



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday afternoon, April 7, 2016

Day 11

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 29th Legislature

Second Session

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

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Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND),
Deputy Government House Leader
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),
Deputy Government House Leader
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (ND)
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),
Official Opposition House Leader
Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (ND),
Government Whip
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W),
Official Opposition Deputy Whip
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (ND)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC),
Progressive Conservative Opposition Whip
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (ND)
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)
Gottfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)
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Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
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Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (ND)
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Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (PC)
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Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)

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McLean, Hon. Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (ND)
McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (ND)
Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)
Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)
Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W),
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Premier
Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)
Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)
Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND)
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W)
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)
Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC),
Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)
Vacant, Calgary-Greenway

Party standings:

New Democrat: 54 Wildrose: 22 Progressive Conservative: 8 Alberta Liberal: 1 Alberta Party: 1 Vacant: 1

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Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
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Kazim	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Thursday, April 7, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Infrastructure and of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is my distinct pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a very distinguished guest and former MLA, Barrie Chivers. Joining Barrie today are members of his family: Tamara, Daniel, Darren, Wendy, and Batya Chivers, Katie Clackson, and Peg Chivers. He is also joined by a number of colleagues and friends.

In 1990, following the death of his long-time law partner and MLA, Gordon Wright, Barrie was elected as the Member of the Legislative Assembly representing Edmonton-Strathcona. As MLA Barrie was the Official Opposition critic for the Attorney General, Solicitor General, consumer and corporate affairs, and at the time the native affairs portfolio. Few people have had more profound influence on labour, employment, and human rights legislation in Alberta than Barrie Chivers. It's fitting that today, as we consider third reading of Bill 4, we recognize him. His firm, Chivers Carpenter, intervened in the Supreme Court case upon which Bill 4 is based. It was in 1987 that Barrie first argued at the Supreme Court of Canada that the right to strike is a Charter right. Mr. Speaker, it took almost 20 years for the Supreme Court to agree with him.

Barrie's distinguished law career dates back to 1970, when he was admitted to the bar, and in 1973 he cofounded the law firm Wright, Chivers & Co. Barrie's defence of workers is legendary. His clients have included numerous labour organizations representing firefighters, teachers and educators, nurses, municipal food service and maintenance workers. His impeccable legal work has led to more progressive legislation in our province. As a result Albertans enjoy greater fairness in the workplace. We recognize Barrie today as he finally retires from the practice of law. Knowing Barrie, I expect he will pursue new opportunities in his retirement with the same devotion that he has given to his legal career.

Please join me in thanking Barrie for his incredible contribution to Alberta and wishing him well as he now rises with his family to receive the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Introduction of Guests

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

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I'd like to encourage the Assembly to witness the wonderful presence of my local school, the H.E. Bourgoin middle school. As I read your names, I'd like the parents and students to rise, please, and we can actually thank you for coming up here and visiting the Legislature: Ms Cheryl Law, Ms Gina Elock, Mrs. Vonda Worthman, Ms Brosseau, Ms Katherine Heppner, Ms Mandee Urlacher, Ms Amanda Shideler, Mrs. Chawnsa Dutertre, Mr. Dutertre, Ms Rondeau, Ms Pitcher, Kelly Bowman, Stacy Sartan, Jennifer Genster, Christina Matwychuk, Lana Patey, and Odette Gagne. Sorry about that to those whose names I brutalized.

This school was named after one of the first teachers at the Duclos school. This school was formed on March 5, 1982. Their colours were brown, orange, and white. They actually took on sensibility, and it looks like they dropped the orange and went black, white, and blue. Currently they have the vision of working to meet the needs of students, which is admirable. Their mission statement is Maximizing the Learning of Every Student. I have to say that I am proud of this school in my riding, and I'd ask that everybody in this Assembly join me in welcoming them here today.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Are there any other school groups here today, hon. members?

Hearing none, I would recognize the Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly guests from the Calgary Stampede. The Calgary Stampede has been bringing together people from across Alberta and attracting visitors to our province from across the world for an incredible 132 years. First held in 1912, the Stampede has become a long-standing Alberta tradition that preserves and promotes our western heritage, culture, and community spirit. The Stampede contributes to our goals of building strong communities and a robust, diverse economy. Generating more than \$400 million in annual economic impact, the Stampede provides more than 5,000 jobs and stimulates tourism and business throughout the region.

As a not-for-profit organization the Stampede owes its success in large part to the people behind it, including 2,300 volunteers and 1,200 staff who commit their names, energy, and talent to this great organization. I would like to ask Mr. Warren Connell, chief executive officer, and Alison Buie, the government relations manager, to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a great pleasure for me to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this House Michael Gardiner. Michael is a good friend, an accomplished campaigner for postsecondary education and for workers' rights, and, according to both himself and the judging panel of myself and my husband, the best dancer at my wedding. I'd like to ask him to please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly my incredibly dedicated constituency staff. Jocelyn Stenger, my constituency manager, has been an incredible asset to my office and the Edmonton-Meadowlark community as a whole. She worked for two of our current ministers while in opposition, and her social work background has helped many of my constituents navigate programs and receive the results that they need. Jim Storrie, my constituency assistant, is responsible for helping me reach out to the people of Edmonton-Meadowlark to keep them informed about the services and programs that we offer. Finally, Bobbi Schuring is currently in the Edmonton-Meadowlark office as a social work student studying at Grant MacEwan.

The people we put in our constituency offices are, I believe, a reflection of who we are as MLAs, and I am able to come to this House every day confident that my community is receiving the best support possible because of my staff. I'd ask all three to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Member for Edmonton-South West.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's really my pleasure today to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly Barbara Warner and Carie Fargey-Scott. Barbara is a former legislative counsel and page at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and is also the daughter of the hon. David Warner, a former Speaker in Ontario. Currently her private law practice helps Canadian charities and not-for-profit organizations. Carie lives in my constituency of Edmonton-South West. She's also a former parliamentary page in the House of Commons in Ottawa and currently is a team manager in claims assurance services at Alberta Blue Cross. Barbara and Carie bonded over their love of politics in their first year of university many years ago, and Barbara's trip out west wouldn't be complete without a visit to this Legislature. I'd ask them both to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Member for Calgary-Shaw.

1:40

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Through you I wish the Member for Edmonton-South West a happy birthday.

Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly my newest constituency assistant, Michelle Hoare. Michelle joined my team early in the new year, and I and the people of Calgary-Shaw are incredibly happy to have her onboard. She's a born-and-raised Calgarian who is passionate about social, feminist, and political issues in Alberta. Michelle has a bachelor's degree from the University of Saskatchewan in international relations. In her spare time she volunteers at the Brenda Strafford Foundation and the Calgary drop-in centre. I'd ask that she please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: I wonder if it's true that the Member for Edmonton-South West can now vote. Is that right?

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you the Council of Alberta University Students, or CAUS, well named. They're wrapping up their week of advocacy here with all parties in the House. I regret that I missed their green muffins last night as they celebrated the end of their advocacy week. Joining us today are incoming members of the council, who will officially start their term May 1, including – could you stand as I mention your names – Stephan Guscott, Tristan Bray, Mike Sandare, Carley Casebeer, accompanied by the executive director, Bev Eastham, I hope, and by research and policy analyst Josh McKeown. Join me in giving these fine folks a welcome from the Legislature.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Minister of Environment and Parks and minister responsible for the climate change office.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my delight to introduce to you and through you several members of the Metis Settlements General Council. I met with them this morning: Sherry Cunningham, elected treasurer; Randy Hardy, president; Stan Delorme, vice-president; and Alden Armstrong, executive director. The MSGC is a governing body that enhances, preserves, and promotes Métis settlements collectively while addressing socioeconomic needs through good governance and community involvement. They also seek to preserve and protect their land and culture. I ask that they rise to receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am so honoured and pleased to introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly the three most important men in my life: my husband, Malkeet, who I've been with for 25 years and who holds my heart and has my back; my oldest son, Akesh, who is 19 and who put his own school career on hold to come home and take over my business of 20 years, my music school, and has done a phenomenal job; and my youngest son, Seheran, who has overcome absolutely every hurdle that's ever been put in front of him and has gone on to prove that all children with special needs are of absolute importance and has just proven over and over and time and time again that he is a magnificent human being. I would ask that all three of you stand right now and receive the traditional welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise and introduce to you and through you to the Assembly a friend of mine and a former university roommate – the less said about that the better – who is here all the way from British Columbia. He is working hard to continue to develop business opportunities in Alberta's Industrial Heartland. If I could have Mr. Cameron St. John please rise to receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Solar Power

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am proud to share that the transition from coal-fired generators by 2030 is generating a positive future for alternative sources of electrical power to meet our needs. In my constituency of Wetaskiwin-Camrose business owners and communities are using solar power more than ever. For example, Parkland Fertilizers has installed 350 solar panels on their new building. The Montana Cree Nation admin office is powered by solar panels, and the community of Maskwacis is negotiating with a company for renewable energy production. The city of Wetaskiwin is offering homeowners a \$500 rebate for installing solar panels.

Industry experts say that Alberta is set to produce 2,000 megawatts of solar power by 2025 and that by 2030 renewables will produce 30 per cent of Alberta's electrical energy. The government's new \$5 million Alberta municipal solar program will assist municipalities all across the province with capital cost rebates for solar system installations and create jobs.

Mr. Speaker, we have some of the best examples of alternative energy facilities. The largest solar farm in Alberta is the Green

Acres Hutterite colony east of Calgary. In Vulcan there are plans to build a project 30 times larger. Another solar farm north of Lethbridge, that will produce enough power for 8,220 homes, is on the way. Other companies are getting into the solar race, too, and when completed, these companies will put \$900 million in new spending and produce 352 megawatts of electrical generating capacity. I have read in news articles that Enbridge and TransCanada, which operate solar power plants in Ontario, are ready to shift into Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, on June 4 and 5 the Eco-Solar Home Tour will feature 18 homes where you can talk to the homeowners about their energy efficiency features.

Hence, Mr. Speaker, the scenario for Alberta's emerging solar power looks a lot sunnier. Thank you.

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

Shane Dawson Jr.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is never out of order to highlight the positive accomplishments of others. I've coached some amazing athletes, but regardless of their athletic skill or abilities I was always proud of every athlete that attempted to live up to our school motto, Strive to Excel.

On the weekend I had the opportunity to watch the Toronto Blue Jays play the Boston Red Sox. Just a baseball game for some, but for me it was an opportunity to watch one of my starting basketball guards, Shane Dawson Jr., pitch in his first major league game for the Jays, one of those times that makes us as parents and coaches and teachers and indeed the entire community proud. I am proud of Shane because he has taken a natural athletic talent and honed it through many long hours to achieve excellence in his chosen field. He is an example that a passion for life and hard work can result in excellence.

I'm proud because Shane knows that while success is good, it is not success that makes you a good person. Having a little sister that struggles with Smith-Magenis syndrome has meant that Shane knows that all people have value and must be treasured. I'm proud that Shane understands that he has been able to achieve his dreams in part because of the efforts of others. He invests time in kids through volunteering. He has learned the lesson that he must repay what he has been given.

Excellence is never easily achieved, but when it is, it should be celebrated, and I am proud to bring to the attention of Albertans one of our own, Shane Dawson: a great baseball player, a proud Albertan, and an even better person. I wish Shane the best of luck. May his fastball always be in the high 90s, may his curveball continue to break hard, and may his changeup continue to fool batters. As he continues to grow in life, may he always move forward in service to others with the speed of his fastball . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

National Sport School

Ms Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to recognize a unique and exciting school located in my riding of Calgary-Bow. The National Sport school is located on the Canada Olympic Park grounds and caters to students who excel in and are dedicated to competitive sports.

Since opening its doors in 1994, the National Sport School has helped Alberta's youth achieve their athletic goals and also, along the way, teach its students how to be leaders and productive members of their communities. Recently Principal Ken Weipert

shared a story with me of how, through the school leadership program, the school was able to bring together enough food supplies to provide the local Mustard Seed Community Support Centre with over 1,000 sandwich lunches.

