seen so many Century farm awards that are proudly hung at the outside of ranches' gates. This is what people were telling me. As people that have an identity of farming – fourth, fifth, sixth generation – they wanted the freedom to shape the world that their children live in. They wanted to teach them the values that their family held most dearly. I have listened. I have heard, and now we have that in writing. It is the original amendment, a common-sense approach by the government to underline the intent of the Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act, that what we value as Albertans is to enshrine the basic human rights and protection of farm and ranch workers.

I will continue to listen to many constituents, to every constituent. I will answer every phone call. I will answer every e-mail. I will go to every event that I necessarily have the human time for. Absolutely, that's what I do. What I've learned is that my constituents have conflicting points of view. There are people that argue on many different sides of a debate, but I am their voice, and I stand in this House, and I stand in caucus, and I speak to every person that I know can make a difference, and I ensure that their

concerns and their very special and unique perspectives are voiced to this government and in this House every day, now and in the future.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise again to speak against this subamendment. You know, I'd like to begin by addressing some of the comments that were made earlier. I don't think that myself or any member of our caucus at all has ever implied or ever intended to imply that any farmer is deliberately exposing anyone to unsafe work. The fact is that in any given workplace there is a potential that an unsafe situation will arise, and that's why it's so critical that an employee have a right to refuse that unsafe work if they feel that it is unsafe. We think that that's a pretty basic position to take.

You know, with respect to people who become injured, they should be entitled to compensation. As so many of my colleagues have said, every year in Alberta 17 people die in work-related farm accidents, and for every one of those deaths 25 or more are hospitalized as a result of a work-related injury. Laws that protect wage-earning employees on farms and ranches are working quite well in other provinces in this country.

You know, we have heard the concerns of the people who brought their concerns forward, and those people are concerned about their way of life and their ability to have their children participate in their family life. We have brought forward an exemption which I think outlines that quite well. But to also say that just because there are a small number of employees on a farm those employees are not entitled to the same protections that all other employees are entitled to, whether on larger farms or any other sector in the province: I just don't think that's appropriate. It doesn't carry forward the spirit and intent of the bill, which is, of course, to protect vulnerable farm workers.

You know, in B.C. when similar legislation was brought in, the farm fatality rate was reduced by 68 per cent, the farm injury rate was reduced by 52 per cent, and the serious injury rate was reduced by 41 per cent. I think it's certainly interesting, Madam Chair, that the members across keep citing that we have the lowest rate of injury of any province, because, actually, we don't keep those statistics, because without the protections of the occupational health and safety code, that enables us to keep those statistics and to investigate unsafe conditions that arise and to investigate injuries that occur and prevent such future injuries, we don't actually have that information.

You know, when we talk about education – well, education is important. Absolutely, we should educate people, but when we're talking about education, we also need to be talking about learning. Occupational health and safety provides a really critical learning mechanism, so when someone is in fact injured on a farm or in any other workplace – injuries, obviously, happen in every sector, everywhere – occupational health and safety can come in, and they can investigate that injury. Sometimes that will, going forward in time, cause changes to the code. Sometimes they discover a new unsafe condition, that hadn't previously been listed, and going forward, workers are protected from that. That's how the law advances. We think that that's a pretty good system. It's a pretty good system of both learning and teaching. I think it's a little bit silly to say that legislation and education are two separate things that can't possibly go together.

5:50

Of course, we know that everybody wants to keep workers safe, and we certainly know that, you know, both farmers and farm workers want safety in this instance. What this bill does is that it just provides very basic protections. It allows that in the tragic event of an accident, not necessarily the fault of anyone, if someone is injured, they are able to claim WCB. The reason it's so important that they have that WCB protection is because, sure, there are other forms of insurance out there, but if the insurance decides to deny the claim, then the individual is left to sue. Often you're talking about someone who's a vulnerable person, potentially, already. They've now been injured, they are unable to work, – so they're not making any income – and they have to go out and they have to start a lawsuit. That can be very expensive, and it can be very challenging for them.

We just don't think that that's the appropriate way to proceed forward. We don't think that, you know, those people who find themselves already injured and already in a vulnerable position should be forced to go out and retain a lawyer, sometimes at extreme cost to themselves, cost that they can't afford, in order to be able to access compensation like long-term disability.

Unfortunately, some workers, when they are injured, may be permanently injured. They may never be able to go back to work, and with workers' compensation they are provided with long-term disability, and that long-term disability enables them to continue to be able to have the necessities of life, to be able to pay for rent and for food and for shelter so that they can continue to live even though they find themselves without income.

You know, these amendments, I think, clarify the government's intention. Certainly, we have taken responsibility for the fact that maybe that intention wasn't clear from the start, but we think that this makes it clear and this addresses the concerns. We don't think that additionally extending those exemptions to paid workers, the very people that we are attempting to protect, is in any way appropriate. This legislation is intended to cover wage earners, right? Even if there are only five wage earners who are on a farm,

they continue to be wage earners nonetheless, and they continue to be entitled to protections, just the same as anyone on a bigger farm. I mean, this would also potentially create an incentive whereby someone might try to stay under that number to avoid the legislation, but certainly we don't think it's the case that this amendment is in any way necessary to get around the situations that have been created.

You know, this government is and has been committed – I think, historically, that it should come as a surprise to no one – to ensuring that vulnerable populations, including vulnerable paid workers, have access to rights and have access to be full participants in society. That's exactly what this will do. It will allow them to have the right to refuse unsafe work, it will allow us to investigate when an injury or a death occurs, and it will allow people to have access to compensation.

In sum, Madam Chair, I think I would now like to move that the committee rise to report progress. Thank you.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Mrs. Schreiner: Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 6. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

Ms Ganley: Madam Speaker, I move that we adjourn the House until 7:30 this evening.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:56 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.]

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