1:50

The student body of the National Sport School represents athletic excellence in over 30 sports, including alpine skiing, figure skating, luge, bobsledding, gymnastics, water polo, and equestrian sports. Yesterday I had the pleasure to introduce several students. Brooke Apshkrum successfully brought home a gold medal in luge at this year's Youth Olympic Games, which were held in Lillehammer, Norway, in February. Congratulations, Brooke. Carter Malyk competed in luge and bobsleigh and would be continuing a family tradition when he achieves his dream of representing Canada in future Olympic Games. Keep up the excellent work, Carter. And Rachel Thibeault, 16, is a competitive swimmer, member of the University of Calgary Swim Club, and has been competing since 2007.

While the dedicated staff support these children in meeting their academic goals, these young athletes travel the world representing Alberta and Canada on the world stage. The National Sport School can be proud of the fact that in the last two consecutive Winter Olympic Games the students and alumni made up 10 per cent of Canada's athletes.

It was an absolute pleasure touring the facility with the principal and learning about the programs the National Sport school has to offer. This unique school is an asset to our community, and I'm very proud to be representing them here today.

Oral Question Period

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

Energy Policies

Mr. Jean: It's time to elect Thomas Mulcair as our Prime Minister. Those were the Premier's words last October in the federal election. Today the federal NDP leader says that if his party tells him to, he will do everything he can to keep Alberta's oil in the ground. We know this Premier has fund raised for the NDP politicians who have said this in the past, but Albertans expect her to condemn this when she speaks at the convention on Saturday. Will the Premier stand in her place and commit that she and her cabinet will do everything they can to condemn this motion in the strongest terms possible?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to make it crystal clear that I absolutely do not agree with what Tom Mulcair said about keeping oil in the ground yesterday. Those remarks are unacceptable, and I will certainly be there to convey that message to membership and to make sure that they know how important it is that we get our product to market.

Mr. Jean: I'm very glad to hear the minister say that. I hope to hear the Premier say exactly the same thing because . . . [interjections] I understand, and I'm glad to hear that the Premier understands the damage from the federal NDP advocating to stop oil production here in Alberta.

The fact remains, however, that the Premier has fund raised for anti-Alberta leaders in Ontario, and the federal NDP has made several statements campaigning against Alberta pipelines. My next question is a very simple one. Will the Premier advocate to her provincial and federal colleagues, proudly stand in her place, and

support Alberta's oil sands and our pipelines right across the country and around the world?

Ms Hoffman: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. We've been consistent on that. We know that pipelines are the safest way to get our product to market, and we absolutely are committed to making sure that we have a drama-free method of getting our product to tidewater.

In terms of party members not always agreeing, for example – we have a few people here – a former colleague of the hon. leader not that long ago said that Nelson Mandela was a terrorist. Did he agree with what that party member said? I sure hope not, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Jean: I hope that this government can understand why Albertans need some clarity from the Premier on this issue. On pipelines the Premier has campaigned against projects like Keystone and like Northern Gateway that are so important to our resources. Members of her cabinet have campaigned for B.C. politicians asking to keep Alberta's oil in the ground, and the Premier refuses to oppose plans for a crude-oil tanker ban. Will the Premier stand up and advocate for all our pipeline projects and against tanker bans to her federal NDP friends, and will she stop fundraising for these people that oppose our industry?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, we've been really clear that we absolutely are committed to making sure that we get a pipeline built to tidewater. We are focusing our efforts on making sure that the paths of least resistance and of most benefit to Canadians are the pipelines that we're moving forward with. So we will certainly be talking about opportunities to move our products east and west with our colleagues from across Canada over this very weekend.

Another example of a former colleague that the hon. leader shared a party with, Brent Rathgeber, just said a little while ago that the Official Opposition's job . . .

The Speaker: Hon. minister, I believe there was use of a name in your statement. As I understand, it should be avoided in the House. [interjections] I'm sorry. You're correct.

I'm advised that I was incorrect. I did interrupt the member. My apologies.

Alberta Health Services Decision-making

Mr. Jean: Mr. Speaker, last fall the Premier delivered a keynote address at the AUPE's annual convention. What's concerning is the allegation from the former CEO of AHS, the highest paid person in Alberta by the government. In advance of the speech, to avoid embarrassment for the Premier, AHS was ordered back to the bargaining table to offer a raise to AUPE. This move will cost taxpayers millions and millions of dollars. Can the Premier confirm if anyone in her office instructed AHS to offer raises to the AUPE in advance of her appearance at this convention?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, the Premier has spoken to this issue before, and I'll be proud to speak to it again. Certainly, when there is an opportunity to get back to mediation, we encourage both the employer and the employee to go to mediation. We've all said in this House that we think the best way to get deals is to have people sit down and talk, and that's certainly what we encouraged them to do.

In terms of what was said yesterday, the Leader of the Official Opposition said that Ms Kaminski's professional reputation was exemplary, and then a few minutes later his colleagues said that the system that she led was bureaucratic, inefficient, and wasteful. Get

it right. Mr. Speaker, which way is it, (a) or (b)? I really think they need to straighten their facts.

Mr. Jean: It's (c): this government keeps interfering.

The NDP government offering pay raises to public-sector unions so that the NDP Premier could avoid embarrassing herself when speaking to our union brothers and sisters is exactly what Albertans feared may happen with this government. It's a serious allegation, and the Premier needs to provide a serious answer, not avoid it. Did the Premier or someone in her office order AHS back to the bargaining table with the AUPE in advance of the Premier's attendance at their convention after they'd already received instructions in the bargaining unit?

Ms Hoffman: As has been said, this is a long-outstanding negotiation that broke down under the previous government. When we saw that there was an opportunity to get the parties back to the table, we thought it was important to encourage that. We do not apologize for that, Mr. Speaker. This is being negotiated right now, and certainly I am proud of that.

In terms of interference, certainly, if that's what you want to call it, I guess I'm guilty. When the opposition whip asked me to meet twice recently to talk about Sundre, I said: absolutely. I think that's important. I think that he's doing his job, and I think I am, too.

Mr. Jean: Yesterday, when asked about interference in the Edmonton lab services project, the Premier said, "There was no written evidence to suggest that [this] particular issue was a good decision, so this minister set about getting evidence on which to base her decision." Well, we actually FOIPed that decision, and it is one of the most researched AHS decisions that we have ever seen in Wildrose's history. I will table those documents later. Did AHS not share this evidence with the minister, or was the minister mad that the evidence didn't fit with her ideological agenda?

Ms Hoffman: Certainly, there was lots of evidence that the one model that was being considered had been considered. There wasn't evidence that either of the other models or three other models, maintaining the current mix of private and public delivery or expanding public delivery, was considered. That, to me, is evidence on one specific model. That's not evidence to make good decisions.

How about other interference? The opposition Health critic just yesterday asked me to interfere in that promotion of organ transplants. That's good governance. The opposition Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky suggested yesterday that the Minister of Infrastructure and myself should interfere in the Grande Prairie hospital construction. He's doing his job; we're doing ours.

The Speaker: Third main question.

2:00

Energy Policies (continued)

Mr. Jean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Another day and more grim news for Alberta's economy. Canada's oil patch has suffered the biggest drop in investment in almost 70 years, and instead of providing stability for our energy sector, the NDP has done everything it possibly can to drive investment out of this province. When Albertans asked for a steady hand, they got higher taxes and risky economic experiments. When will the Premier start restoring confidence in our oil and gas sector instead of pushing it out of the province?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The unfortunate news that capital investment is down significantly is a direct result of low global prices of oil, and certainly we feel for those families. The decline has resulted in devastating job losses here in Alberta, and it's made it more difficult for governments across the country to invest in education and health care. Only the opposition thinks that Alberta's government decides the price of global oil. We know that's not true. We're continuing to work with other partners like Texas and North Dakota, both of whom have governments other than the NDP. We need to find ways to put people back to work, and we're doing that.

Mr. Jean: Just this year a shocking \$50 billion of investment has been pulled out of our energy sector. That's like Canada's entire aerospace industry being wiped off the map in just a short period of time. Rig workers and the men and women who rely on oil and gas to put food on their tables are tired of a government that fights harder for carbon taxes than for their jobs. Can the Premier explain how introducing damaging new tax hikes, experiments with our electrical grid, more regulation, and a \$3 billion carbon tax, that wasn't campaigned on, provides hope for these Albertans?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the United States two-thirds of their rigs have been decommissioned. The hardest hit state is Texas, which is led by a Republican governor. Does the opposition blame the Republicans for the low price of oil, too? For the first time in 10 years oil production by America's second-largest producer, North Dakota, is falling year after year. North Dakota has a Republican governor. Are you blaming them? We're taking responsible action. We're moving forward on climate leadership and diversifying the economy and getting a pipeline built so that we can get people back to work.

Mr. Jean: Here's what Tim McMillan, with the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers, said: "Canada needs urgent action to remain [a competitive] market for oil and gas investment." The NDP's own royalty report shows that Alberta's competitive advantage is slipping both here in Canada and in North America. The Premier's response: a \$3 billion carbon tax, higher business and personal taxes, and punishing new regulations. Can the Premier please stand and explain how higher taxes will help increase Alberta's competitiveness in the world?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We are incredibly proud of the work we are doing to address climate change and be climate leaders. As a result, people are looking at Alberta differently than they have in the past. They know that we take climate change seriously. They know that a price on carbon is the best way to make sure that we address easy emissions and to diversify the economy by reinvesting that revenue back in green jobs and other local initiatives to support communities. I'm incredibly proud. This is going to be good for the renewables, and it's also going to be good for getting us pipelines built, which is fundamental.

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

Provincial Fiscal Policies

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The PC caucus this week launched Engage and challenged the government to seek out ways

to save Albertans \$4 billion over two years. [interjections] The Official Opposition may think saving money is funny, but we think it's serious. One way to achieve this is to empower the public service to find efficiencies and cost savings while maintaining front-line services. When I asked the Premier about it, she didn't answer my question. To the Minister of Finance: when the public service identifies cost savings that don't require layoffs or cuts to services, will your government then act quickly to put these savings into action?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Certainly, we had a very rigorous engagement process this time last year; it was called the 2015 election. Albertans sent a very clear message: keep your hands off our health care and our education. That's exactly what we're doing. We are making sure that we're moving forward strategically, that we are moving forward thoughtfully. We reinvested \$800 million as opposed to what the member opposite proposed, which was to cut significant resources from front lines. I find what he was proposing this time last year and what he's suggesting today very ironic.

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, what's ironic is that I read in the paper this morning that the minister is proudly putting her hands on health care, and then in the same day she's not. That's really interesting.

Alberta municipalities receive revenue through linear assessment. Linear properties include pipelines. Sometimes the pipelines are owned by companies that go bankrupt, and the companies, of course, stop paying their taxes. Despite that, the municipality is still on the hook to pay the Alberta government's linear assessment for education. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: when are you going to correct this unfairness and stop assessing municipalities for linear property owned by bankrupt companies that cannot pay?

The Speaker: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to say that I'm very proud of the broad range of supports that we provide to municipalities right across Alberta. Despite our own 20 per cent budget reduction, we continue to provide strong support to municipalities right across this province to ensure that they can take care of the residents that we share together. I'm proud of the relationship we have built with our municipalities. I look forward to ongoing conversations with them. I'm very proud of our continued support for all of the communities across Alberta.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, at a mayors and reeves meeting in Lethbridge last week, in front of one of the private members over there, they were told that the government never answers the questions, and that's still consistent today.

Purchasing is an area where government could assist municipalities to deliver stable, cost-effective services. The government of Alberta is a major purchaser of many commodities also used by municipalities. To the Municipal Affairs minister: will the government of Alberta work with the AUMA, the AAMD and C, and municipalities to help them reduce their expenses by combining purchase volumes that result in a net savings?

The Speaker: The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Again, since becoming the Minister of Municipal Affairs, I have worked tremendously hard to build a relationship with AUMA and AAMDC. It's tremendously respectful. We have a great relationship with one another and have exchanged a number of ideas over time. Certainly, if there's any kind of opportunity to work together to enhance services to Alberta, to increase the efficiency, I'm happy to work with them on a variety of options and have those conversations.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Coal-fired Electric Power Plant Retirement

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Alberta has a competitive electricity system, one that should be maintained to enable the orderly retirement of coal-fired generation and a careful transition to gas-fired power and renewables, all without jeopardizing reliability or substantially increasing the cost to Albertans. Now, that is a tall order. I've heard many concerns about the impact the government's plan will have on electricity bills and also whether the government thought through the implications before they acted. To the Premier: before today, have you or any of your ministers met with leaders from the Balancing Pool to discuss the potential impact of your policy changes before those changes were made?

The Speaker: The minister of environment.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Of course, we undertook a very robust engagement process through last fall that led to the launch of our climate leadership plan, which included an economy-wide price on carbon, action on methane, action on energy efficiency, and the phase-out of coal-fired electricity. Now, we engaged with experts across the economy and did some very deep dives on technical engagement. That was in the hands of the Climate Leadership Panel, which then reported to us in November.

Mr. Clark: I'll take that as a no, Mr. Speaker.

The Premier has said previously in this House that the change-of-law provision of power purchase agreements allows owners to return their unprofitable contracts, and she's called them a failed legacy of the previous government. Mr. Speaker, that is simply untrue. PPAs have generated about \$4 billion for Albertans since 2001, and we currently get a credit on our electricity bills. If the minister had engaged with the Balancing Pool and other experts, you would have known that. What assurance do Albertans have that the government has done their homework before making such major decisions?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we're working currently with the Balancing Pool and looking at the overall issue, what some of our options are, so, yes, we are engaging. As much as this morning we had a meeting. Yes, we're working on that.

Mr. Clark: It's taken you nearly a year to sit down with the Balancing Pool to actually have that meeting, which is very troubling.

Given the risk of significant added costs to consumers will the Premier engage the experts and request AESO, the Balancing Pool,

the Market Surveillance Administrator, and the coal phase-out negotiator to work together to prepare a detailed impact assessment, including the cost of new transmission lines, and release their findings before you move forward so that all Albertans know the cost and impact of your plan?

2:10

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. To correct the hon. member, today was one of many meetings we have had. We've had previous meetings with the Balancing Pool, and that's exactly what we are doing right now. We are bringing all the players in to look at the whole picture and the whole issue holistically. There will be more to report, but at the moment we're working with all the different players.

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

Arts and Culture Industries

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week Calgarians were thrilled to be able to host the Junos and Junofest in our beautiful city. Over 17,000 Calgarians signed up to volunteer, including my CA, and I know myself that I and many of my colleagues got out to see shows over the weekend. While it was wonderful to see Calgary and Canadian music highlighted, I have heard some concerns from my constituents regarding the costs associated with hosting arts and culture events during our current economic climate. To the Minister of Culture and Tourism: what are the economic impacts of arts and culture events like the Junos last week?

The Speaker: The Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for the question. I was very proud to actually participate as well and be part of the events of the week. We know that when we have large events like the Junos come to our city, it generates about \$10 million, or more than that, perhaps, in revenue. I believe that's a very good investment. I know that this is the year of music for the city of Calgary, and we were happy to participate. We are going to continue working with them.

Thank you.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given the impact our arts and culture industry provides by having a significant return on investment and given that our government remains committed to diversifying our economy, again to the Minister of Culture and Tourism: what additional supports are available to our arts and culture sector?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for the question. My ministry continues to work with this sector to support growth in the arts and culture industries. Our government is committed to continuing this approach and ensuring that Albertans have access to top-notch cultural experiences. We have continued our investment. Earlier today I went on a tour of the Royal Alberta Museum to see the progress that's being made there. The Calgary film studio will attract business from around the world to this province. I think that's a great investment. We will continue to support that.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I agree with the minister. Given that in an economic downturn tourism remains one of the fastest growing sectors of our economy, again to the same minister: what are you doing to promote Alberta's arts and cultural festivals to the rest of Canada and the world?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for the question. Our tourism sector showcases this province and our vibrant communities to the entire world, and that leads to the strengthening of our economy. I am proud that a French language travel guide will soon be available as well to attract visitors from across the country and across the world. I am confident that the upcoming flights from Beijing to Calgary will also bring an additional number of visitors to this great city. It's going to be a great contribution to this province.

Thank you.

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

Coal-fired Electric Power Plant Retirement (continued)

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This government's risky plan to phase out coal is going to kill thousands of mining jobs in communities like Forestburg and Hanna. These are good-paying jobs, family jobs, and workers are worried that this ideological government hasn't done its due diligence. What exactly is the minister's plan to take care of these families after she kills their way of life?

The Speaker: The Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just as a matter of decorum in this House, might I remind the member that this phraseology of killing things is entirely inappropriate in this House.

As to supports for coal communities, on November 22, 2015, when we released the climate leadership plan, we made a commitment that we would phase out coal-fired electricity in the remaining six plants after 2030 in a manner that would not unnecessarily strand capital, in a manner that would support communities and ensure transition for workers.

Mr. Taylor: You know, I asked exactly what you were going to do. That answer is not good enough for the families who need certainty right now.

Given that the federal plan to phase out coal has given these families in my community up to 15 more years to plan their shift away from coal and given that the minister has no plan and provides no certainty and no predictability, can the minister explain why she made this decision as an order in council and didn't sit down and consult with workers, officials, and communities like Forestburg and Hanna before she came to this radical decision?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the fact of the matter is that 12 of the 18 plants were scheduled for decommissioning by 2030, and that was under the federal environment coal regulations. Now, the previous government did not have any kind of plan to transition those workers throughout those communities. We have committed to that. We'll have to wait for the budget in order to get some details on that. However, for the

remaining six plants this is why we have appointed a facilitator: in order to ensure that we do not unnecessarily strand capital, that we transition the communities, and that we are fair for workers.

Mr. Taylor: Given that these coal plants are the lifeblood of communities like mine and given that these are major employers that provide good, solid jobs you can raise a family on and that they fuel our economies, does the minister even care that her ideological actions are killing jobs and the local communities that they support?

Ms Phillips: Mr. Speaker, I might point out that the real ideology at work here is stranding workers and communities, which the previous government planned to do. So immediately we took action, and we looked at the fact that 12 of these 18 plants were going to be decommissioned beginning in 2019 because they had reached their end of economic life and that we would need to put some kind of transition plan in place for those plants, which we are doing, which will be in the budget. Now, why did we make this decision? One word: health.

Environmental Monitoring and Reporting

Ms Jansen: Mr. Speaker, listening to the debate yesterday, I heard the minister of economic development tell this House they're interested in good ideas regardless of where they come from. There are some solid ideas like, for instance, that in October 2013 the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview called on the previous government to create an environmental monitoring organization that is independent and at arm's length from the government and free from any political interference. To the minister of economic development: how does eliminating AEMERA, an independent, arm's-length agency, work to help you achieve your goals?

The Speaker: The Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, absolutely, Mr. Speaker. You know, as part of our broader review of agencies, boards, and commissions to find efficiencies, our government conducted an independent review of AEMERA. Our government has always said that we need to do a better job of monitoring the environment, and that's what this decision will deliver.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Science Advisory Panel that we are retaining will report directly to Albertans. We have asked the Auditor General to examine the matter within two years' time. In addition, the good work that was happening within AEMERA will continue, without the costly administrative duplication that the previous government built into it.

Ms Jansen: That's wonderful news. So the jobs are on panels. Good. It's nice to have clarity.

In the statement by the Minister of Economic Development and Trade he noted that unless there was an independent and arm's-length body, the organization would be at the mercy of the minister and their political direction. To the minister of environment: how can Albertans feel assured this new body will be accountable when it's now at your mercy?

Ms Phillips: Mr. Speaker, as part of a broader review of agencies, boards, and commissions the fact is that this province looked at the duplication, the administrative bureaucratic inertia within duplicating efforts, and we decided that monitoring is on the level of public safety and public health. It is core government business for which the government is responsible. And you know what? We will see how it all works out. But the fact of the matter is that the Auditor General will be examining it in two years' time.

Ms Jansen: See how it all works out. Well, that's comforting.

Mr. Speaker, on October 31, 2013, the minister of economic development said: "When you don't have an . . . arm's length, a distance between government and a body that they're selecting, questions arise, questions about judgment." This statement is directly at odds with what your government has done by eliminating the independence of AEMERA. To the minister: who in your government made the judgment to walk away from accountability and transparency?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

2:20

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As part of the ABC review I requested the former Deputy Minister of Environment Canada to conduct a thorough review of AEMERA, and what we have come up with is the fact that the Science Advisory Panel will report directly to the public, will work with the chief scientist to identify gaps and address those gaps through peer review. That is the core good business that we are carrying forward with AEMERA. What we are eliminating is the former government's proclivity toward appointing friends to boards and the costly duplication of executive teams. That is what we are eliminating, and that is how this government is going to move forward.

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

ReThink Charter Academy

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Research clearly demonstrates that charter schools cost less on a per-pupil basis and are closed down if they aren't effective at meeting student achievement goals in their charter. There is an incredible need for the special program being offered to some of the most vulnerable Albertans through ReThink's charter school in Calgary. This school had received preliminary approval from the previous government, and all edits to the application had been made to receive final approval. Will the minister explain to the families why he rejected the application?

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for the question. One of the very first things that I embarked on as Minister of Education was to make sure that we're using due process and following due process in all of the endeavours that we have, including applications for new charter schools. So we made a point of using the regulation process that we have set up and not pre-approving like the previous government did. It was very inappropriate and sent the wrong signal. Based on the way that we went through the process, some charter schools did not make the grade.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that special-needs advocates state that spaces are tight for special education in this city, independent schools are full, and kids within the public system are falling through the cracks and given that Alberta is the only province that has charter schools and that the Education ministry itself reported that overall charter schools appear to have provided enhanced student learning outcomes, will the minister revisit his rejection of the ReThink charter school application and provide an important option for some of the most vulnerable students in Alberta?

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks for the question as well. As I said before, we went through due process using the regulations that were provided, and until we review and revisit those regulations, then I am bound to using the process as it was designed.

Let's not forget as well that we have a very vibrant public school system in the city of Calgary and right across this province that's constantly innovating and constantly building to make sure that kids get the education that they need.

Mr. Smith: When the public schools are full, it's hard to get them in.

Given that I am worried for the parents, who are seeing an opportunity to help their children with learning disabilities reach their potential, and given that these families desperately need the special programming and supports that were to be offered through ReThink charter school, will the minister please help me explain to these families why they are not being allowed to exercise their parental rights to choice in education?

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, our ministry has reached out, and we can reach out more to ensure that all students and their families in the city of Calgary and right across the province as well have all of the different opportunities available to them, the different choices available to them, too, through all of the forms of school education that we have in the province. We are very proud of the different alternatives that we offer throughout the province and in the city of Calgary, and we're very proud of following due process to make decisions in governance.

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

Energy Policies (continued)

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Canada's oil patch has suffered its biggest drop in investment in almost 70 years, the largest two-year decline since 1947. Capital spending has dropped by \$50 billion over a two-year period, and the protracted plunge in oil prices means that Albertans don't see it getting better any time soon. It's time to wake up. To the Energy minister: why with stark investment numbers and ever-climbing job losses is the NDP government still pushing ahead with ideological policies that are hurting everyday Albertans?

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, I think the key in that article is that it's Canada's oil and gas sector, not Alberta's. When I was in Houston a month ago, there were 53 countries attending. [interjections] We all had the same story: a decline in capital investment, job losses, low oil and gas prices.

Mrs. Aheer: Given that it is the junior oil sector facing the brunt of this economic downturn and given that the juniors are the heart and soul of the Alberta story, forging new ground and entrepreneurs, and that since juniors sink their own hard-earned dollars into these ventures, the economic downturn has real-life implications like loss of income, companies, and even one's house, will the minister explain to Albertans why this government has failed to take urgent action for Albertans to remain an attractive market for oil and gas investment?

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, we're picking up some pieces of lack of planning in pipelines over the past 10 years. That's what we're doing daily right now, working with the companies to get our product to tidewater. We know that Albertans will prosper more if we can get that product to market. Right now we get significant discounts, and that's hurting Albertans.

Mrs. Aheer: Mr. Speaker, Albertans are disheartened to see that this NDP government is clearly missing the big picture, continuing to damage our economy, and using failed soft diplomacy. Given that energy is a key economic driver in our province, this NDP government needs to realize that energy companies will suffer. There is a ripple effect across the economy. Given that there is a surefire way to spur this energy economy, market access, and given that to date the NDP government's record for promoting market access to tidewater has been astoundingly poor, will the minister commit right now to stand up for Albertans and stand up for Northern Gateway, Energy East, and the ...

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. [interjections]
Hon. members, keep the volume down, folks.
Proceed.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you for the question, Mr. Speaker. In fact, this week I have spoken to four different companies who have complimented our approach on pipelines. One company today asked us if we would go to the U.S. to talk about our climate change plan because they see it working. In fact, these same people asked us if we could ask our colleagues to work with us and not against us. Three to four of them have told us that they have spoken to you folks about your approach.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-West.

Registry Service Renewal Reminders

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are no longer receiving paper reminders for various renewals such as vehicle registration and ID cards. This for the most part is a common-sense, cost-saving measure that meets our PC caucus's \$4 billion challenge. Most Albertans are comfortable with living solely in the electronic realm; however, this is not true for everyone. To the Minister of Service Alberta. You continue to tell seniors that they will receive paper reminders for another year, except this is not quite true. Only seniors over 70 will receive these reminders. Why have you not included all seniors in the paper renewal reminders?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In tough economic times like these it's no secret that we're facing some trials, so our government is committed to finding efficiencies within government that can help us save money. This particular initiative will save Albertans \$3 million per year and will move us into the 21st century, I'm proud to say, by bringing renewal reminders online.

Thank you.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: given that you are creating confusion about the registration and licence renewal reminders and given that going full stop for a segment of our seniors' population may result in some of them unintentionally failing to renew their registration or licences and given that any plan to phase out paper reminders in favour of electronic ones deserves

a transition plan and not a full stop, how will you ensure that seniors under 70 do not fail to register their vehicles because they are waiting for a reminder that will never come?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McLean: Thank you for the question, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we have a plan here to ensure that this transition is smooth because it's important to us that Albertans do renew on time. The way that we're going to take this going forward is by educating Albertans about this. As you've mentioned, seniors over 70 will receive an additional renewal reminder by paper letting them know about the online service, letting them know to contact their registry agents, who also play a part in this system. Additionally, just like clockwork, they will continue to renew in the same month that they always have, and all Albertans can always just check the back ...

2:30

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

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that all Albertans are being asked to set up electronic reminders and given that it's a big expectation to assume that everyone will do it proactively, let alone seniors and many rural, remote, and low-income Albertans who may not have access to the technology, and given that you surely don't want Albertans to inadvertently break the law, to the same minister: what is your ministry's ongoing communication plan for ensuring that innocent Albertans are not unnecessarily caught up in the justice system due to this government's procedural change?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure my friend across the aisle and the minister of seniors will agree with me when I say that our seniors are vibrant individuals. My own grandmother is over 90, and she has a smart phone, so I think it would be incorrect to suggest that at someone's age, particularly because of their age, they would not be able to remember what month they need to renew or that they wouldn't have access or know how to navigate online systems.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

Métis Consultation Policy Development

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've heard from constituents and Albertans alike about their concerns regarding the government's historical relationship with Alberta's indigenous population. I've also met with many Métis settlements members who are concerned about industrial development in their traditional territory. Given our government's commitment to developing new relationships and implementing the objectives and principles of the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, to the Minister of Indigenous Relations: what is Alberta doing to understand and address the potential impact of Crown decisions on settlement members' harvesting and traditional use activities?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Our government understands and recognizes how important traditional practices and harvesting practices are for the Métis people of this province, and we are very

proud to have signed on April 4 a consultation agreement with the Métis settlements in consultation with the Métis people. It's a formal, meaningful consultation policy. It's a crucial step toward our goal of fulfilling the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples and providing a stronger, more collaborative relationship with the Métis people.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the minister for the update. I'm glad to hear that the government is engaging in meaningful consultation with settlement communities. This is certainly a deep-rooted value that Albertans support. Given the importance of this policy to industry and Métis settlements what kind of consultation occurred in the development of the Métis settlements consultation policy?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. When we formed the government in this province, we immediately declared our intention to change the relationship with the indigenous people in this province, and as a result we have used the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples to help guide us. As part of our consultation process in developing this policy, we worked with the Metis Settlements General Council and ensured that their interests were brought to the table and fully respected. We are very proud to say that we received unanimous support from all eight of the settlements and, as a result, have a consultation policy, that was definitely lacking in the previous government.

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

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that this policy is critical to developing respectful relationships, what is the government doing to ensure that nonsettlement Métis communities – I'm a member of those myself. How are we ensuring that those communities are consulted?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. We are very proud of the movement we have made forward with the settlement Métis in this province because they had been a neglected group of the indigenous population in this province under the previous government. Again, we have found another neglected group, and that is the nonlanded Métis people. As a result, we have begun our process of engaging the Métis Nation of Alberta Association in building a consultation process, and we expect over the next year or so to be able to complete that consultation, just as we've done for the settlement Métis.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Seniors' Advocate

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've heard from many Albertans, care providers, and many social service groups that our health care system has continued to let Alberta's seniors down. Systemic cases of abuse, poverty, and inadequate care are things our seniors are often forced to deal with on a daily basis. Wildrose

is renewing our call to create a truly independent Seniors' Advocate to help seniors navigate confusing government programs and identify key areas where we can better support our seniors. Will this government do its part to protect our most vulnerable by creating a truly independent Seniors' Advocate?

The Speaker: The minister of seniors.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you also to the member for the question. It's very important for us to make sure that our seniors are receiving the services they need and have the proper housing. We know that there was a billion dollars in deferred housing left over from the previous government. Our government is committed to making sure that there are services for seniors in Alberta, and we're working closely with all the organizations.

Thank you.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that there exist other independent officers in Alberta like the utilities advocate, like the Child and Youth Advocate and considering that the previous government showed no interest in protecting our seniors, who are often amongst the most vulnerable groups in our population, what steps will this new government take to answer the Wildrose call to create an independent advocate for our seniors?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Certainly, we do have a Seniors' Advocate. Seniors in Alberta are welcome to give any kind of concerns or complaints they have to the Seniors' Advocate, and we'll move very quickly on responding to their questions. We're open to hearing what the opposition has to say about that, and we'll take this under advisement. We appreciate the feedback.

Mr. Yao: Given that the October 2014 Auditor General's report highlighted limitations of the current Seniors' Advocate's office, which does not have the mandate to compel facilities or AHS to take action to provide detailed information related to seniors' concerns, and given that these are standard, necessary powers equivalent to the powers of other independent advocates, why doesn't the minister recognize that the current PC system does nothing to actually help our seniors and that we need an independent advocate?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and again thank you to the member for the question. We as a government are extremely concerned about seniors in this province. We know that this is an area that has been neglected by the previous government, and we are very excited about some of the major initiatives that are coming forward very shortly. I encourage everyone to stay tuned about the budget, and we'll be talking more about that. We know that the process we have in place now does respond very well to seniors' concerns.

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

Adult Learning System Review

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When this government announced the current tuition freeze last spring, it also promised an

adult learning review to advance our postsecondary system. Last fall the minister at the time claimed that the government was very quickly rolling out the review. Having spoken on numerous occasions with student and institutional leaders, I know they're eagerly anticipating the onset of this consultation, but as of today the government is still silent, almost a year later. Sound familiar? To the Minister of Advanced Education: does your ministry actually have a timeline for this, or is this just another NDP promise that's gone by the wayside?

The Speaker: The Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite, of course, being a member of the PC Party, is familiar with promises that get thrown by the wayside. I'm proud that we are a government that has kept its promises, including the tuition freeze, which we introduced last year and will continue this year. Of course, institutions are wondering what's going to happen once the tuition freeze is lifted, and we are working to make sure that institutions have the certainty that they need to go forward with that in the next year.

Mr. Rodney: Given that one of the guiding themes of our recently launched PC Engage strategy includes the need for government collaboration and inclusive policy development, the NDP is failing miserably in this regard. Consultation is not occurring for the adult learning review, and this is extremely challenging for students who are trying to plan their finances during these trying economic times. To the same minister. We'll try this a different way. With whom and how exactly does the minister plan to conduct this consultation, once it begins, at a time when postsecondary students, hopefully, will be working at summer jobs if they can find them?

2:40

The Speaker: The Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. On the issue of summer jobs, of course, our government has reinstituted the STEP program, so he'd better be a little bit humble when he's talking about reducing employment opportunities for students.

We are certainly going to conduct engagement with postsecondary institutions, students, faculty members, and concerned community members about sustained, predictable funding for our postsecondary institutions, and we will be launching that review in the fullness of time.

Mr. Rodney: That's strike 2 on questions and answers so far. Let's see if we can hit a home run on this one. Given that this government conducted the Bill 6 so-called consultation that they themselves admit fundamentally failed in terms of process and then resulted, as you remember very well, in protests across the province, including on the steps of this very building, and given that it appears that this government is reticent to begin yet another important consultation, to the same minister: is the government going to begin conducting the adult learning review in voice mode, or will documents be produced if there ever is a consultation?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, I just said in my previous answer that we are going to be conducting the consultations around the adult learning review so that postsecondary institutions will have certainty about what will happen to their funding once the tuition freeze is lifted for the 2017-2018 academic year. I'd be happy to include whatever documents

we produce and submit them to the hon. member and all hon. members for their consideration when that is completed.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-South. [A timer sounded] I've recognized the member, of course.

Legal Aid Review

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are aware of the importance of maintaining a fair and accessible justice system that includes the role of legal aid. In my constituency of Red Deer-South I've spoken to vulnerable constituents who are dealing with the justice system and have shared their stories regarding barriers to accessing legal aid. To the Minister of Justice. You recently announced a review of the legal aid system. What issues are being considered as part of the review?

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much and to the member for the critical question. Of course, we all know that legal aid plays a vital role in our justice system in ensuring that the most vulnerable have access to a fair justice system just like everyone else. This review was undertaken to ensure that we're using taxpayers' money in the most efficient possible way while respecting those rights. We will be reviewing governance, scope of services, financial eligibility guidelines, and the delivery model to ensure that we're doing the best work for all Albertans.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that the process has been started and given that my constituents are anxiously awaiting the results and looking for an update, again to the Justice minister: what work is going on now, and when can we expect it to be completed?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the critical question. Well, of course, in performing this review, we want to consult with all participants in the justice system, so we are talking to people from Legal Aid staff as well as the legal community, service providers, and the court. We anticipate finishing these conversations and having this come to a close later this year so that we can provide Albertans with the certainty that legal aid is working in the best possible way.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister. Given that at the same time that you announced the review, you also mentioned some interim changes on how legal aid services are delivered and given that our province is currently experiencing difficult times, again to the same minister: can you tell us how these changes have helped Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. When we announced the legal aid review, we did announce in concert with Legal Aid some interim changes. These included an increase to the financial eligibility guidelines to ensure that more low-income Albertans can receive those services and a targeting of that service to make sure it's supporting the most

vulnerable. We know now that legal support officers are able to complete applications in a much lower time frame. We've also launched a pilot project that will allow for discretionary coverage, and this has cut down on Rowbotham applications before the courts.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I've been advised that the Minister of Health has a supplementary piece of information as a result, as I understand it, of yesterday's question.

The hon. Minister of Health.

Red Deer Regional Hospital

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have an update for the Assembly on the ongoing repair work in response to the flooding at the Red Deer regional hospital. The question was asked by one of the hon. members yesterday. Work continues around the clock to bring the five affected operating rooms back online. My office was updated just today to say that one room will be online on Monday, which is sooner than was expected. The other four remaining rooms will be up the following week, which for some of them was slightly later than we'd expected, but between next Monday and the following week they should all be back up and online. Of course, patient safety is the top priority.*

Members' Statements

(continued)

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

Roberta MacAdams

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Roberta MacAdams, whose portrait hangs on the fifth floor of the Legislature, was a very private but very important woman in Alberta's history. She was elected in 1917 as the first woman MLA in Alberta, and she was one of the first two women elected to a Legislature anywhere in the British Empire.

A book, *Give Your Other Vote to the Sister: A Woman's Journey into the Great War*, written by Debbie Marshall, tells the story of this extraordinary woman. Not only did she run for office while serving as a nursing sister overseas during the Great War, but over 90 per cent of her electors were men, Alberta soldiers stationed in England and in the muddy trenches of the Western Front.

MacAdams grew up and was educated in Ontario, but in 1911 she accepted a domestic sciences teaching position with the Alberta government's department of agriculture and moved to Edmonton. She was a dietitian and enlisted in the Canadian Army Medical Corps in 1916 in order to contribute her skills as a hospital dietitian.

Following the introduction of the Alberta Military Representation Act, MacAdams decided to run in the 1917 general provincial election to be one of two soldiers' overseas representatives in the Legislative Assembly of Alberta. MacAdams sat as an MLA until 1921 and was the first woman in the British Empire to introduce and pass a bill. After her term ended, she returned to devoting her life to education, providing nutritional education to the farm wives in the Alberta countryside.

Roberta MacAdams was a courageous and determined woman who shows us how, with conviction and perseverance, we can make change happen.

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

Rwandan Genocide Day of Reflection

Loyola: Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to rise and acknowledge today, April 7, the International Day of Reflection on the Genocide in Rwanda. In 1994 more than 800,000 people were systematically murdered throughout Rwanda. The vast majority were Tutsi, but moderate Hutu, Twa, and others were also targeted. On this day we remember all who perished in the genocide and renew our resolve to prevent such atrocities from ever being repeated anywhere in the world. Stories of the survivors' courage demonstrate to us that reconciliation is possible even after such a tragedy.

Edmonton has its own vibrant Rwandan community, many of whom arrived after the Rwanda genocide. Today Edmonton's Rwandan community has more than 2,000 members, and the majority of them are under 45. This hard-working community lives mainly in north and central Edmonton. After 22 years many members of the community are still dealing with the trauma due to the loss of family, friends, and other loved ones. It's a very close-knit community, which tries to heal its wounds by organizing private vigils and awareness campaigns throughout the month of April right here in Edmonton.

Mr. Speaker, July is the month of celebration to mark the end of genocide. In August community members set up one of the most beautiful tents at our Edmonton Heritage Festival in Hawrelak park to showcase Rwandan heritage through Intore dance, which is a traditional ballet form of Rwanda.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon writes:

The history of Rwanda teaches us an essential lesson. While the capacity for the deepest evil resides in all societies, so, too, do the qualities of understanding, generosity and reconciliation. Let us nurture these hallmarks of our common humanity to help build a life of dignity and security for all.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

2:50 WiseGuyz Program for Junior High Boys

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak about a program that finds a home in schools throughout Calgary, run by the Calgary Sexual Health Centre. The WiseGuyz program acknowledges the pressure on boys and young men to behave in certain ways, and it seeks to address the effects this has on society, including social isolation, poor communication, homophobia, risky sexual behaviour, and violence.

We can take heart in seeing teen pregnancy rates dropping, but it is hard to ignore the fact that STI rates continue to rise. Even more alarming is the troubling reality that sexual violence rates are on the rise. Mr. Speaker, this is not okay.

While most sexual health services are targeted toward women – combine that with the damaging attitude that boys will be boys – WiseGuyz addresses the growing discussion of cultural and media messages about what it means to be a man in our modern world. WiseGuyz engages junior high boys in a weekly program that covers four modules: human rights, sexual health, gender, and positive relationships. It helps young men understand the connection between masculinity, male norms, sexuality, and violence. My favourite description of the program is from a young boy in the program who describes it as a program where you learn not to be a jerk.

I could go on about why I like this program, but frankly the results speak for themselves. They're available at calgarysexualhealth.ca. The outcomes of this program are remarkable. There's a marked decrease in homophobia, a huge increase in sexual health awareness,

*See page 392, right column, paragraph 12

and a meaningful uptick in the attitudes toward embracing progressive male norms.

With huge steps being made in the development of our young men, WiseGuyz has quickly gained a reputation for being a strong model in changing behaviours and reducing incidences of bullying, homophobia, and dating violence. Mr. Speaker, I am so thankful that programs like WiseGuyz are in this province, and continuing such supports is critical. By challenging the stereotypes about masculinity, teaching young men to respect themselves and others, and giving them the skills . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees

Mr. Connolly: In accordance with Standing Order 99 the Standing Committee on Private Bills has reviewed the petition that was presented on Monday, April 4, 2016. As deputy chair of the committee I can advise the House that the petition complies with standing orders 90 to 94. Mr. Speaker, this is my report.

Introduction of Bills

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

Bill 6 Securities Amendment Act, 2016

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to introduce Bill 6, the Securities Amendment Act, 2016.

As you know, the securities regulatory landscape has become more complex, sophisticated, and international in scope. It is being driven more by technology than ever before. Our goal is to ensure that Alberta's securities regulatory system reflects the realities of today's capital markets and evolves with international standards and global regulatory reform initiatives. This requires continuous review and updating of provincial securities laws. The proposed changes in this act will update and further harmonize Alberta's securities laws with those in other jurisdictions across Canada and will enhance the protection of Alberta's investors, promote the operation of a fair and effective Alberta capital market, and minimize systemic risk.

Mr. Speaker, as I recently announced, our government will continue to regulate our own capital markets right here in Alberta instead of joining the national securities regulator. Our government strongly believes that Canada's capital markets are best overseen by local regulators who know the industry, have street-level knowledge, and can respond to local regulatory challenges quickly and effectively. We are not alone in this belief, but we also understand that we must work together with all of the provinces and their security regulators to ensure effective regulation across the country. Introducing this bill is a reflection of our commitment to the continuous improvement of Canada's existing securities regulation system.

Mr. Speaker, I now move first reading of Bill 6, the Securities Amendment Act, 2016.

[Motion carried; Bill 6 read a first time]

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

Bill Pr. 1

Bow Valley Community Foundation Repeal Act

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being the Bow Valley Community Foundation Repeal Act.

[Motion carried; Bill 1 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Earlier in my remarks during question period I made reference to some quotes, and I'd like to table the articles from which they came.

The Speaker: The Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two tablings this afternoon. As the first one I would like to enter into the public records three documents, which are the trading cards for the three canine conservation team dogs that do the mussel-sniffing activity on all of our watercraft or many of our watercraft entering into the province. They are Diesel, Hilo, and Seuss. These are the cards that are given to boat owners as their watercraft are being inspected, and they certainly seem to ensure that people are not so angry when they have to sit in traffic lines. That's the first piece about that.

Now, the second thing I'd like to table. Canada's Ecofiscal Commission has put out a recent report, Mr. Speaker, entitled Choose Wisely: Options and Trade-offs in Recycling Carbon Pricing Revenues – now, of course, the Ecofiscal Commission contains as members folks like Preston Manning and is funded by companies like Suncor and TD Bank – in which it is not that we must price carbon; it is how we best price carbon.

Mr. Hanson: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to table 100 pages of information that Wildrose obtained under a freedom of information request on the strategy of Edmonton and north zones lab services. The minister and the Premier have claimed that this evidence did not exist. We suggest that if she needs help finding these business cases, briefing notes, and analysis, I'm sure that one of the pages will deliver one of these to her office.

3:00

Orders of the Day

Government Motions

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Auditor General Appointment

12. Ms Ganley moved on behalf of Mr. Mason:
Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly concur in the February 2016 report of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices (Sessional Paper 19/2016) and recommend to the Lieutenant Governor in Council that the Auditor General, Mr. Merwan Saher, be reappointed for a two-year period commencing April 29, 2016.

Ms Ganley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On March 14, 2016, the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices reported to the House concerning the reappointment of the Auditor General. It is now my privilege to move the motion.

The Speaker: The Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is an honour today to rise in this Assembly to acknowledge the work of Mr. Merwan Saher, the Alberta Auditor General. Mr. Saher is receiving reappointment to his position, and I am confident that I speak for all members of the Assembly when I congratulate and thank the Auditor General and his colleagues at the office of the Auditor General. Your work is crucial to the maintenance and transparency of government. Whether it be through the reports that your office puts out or by answering questions at a committee level, your efforts assist both the public and the members of this Assembly in having a better understanding of the performance of our government.

In my time as the MLA for Bonnyville-Cold Lake I have sat on the Public Accounts Committee. Mr. Saher has produced reports and made appearances which have assisted all members of the Assembly in understanding the complexities of our system of governance. This is a difficult and a thankless job that fundamentally works to improve the efficiency and the effectiveness of the public sector.

Mr. Saher, congratulations, and again my most sincere thank you.

The Speaker: Are there any other members to speak to this matter? The hon. minister to close debate.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think I can speak for everyone on this side and probably everyone over there, too, that we're very pleased by the report, and we're happy to support the recommendations. I would encourage all members to vote in favour.

Thank you.

[Government Motion 12 carried]

Consideration of Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor's Speech

Mrs. Littlewood moved, seconded by Mr. Westhead, that an humble address be presented to Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor as follows.

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

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

[Adjourned debate April 6: Cortes-Vargas]

The Speaker: The Member for Peace River.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to have an opportunity to respond to the throne speech. I lived in Alberta during the global recession of the '80s. It was a difficult time, but we made it through. Unfortunately, decisions made by the government of that time were not in the best interests of Albertans. The slash-and-burn of front-line staff such as nurses and teachers is something that we're still feeling the repercussions from, so I'm very glad our government has promised in the throne speech to draw the right lessons from our current economic situation by supporting front-line workers and families. I note the help to families through the new child benefit program. During the '80s I was a single parent raising four young daughters, so I know how important those kinds of supports are.

The throne speech has me reflecting on my own role and how I came to be in this House with the great honour of representing the constituency of Peace River. My journey has been one of change, often very dramatic change. Integral to my ability to be successful

in my new role is the love and support of my daughters Carla, Marni, Amaya, and Naomi, who have stood alongside me and encouraged me every step of the way, and, of course, my four amazing grandchildren – Noah, Reuben, Virgil, and Rhea – who are as proud of me as I am of them. I love you guys and couldn't do it without you.

I've lived all my life in Alberta. My grandparents on both sides came to Canada in the early 1900s. My maternal grandparents were Ukrainians from Austria, and they settled in Hairy Hill, where they farmed and raised a family. I spent many wonderful years growing up on their farm, and I also had a semirural upbringing on my paternal side. My grandfather was sent away from England at age 12, one of the home children who were sent to Canada during the war to be fostered. He eventually made his way west, married my grandmother, and for a time they homesteaded in Grande Prairie. They soon moved to a farm in southeast Edmonton near Refinery Row. My grandmother opened a small restaurant to serve refinery workers, and this eventually became the Ham Shack, a popular high-class dining establishment that served many of Edmonton's movers and shakers of the time.

When my parents married, they settled on a piece of land behind the Ham Shack, and my dad built the house where my siblings and I were raised. Overall, we had a good life and a happy, intact family. Summers we would explore Alberta, driving forestry trunk roads, camping in the bush, or spending time at my aunt's lakeside cabin up at Crane Lake. Every winter my mom would build a giant skating rink on the empty lot next to our house where all the neighbourhood kids would come to skate. My mom was a hard worker, kind, generous, and devoted to her children. She was fiercely independent and taught me to think for myself, skills which helped me manage the profound changes I would experience later in life.

But there was something rather unusual about my upbringing. My mother was part of a very conservative and fundamentalist religion that interpreted the Bible literally and taught that the end of the world was imminent. My dad was not of the same faith, but he allowed her to take the lead in raising us, so the church was a key focus of our lives, and friendships, relationships, and activities outside of the church were very, very restricted. Higher education was discouraged, and the focus was on missionary work.

My dad, on the other hand, values higher education. He's an extremely intelligent and creative man who spent a lot of time in his basement workroom, where he experimented and built things. During a time when computers took up whole floors at the U of A and were programmed with punch cards, my dad built a small home computer. He also constructed a theremin, which was an early electronic synthesizer. One of his most wonderful creations was a Tesla coil. I'd round up all the neighbourhood kids, and we'd enjoy a lightning show in the basement. My dad later became security manager for the government of Alberta and, in fact, was responsible for security here at the Legislature until his retirement.

My mom didn't believe in voting or supporting political parties, so politics was not part of our lives. The one exception was my uncle Dave. He was a tireless advocate for the underdog, passionate about fairness, and always ready to fight to see justice done. He took this to the next level, running as a federal candidate in 1984 and '86 for two western separatist parties. He inspired me and planted the early seeds.

I began teaching piano when I was 13 and started my first band when I was in high school. Eventually the band included all my siblings, and we travelled the province performing for weddings, parties, and graduations. At age 19, driven by a desire to do something more meaningful with my life, I moved to Central America and lived for two years in Honduras, where I met my first husband, who was a popular singer there.

We returned to Edmonton and began to raise a family. Unfortunately, he had addiction issues and was abusive, so after some years I made the decision to raise my daughters on my own rather than live in fear. I returned to music as a way to support my family. I formed a band with my brother and sister and managed to earn a living as a musician in Alberta for a number of years.

After some time I remarried, and this proved to be another key change in my life. Circumstances around that marriage led to a crisis of faith. I began to question the things I had been taught all my life. I realized that what my mother believed and taught me as a child did not make sense and did not fit with my world view. I began to experience a sense of enlightenment and freedom for the first time in my life as I broke free from the shackles of the fundamentalist religion in which I had been raised.

This freedom came at a cost, however. I learned first-hand how religion can divide families, how deeply held religious beliefs, no matter how sincere, can be used to judge, marginalize, and hurt those among us who are perceived as different or who do not believe the same things we do. This experience, while incredibly painful, has helped me learn to be inclusive, welcoming, and understanding of everyone in the province and in my constituency regardless of where they come from or what they believe. The process took a profound toll on me personally, however. I lost family and friends, and I went through a bout of severe depression that almost cost my life. My marriage was another casualty. With the love and support of my daughters I came through.

Key to managing the change was my decision to go to university. I enrolled in my first university course, and at the age of 45 I became a full-time student at Athabasca University, eventually earning my master's in psychology. I became active in my student union and embraced politics. I joined the NDP under Raj Pannu's leadership, attended my first political convention, and, incredibly, voted for the first time in my life.

3:10

When I graduated in 2002 with my BA in psychology, it was one of the proudest moments of my life. I shared that proud moment with my daughter Marni, who graduated the same week with her BA in chemistry. While attending university, I found an ideal job that fit my study schedule, *Alberta Hansard*. Soon I was completely hooked on politics, watching the activities in the House on a daily basis. Listening to the members, often till the wee hours of the morning, ignited something in me. I would see the dismissive way the opposition was marginalized, the way legislation was rammed through in the middle of the night without consulting with Albertans. I saw arrogance and inflated self-importance and a government completely disconnected from the needs of average Albertans, and I longed for a better way.

But I was caught up in trying to make a living while finishing my degree, and the recession of 2008-09 put serious financial pressures on me, to the point where I was facing foreclosure. As I struggled to save my home, I encountered many predatory lenders who were eager to take advantage of me. That's why I'm so pleased to support the act to end predatory lending, as these unscrupulous lenders truly need to be stopped. Even though I was still a full-time student, my student loans went into repayment, and my efforts to work with the student loan system were incredibly frustrating and unsuccessful. This is another area where I'm looking forward to seeing some changes under our government. Soon I was working multiple jobs, caught in a treadmill of day-to-day survival. I know what it feels like to be forced to choose between feeding your family or paying rent. I know what it feels like to be penalized for having no money by having your lights and heat turned off and then having to pay extra for reconnection. Too many Albertans live like this.

My youngest daughter, Naomi, who was building her own career as a welder, kept encouraging me to focus on my dream of being a psychologist, so I accepted a position in High Level where I could complete my registration requirements and once again faced major change. I packed up my car and headed north to parts unknown. I quickly fell in love with the north and its people. I saw the wonderful community spirit and the ways people worked together. I learned first-hand about the profound long-term effects of residential schools on generations of our indigenous peoples. Working within the mental health system, I saw the many service gaps and the way the system was failing citizens with top-heavy bureaucratic delivery that meant year-long wait-lists for mental health treatment and inadequate crisis response, and I knew we could do better.

I became active with my union and was sponsored to attend winter labour school. One of the teachers of my labour history course happened to be a dynamic, passionate young woman I'd first met during my student union days, who also happened to be the NDP candidate in Lethbridge-West. You know her now as the minister of environment. In the course of our conversations that week I made a decision to embark on yet another major life change, and here I am. Being elected as the MLA for Peace River last May has been an amazing experience. I consider it a great privilege to represent the Peace River constituency, and I'm deeply honoured that constituents have entrusted me with this responsibility.

Peace River, as you know, is the largest constituency in the province by square kilometres but one of the smaller by population. There's a lot I wish I could tell you about my fabulous north, but I don't have a lot of time. My constituency is home to Alberta's oldest community, Fort Vermilion. Established in 1788 as a key trading post, Fort Vermilion quickly became the main trade corridor, opening Alberta up to the rest of the world and serving as Alberta's economic trade engine. The beautiful Bay house along the Peace River is currently being restored by the community and stands as a testament to the role Fort Vermilion played in Alberta's early development. Bush pilot Wop May made his historic open biplane flight in minus 34 weather to Fort Vermilion to deliver diphtheria antitoxin to keep the area safe from epidemic. My constituency is also home to several of Alberta's youngest towns. High Level celebrated their 50th anniversary this past year, and Rainbow Lake will reach that same milestone this year.

Our communities are diverse and unique. In the far north we have Zama City, which is not a city but actually a small hamlet of only about 250, but it has been home at times to more than 4,000 oil workers because it sits in the centre of one of Alberta's largest gas and oil fields. At the southern tip we have Reno, where only a few families still remain but which has the distinction of having three original structures, including the Holy Ghost Catholic church, which date back to the first Ukrainian settlers in the 1930s.

My hometown of High Level is an incredible place. When I first arrived, I was bemused to see the hotels. We have the Mirage, the Flamingo, the Stardust, Caesar's, and indeed in the early days we branded ourselves as the Vegas of the North. High Level is also a model for diversification. Our economy is only about 20 per cent reliant on oil and gas as we are diversified into forestry, lumber, agriculture, and service industries, so we are managing much better than some of the communities further south.

Other areas in my constituency aren't doing as well, unfortunately. Some smaller towns are struggling to remain viable. Peace River itself has felt the impact of the oil and gas downturn with the loss of some major projects. Although gas and oil has slowed, it continues to be very important to our economy in the north. Peace River is home to the fourth-largest oil sands in Alberta.

Our companies there are looking for ways to increase efficiency and diversify into petrochemicals and other areas, and I'm hopeful that our government's focus on infrastructure rebuilding will help my constituency, particularly with the construction of an essential new Peace River Bridge. We are well placed to support construction in the north because we have several large sand and gravel companies and excellent potential feedstock for asphalt.

Lumber is key to our economy. We have two lumber mills in High Level. We've got La Crete Sawmills, Fraser mills in Manning, and the DMI pulp mill in Peace River. These companies are leading the way in environmental responsibility. A number of large trucking companies provide support to that industry, and during the winter logging trucks are constant along the Mackenzie highway.

Farming and agriculture is also important to my constituency. Many people don't realize this, but the north is actually taking advantage of climate change to plant new crops. We are opening up agricultural lands, helping to compensate for key agricultural areas lost to urban sprawl further south. I'm proud to say that we have almost 20 per cent of Alberta's organic farmers in Mackenzie county alone, and the Mackenzie Applied Research experimental farm in Fort Vermilion continues to research new and innovative crops.

My constituency is home to two of Alberta's seven remaining operational ferries, Shaftesbury in the town of Peace River and Tompkins near La Crête. The La Crête ferry takes traffic across the Peace River from May to September. Then from December to March we cross the ice bridge. It's quite the experience to drive the ice bridge in March as the ice begins to melt. You drive through surface water that rises to the top of your tires, trusting that the ice underneath is still solid enough to hold the weight of not just your vehicle but that huge semi that's following you.

Integral to my constituency, of course, are our First Nations and Métis. My constituency is on Treaty 8 lands and is home to three different nations: the Dene Tha', the Beaver, and the Little Red River Cree as well as the Métis in Paddle Prairie. The Lubicon and Tallcree also come into my constituency. These communities enthusiastically supported my election, and I'm deeply grateful. They've not experienced a positive relationship with past governments, and I'm working hard to change that.

The Peace River constituency in Alberta's far north has been described by some as being like the original western frontier. It's a place of incredible opportunity, where you can arrive with a dream and turn it into reality, where newcomers can build a successful life creating something from nothing. Northerners are resilient and resourceful. We find ways to cope and manage the most difficult possible circumstances, and we come out successful on the other side. We survive by being creative and innovative. We're taking the lead in adapting and diversifying and innovating in the north, and one of my goals is to help the rest of the province understand the important role we play in making Alberta great.

I love this province and its people. I consider it such a privilege to be a part of this Assembly, where I can play a small part in supporting the people of my constituency of Peace River through this difficult time. I want to thank my constituents for entrusting me with this responsibility.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I move to adjourn debate.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 4

An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services

[Debate adjourned April 7: Mr. McIver speaking]

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays is not present.
The Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since this legislation was introduced, our caucus has made it clear that we recognize that there was a need for the legislation. Any other party here could have won the last provincial election, and still they would have found themselves obligated to introduce legislation on essential services. The reality is that, yes, there was a Supreme Court ruling in the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour case, and, yes, the last PC government agreed to have us tied to that decision. So, yes, there is an implication for Alberta, one that fundamentally changes the labour landscape in Alberta in a way that we are not opposed; namely, rather than define all public-sector workers as essential, come up with a fair way to determine which ones truly are.

Regrettably, while the title of the bill is An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services, the legislation itself goes substantially beyond what the Supreme Court required. As my colleague the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner said during his second reading speech, there are a number of items in this legislation that we would be more than happy to debate, but they should be done separately in their own context. To debate them as part of a legislation that claims to merely be implementing a Supreme Court decision is profoundly disingenuous. If one were a pessimist, they could reasonably conclude that this demonstrates a certain cynicism on the part of the government.

3:20

But let me be perfectly clear. Wildrose does not oppose nonessential workers having the right to strike. We agree in principle and voted in favour of second reading as an expression of that. We agree that arbitration should be reserved as a last resort for truly essential workers in exchange for the necessary compromise on their right to strike. For other workers a deal should be worked out by the parties, and the government should be fully responsible to the public for the agreements as opposed to leaving it up to compulsory arbitrators.

Again, we agree that the government had to put something on the subject together now, and we agree with the government's stated intentions solely to implement that Supreme Court decision. But we disagree with how they went about it. It's clear that they did much more than that.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

We are opposing the bill in the end because there are just too many flaws and too much uncertainty about ensuring the public good. They set up a full resolution mechanism that puts the union's authority and their workers' rights ahead of the people's representatives and the need to protect public safety and public dollars. We are opposing the bill in the end because there are just too many flaws and too much uncertainty about ensuring the public good, too much authority in the all-powerful commissioner, who the government wouldn't even agree to keep Albertan, defeating our amendment and leaving open the suspicion that they will parachute in another partisan pal from elsewhere.

Now, a number of members here spoke about this bill and mentioned the Supreme Court ruling. It's clear that many members are not all that familiar with the actual text of the Supreme Court ruling. The Saskatchewan law that was court challenged and Alberta's existing regime are substantially different. While Alberta uniformly didn't let the public sector strike since the Loughheed era, they allowed for impartial binding arbitration. There was no such mandated alternate resolution system in place in Saskatchewan. It's the pairing of those two circumstances that led to the Supreme Court decision. If this is of surprise to any members, I invite them to review that decision. The ruling against Saskatchewan's laws was based on the facts that Saskatchewan's public employers do not have unilateral authority to determine what's essential without an adequate review mechanism and that those laws lacked an impartial alternative bargaining process to settle disputes. However, the SFL decision nowhere alludes to what they would have ruled if only one of those factors had been in place, so the findings of the court in SFL cannot be transplanted upon Alberta.

Nowhere does the Supreme Court require public-sector employers or bargaining units to make considerations about whether or not temporary workers can be employed temporarily to deal with unexpected issues that emerge while workers are striking, yet there is a strict ideological banishment of all replacement workers in this legislation. It's not even something the two parties can agree to as a conditional element.

The Supreme Court does not give any indication of how essential services should be defined other than that public-sector employers cannot unilaterally define them, yet there is a section of this legislation in which the minimal contents of an essential services agreement are prescribed by government. Were it not for an amendment put forward by our caucus, any future government could go to the regulations and expand the mandatory requirements of essential services agreements. Of course, I should acknowledge that the government voted in favour of that amendment, and we do want to give them credit for that.

However, most of these amendments pertained to the fact that large parts of this legislation were well outside the scope of the Supreme Court ruling. I observed with surprise that there were some groans and audible expressions of dissatisfaction from some members in the government benches when amendments continued to be put forward.

Madam Speaker, yesterday our caucus put forward substantive amendments concerning monetary penalties against illegal strikes and illegal lockouts. Speaking against these amendments, the Minister of Labour and others said that raising monetary penalties and fines was somehow against the Supreme Court ruling. As I noted earlier, there is nothing in the Supreme Court ruling that would have necessitated this. More disturbingly, a few members over there rose to defend the low fines by suggesting illegal strikes even by essential workers were not something to worry about.

Yet even the government in this proposed legislation acknowledges that the largest public-sector union here has a multimillion-dollar defence fund. Who here honestly believes that they would be fundamentally discouraged and dissuaded from an illegal strike by a mere \$1,000-per-day fine? Let's be realistic. They likely wouldn't even notice. My caucus colleague's amendment also raised the monetary penalty for employers who take part in an illegal lockout. Would a large employer be genuinely dissuaded from an illegal lockout by the prospect of a mere \$1,000-per-day fine? Of course not.

It was disappointing to see the government members vote against these amendments. Nobody is implying that public-sector unions are wanting and willing to wage illegal strikes with frequency, but we do have to recognize that these are essential services agreements

that are being discussed. The services involved here are those where it is generally recognized that there is a major threat to life and public safety and well-being if those services are unavailable for a time. That's why it is vitally important that big union bosses are discouraged from organizing illegal strikes of these workers. The potentially devastating consequences are what make the action so effective. Now that strikes for general workers are permitted, we can only imagine what levers might get pulled in the middle of a contentious strike. The government should have agreed with our amendment and agreed to put some actual deterrents in the fines.

Madam Speaker, yesterday my caucus colleague proposed an amendment that whoever is the commissioner for essential services should have a recent background of living in Alberta, working with and for Albertans and understanding our unique labour history. The role of commissioner, as defined in this legislation, is a profoundly powerful one. As noted in the legislation, the decisions they make are final and binding where essential services agreements are concerned.

Alberta's labour history is different than that of British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, or anywhere else in Canada. Alberta's labour relations community, as I understand from stakeholders and others, is also relatively close. There are qualified professionals here who know the background on a lot of major files as they pertain to the public sector. To have these overlooked in favour of someone with essential services or other labour relations experience in another province is problematic. To have them overlooked in favour of another NDP crony from another wing of their organization is frightening.

There are certain private-sector positions as well where there is some requirement of local familiarity for desired candidates. For example, some private-sector companies will require that a candidate have experience and existing relationships with local media before being hired for a media relations position. Some private-sector companies will require that a candidate have experience with the local jurisdiction's regulatory requirements before being hired to advise on government relations and policy framework. So there is nothing illegal or unusual about such a common-sense provision for any candidate to serve as commissioner. Yet the government defeated this amendment.

3:30

There is no restriction keeping this or a future government from appointing someone from out of province to oversee one of the most significant and delicate labour relations positions in Alberta, unilaterally making final and binding judgments on essential services that greatly affect Albertans and their government. It was disappointing to see the government vote against this motion and have it defeated.

I should note as well that the power of the commissioner and the authority that is wielded by whoever has that position is, again, not something that was prescribed by the Supreme Court in the SFL decision, so the government cannot use the cover of the Supreme Court for the structure of the essential services regime that this act prescribes. If this is the desired wish of stakeholders that the government consulted with, that is a somewhat different matter, but there are still relevant concerns about the checks and balances on the role of the commissioner. If the government wanted to discuss the creation of such a role and to structure Alberta's essential services regime this way, that is a matter that should be debated on its own terms. To frame that as being part of what the Supreme Court required is just not correct, and we never heard a good explanation for why there couldn't be a small panel rather than a single person.

Madam Speaker, in conclusion, I want to note the following. Wildrose understands the importance of meeting the requirements of the Supreme Court ruling by the mandated date, and on that principle we understand why the government had to put forward this bill. But there is overreach here beyond what the Supreme Court had asked, so we wanted to make the bill better. We proposed several amendments to ensure that essential services are better protected and treated fairly and to ensure that the public interest is protected at the same time. Regrettably, this government had chosen to defeat those amendments. Credit where it's due: they approved one amendment. But that amendment alone does not resolve the numerous problems that exist within this legislation as proposed.

Given all of the consultation that had been done with Alberta stakeholders and given how quickly this government is able to push legislation through when they actually want it passed, there is still more than adequate time to do a better bill on essential services, so I will be opposing this bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Seeing none, next on my list is the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Essential services pertain to the most vital services that Albertans rely on, that they depend on. Accordingly, it's important that the government gets this legislation right. Wildrose does not oppose nonessential workers having the right to strike. All individual rights should be respected, and it's just not necessary to tell nonessential workers that they can't strike, even if it has proved convenient for many over the last 40 years.

We agree in principle with reducing that category of essential workers and voted in favour of that at second reading as an expression of that. As my colleague the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner noted when he spoke about this bill in second reading, we were open to working with the government on this proposed piece of legislation. As several colleagues had outlined earlier, we recognized that there was a need for this bill in some form given the Supreme Court ruling and the previous government's agreement to have us bound by it, but the approach that this NDP government took for this bill went beyond what was required and didn't do enough to ensure that Albertans can rely on the sometimes life-and-death services that government is duty bound to provide regardless of labour disagreements. We do not agree that this bill only implements the ruling by the Supreme Court.

There were several reasonable Wildrose caucus amendments that were defeated. This bill could have been considerably improved, and it's a shame to see that this was not the case. One of the amendments put forward by my colleague was to raise the monetary penalty to discourage illegal strikes or illegal lockouts. A maximum \$1,000-per-day penalty does nothing to dissuade a big union boss who thinks an illegal strike by certain essential workers would be strategic to him or a large employer who wants to lock out workers. When we talk about legal strikes and the need to have adequate penalties, we're not talking about any service. The government's own legislation as it appears here speaks to that.

- (a) the interruption of which would endanger the life, personal safety or health of the public, or
- (b) that are necessary to the maintenance and administration of the rule of law or public security.

Albertans shouldn't have to worry about whether or not these workers are available.

Emergency services – police, fire, EMS – all save lives in different ways. They all help to protect life and protect our society. Police attempt to help by enforcing laws with the ability to restrain predators and bullies, people who would commit violent crimes on each other. Firefighters: not only do they alleviate emergencies, but in many communities such as Fort McMurray, Edmonton, Calgary, Lethbridge, Airdrie, fire service supplements EMS by providing EMS-qualified staff. This is especially important when ambulances are caught in code reds, which is still often happening.

Of the three, EMS is the one that provides the most direct medical intervention. It is health care, so much so that our government, Alberta Health Services back in the day, recognized this and took them under their own umbrella. They recognized that the quality and level of care that they were providing was on par. In Alberta virtually anything that can happen in an emergency department, paramedics can do out in the field, and that is a valuable service indeed, the ultimate interventions. People call these agencies in the most dire situations, yet EMS remains on the outside. You need these people. These emergency medical service workers, the paramedics and EMTs that are in this field, they can keep you from becoming paralyzed out in that field. They will keep you breathing. They will make sure that you are breathing. They will keep your heart beating. They have all the interventions, all the medications, all the implements to help assist with this, yet we don't consider them essential, not entirely.

I'm sure that many members here have had the misfortune of experiencing an emergency, a situation where someone's life is on the line. The life-saving services in those cases are the ones where illegal strikes need to be discouraged. There is no talking point. There is no explanation that can comfort those who are adversely affected by an illegal strike in these service areas. Nobody should have to rush a loved one to the hospital and find that much-needed services are only operating at a partial capacity or not at all. Nobody should have to wait by a phone in the case of an emergency only to find that a response is taking too long.

Madam Speaker, in the early 2000s I was in the EMS profession. I was fortunate enough to be working for a fire service, though, a service where we were integrated and we could not strike, but during that time there was a provincial-wide strike in EMS. I was way up in Fort McMurray. We tend to be a little bit isolated, but I could hear through all my friends and whatnot what a terrible time that was. Many of my brothers and sisters were working down south with a lot of these agencies and were put in difficult situations, but again it was a service that was never treated appropriately. Many of my instructors who were teaching me when I went to school, many of the managers that I was learning under, many of these supervisors had to work on the floor in the field to cover these bases, but there were not nearly enough of those to cover so many that needed to be protected. Yet in the police and fire services, even though they may have work disagreements, labour disputes, they're able to get through these without the ability to strike. They use arbitrators, and there's no reason why emergency medical services, who provide health care in the field, can't be under this umbrella.

Some members may also recall what happened in Montreal in 1969, when 3,700 members of the Montreal policemen's brotherhood walked off the job over pay issues. It's regrettable that the sides involved couldn't come to a conclusion beforehand, and there were consequences. I raise this example because police and security are a prime example of what many people think of when they think of an essential service, something needed to maintain the general welfare of our communities. The result of that 16-hour strike included violent protests, mass burglaries and lootings, assaults, and so on. Off the top of my head, I believe there were over a hundred arrests that day.

3:40

Of course, the circumstances there were significantly different than the current labour environment in Alberta, but the broad point is this. There is a real human consequence when essential services disappear. Services that have that designation have it for a very particular reason. So, yes, there should be significant monetary penalties for big unions that want to go ahead with an illegal strike and put their bargaining interests ahead of the interests of Albertans. A small fine of no more than \$1,000 per day is simply not adequate to deter an illegal strike.

One of my colleagues' amendments yesterday would have expanded on the definition of essential services. The government's bill as introduced does not adequately define essential services, meaning very important functions concerning infrastructure and the environment and financial security that would be neglected in a strike. Wildrose believes that what is essential to the public interest goes beyond just safety and the rule of law.

Do the folks over there really believe it is not essential to prevent an environmental disaster just because there are no human lives at risk? Well, you voted the inclusion of that down as a consideration of what is essential, so you'd better hope that managers can handle everything on that front in case of a strike. It simply might not be possible for managers in a strike or lockout scenario to be able to make all of the necessary decisions quickly without some of the unionized workers. If it is possible, well, I guess that poses a different problem for those unionized workers.

As members will recall from yesterday's debate, the reality on the ground is that certain workplaces will become hazardous and certain machinery will be devalued if not maintained. We therefore asked that the bill be amended to include, as Ontario's does, the designation of preventing the major deterioration of workplaces and equipment and machinery as an essential service. This does not mean that every position pertaining to equipment and machines would have been declared essential.

The amendment would not have altered the fact that legislation lets both sides negotiate an essential services agreement. In workplaces where this would apply, there are simply a few roles that might be designated essential for simply maintaining expensive, important equipment or financial interests or environmental concerns. Who and what would be is between those negotiating, but the definition here precludes many interests from even being considered by an essential services agreement under this act given this particularly narrow definition. We do not want to needlessly expand the definition of essential to too many positions because that has consequences as well. But there are some legitimate concerns that the current definition, as proposed legislation, does not capture what is actually essential to the public interest. Whichever side of the bargaining table you're on, that interest has to come first.

Yesterday my colleague also sought an amendment concerning a change in circumstance. It will be a significant event for many Albertans in the public sector when this legislation comes into force as employers and bargaining units for workers will be negotiating essential services agreements for the first time in Alberta. As currently worded, Bill 4 does not necessarily allow for quick emergency amendments. It may be discovered in the middle of a strike or lockout while negotiations are ongoing that a certain service should have been designated essential but was not.

Governments do not always get things right the first time. That's true of any government in any jurisdiction of any political stripe. Accordingly, there needs to be a mechanism that allows for a quick return of these services should a situation arise. In yesterday's discussion the minister and other members made a point that an umpire could handle the scenario. The minister suggested that the

umpire will be there on the ground and can direct one of the public-sector workers to cross the picket line and perform an emerging essential service. But what if the union disagrees and appeals to the commissioner? How long will that take? And last I checked, it is not mandatory for every worker to be full-time on the picket line, so what if that skilled employee is not available to just come back into work?

The amendment would have allowed a public-sector employer to use temporary workers to get the job done for a narrow period of time if negotiations are ongoing and the bargaining unit for whatever reason is unwilling or unable to let workers return. Some on the government benches made the case that there are scenarios where an unfettered right to replacement workers would tip the scales of fair bargaining, but that's not what this amendment would have done. This amendment would have allowed the commissioner to put an end to the use of replacement workers as soon as a decision on the new circumstance was finalized. We think that was a fair compromise to ensuring that Albertans have access to the services they need while respecting the rights of all involved.

Our caucus recognized that an essential services agreement needed to be passed. I want to once again be clear. Wildrose does not oppose nonessential workers having the right to strike. Our caucus agreed and voted in favour of second reading as an expression of that.

But there are still some serious questions remaining in this bill. In the end there are simply too many flaws in the legislation. Like so much of the legislation you guys write, there are a lot of flaws. The government still has time and the opportunity to not only implement what was actually required by the Supreme Court but to separately discuss other labour legislation. It's just so important that we get this right when the essential services this government provides are at stake.

I cannot support this bill. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Seeing none, I will call on the hon. minister of culture.

Miranda: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today in support of this bill, and I thank the minister for bringing it forward. Prior to my election to this Chamber I was actually working for a union, and most of the work that I did there involved research. Prior to that I was actually the president of the local union for flight attendants, and I can tell you that in the federal jurisdiction we do have legislation that actually considers flight attendants an essential service. The reason for that is because you need to get mail from one end of the country to another. Other reasons as well are because you need to support communities that are in the north, for example, that rely on air travel to bring perishable foods and replenish food items. In the federal sector there already is a law that has a provision to compel workers who are, you know, going to entertain the idea of perhaps withholding their services or being locked out of their work by their employer to have a resolution mechanism, to resolve and to establish a number of people, of workers, that can maintain a level of service that is acceptable, that doesn't put the public good, the public welfare, into question.

I actually had the fortune, or misfortune, of having to deal on several occasions with the possibility of going on strike. In my situation, of course, it was a little bit tricky because, you know, I had members all over the world, and if we did go on strike, we would potentially have picket lines, well, around the planet. So when we entered into negotiations, we would actually often start with our discussion on an essential services agreement. I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that oftentimes those were quite difficult, but they were not impossible to do, and the reason for that is because

employers have a vested interest in ensuring that services are being delivered according to their business plan. From the workers' perspective I can tell you that not a single one of us wanted to ever put a single person in the north in peril. We were representing workers who were extremely proud of the work that they did, and they were actually very much willing to listen and were very much willing to enter into this dialogue. Oftentimes those kinds of discussions took place at the beginning of bargaining, when things aren't so heated.

One of the things that I saw in this process here and one of the questions that I myself had for the minister when we started talking about this was: at what point do you enter into these discussions? Well, as you can see, it's going to be part of the bargaining process. It's going to allow for workers who right now don't have the right to actually strike to be able to do that if that is the case. However, we are providing now a mechanism that determines whether they are an essential service and whether they are required to actually stay on the job and at the same time protect their collective bargaining rights, their rights as workers, now guaranteed by the Supreme Court of Canada. So, to me, this mechanism makes a lot of sense. I have seen it practised. I have practised it myself.

3:50

To the concerns that have been raised, for example, pertaining to EMS workers, I actually have organized them. I was an organizer as well, so I actually signed up a few locals into a union and turned it over, of course, to somebody else to negotiate their first collective agreement. I can tell you that EMS workers, much like flight attendants, are extremely proud of the work that they do, and I can tell you that they're extremely reasonable people, and they don't get into that job because they want to go on strike; they get into that job because they care about people. They care about providing the services, and they're not going to be the ones who are going to prevent people from getting all the medical attention that they need just because they're having a dispute with their employer.

That is the pride that a person feels when they enter into those kinds of jobs. They do that because – let's face it – it's not always about the money; it's about the pride that you feel, the reward that you feel from being part of your community and providing a service that is so, so essential to the fabric of that community and the well-being that a lot of them do their hours and work a lot of hours for free as well because they care that much about the patients that they look after.

So I have no doubt, Madam Speaker, that if the situation were ever to present itself where EMS workers would need to have that discussion, they themselves would tell the people who represent them to look into that and ensure that they can provide a level of service that will never put a single Albertan in harm's way. I believe that. I really do. And why is that? Because the workers of this province are extremely proud of the work that they do, proud equally of being union members as well, and now, under this bill, they will have the same rights as every other Canadian, and I stand behind that. I support that.

I thank the minister for bringing this bill forward. Thank you.

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

Seeing none, I'll recognize the next speaker, the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Let me be perfectly clear. Wildrose does not oppose nonessential workers having the right to strike. The Supreme Court was very clear on that. We agree in principle and voted in favour of this proposed legislation in second reading as an expression of that. We agree that

arbitration should be reserved for truly essential workers in exchange for their right to strike. For other workers a deal should be worked out by the parties, and the government should be responsible to the public for the agreements, not compulsory arbitrators.

We agree that the government had to put something on this subject together now, in light of the Supreme Court decision. We acknowledge that. We agree with the government's stated intention solely to implement that Supreme Court decision. We just disagree with how they went about it. We disagree with any suggestion that all they are doing here is implementing the Supreme Court decision.

We are opposing the bill in the end because there are just too many flaws and too much uncertainty about assuring the public good, too much authority in the commissioner role created in this legislation, who the government wouldn't even agree to keep Albertan. You know, it's simple. We asked them to, you know, just make sure that it was at least an Albertan. They defeated our motion. Whatever side of the bargaining table you're behind, we are all public servants. That public interest needs to be protected above all.

The proposed monetary penalties, up to \$1,000 per day for an illegal strike, are not real penalties. It's an acknowledgement that something wrong has been done with a symbolic punishment. Someone with a multimillion-dollar defence fund will not be deterred by a daily penalty that barely, barely cracks four figures. The same thing goes for the penalty of up to \$1,000 per day for an illegal lockout. An employer willing to wage an illegal lockout on their employees is unlikely to be deterred by such a small figure; let's be reasonable.

Even the government will acknowledge that this legislation represents a significant shift for Alberta labour relations here in Alberta. Inexplicably, the government felt the need to oppose our amendment to raise the value of monetary penalties up to \$750,000. That's not a minimum; it just ups the scale a little bit. That doesn't mean that every offending trade union or employer would face that maximum fine, but the ceiling on fines would have been lifted for those who are larger, who can quite literally afford the monetary fine proposed in the bill.

Yesterday the government claimed that lifting the monetary penalty was beyond the scope of the Supreme Court ruling. That's absurd, to suggest that a maximum fine of \$1,000 is within the scope of the Supreme Court decision but a maximum fine of \$750,000 is somehow not within the scope of the Supreme Court ruling. The reality is that neither of these decisions are within the scope of the Supreme Court ruling; they're within our scope. The Supreme Court ruling did not speak to what is an adequate monetary penalty for someone who wages an illegal strike or lockout.

The title of the bill, An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services, does speak to the impetus for why this legislation was needed, but this legislation overreaches the Supreme Court's ruling. For instance, the legislation includes a prohibition on the use of temporary workers while those bargaining for a new agreement are on strike on the lockout, you know, overreaching the Supreme Court ruling. That's not required anywhere in the Supreme Court decision. Madam Speaker, may the record show that we want to have that discussion. We want to have that debate and give the due assessment to such a legislative change.

The Supreme Court ruling stemmed from two particular findings within legislation in Saskatchewan. First, the court took issue with an employer's ability to unilaterally decide what is an essential service. Second, they took issue with the absence of an adequate, impartial, alternate mechanism for bargaining. The impact of these

two factors taken together and the assessment that striking is a Charter right led to the current legislative onus upon Alberta.

In no way does it derive from this that a public-sector employer cannot hire temporary workers to compensate for lack of labour during a strike, so to wedge such a restriction into An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services when that particular provision is not actually being required in the wake of the Supreme Court ruling is, quite simply, disingenuous. We understand the convenience of being able to do a swath of labour changes in one go as opposed to multiple pieces of legislation, but there's a fundamental difference between what the Supreme Court decision requests and what the government here would just like to implement.

My colleague from Cardston-Taber-Warner yesterday proposed two common-sense amendments to this aspect of the legislation. These did not strike out the ban on replacement workers that this government insisted on. One such amendment merely said that in an unforeseen circumstance, such as if it is discovered in the middle of a strike scenario that a service should have been designated essential but was not, the employer can temporarily use replacement workers. Not an unreasonable request. If the commissioner were to have found that the use of replacement workers in such a context damaged good-faith bargaining negotiations, they still could have the ability to shut down the use of replacement workers. Our amendment specifically allowed for that, but that, too, the government defeated.

The reality is that the government has overstepped the boundaries of the Supreme Court ruling. When this bill was introduced, my colleagues and I were very cautiously optimistic. We recognized the need to carefully define essential services workers and ensure that those workers in those services are treated carefully and fairly. We do not oppose nonessential workers having the right to strike, and we want Albertans to have the access to the services they need at all times, 365 days a year. That's why I will not be supporting this bill in this form. If this bill were simply about implementing a Supreme Court decision, that would be a different matter, but this bill goes far above and beyond that.

It is just so important that we get this right when the essential services this government provides are at stake. Ministers of the Crown are responsible and accountable for the services, especially essential services, that their departments and agencies provide. They are still responsible for those services when there's a strike, legal or illegal. They should be mindful of that when voting on this bill.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. minister of culture, under 29(2)(a).

Miranda: A question under 29(2)(a). I was wondering if the member could tell us if he knows how many illegal strikes there have been in the province of Alberta over the last five years and a rough idea of how many collective agreements are actually bargained in this province over the same period of time.

Mr. Hanson: Well, the fact is that I don't have those numbers in front of me, and I really don't think that it's relevant to the discussion we're having. [interjections] So why didn't you just tell us that, then?

The Deputy Speaker: Any other questions or comments?

Any other speakers wishing to address the bill?

Seeing none, the hon. minister to close debate.

4:00

Ms Gray: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to all members who have contributed to the debate on Bill 4. This piece of legislation is one that was done because of the Supreme Court ruling but also because of the Court of Queen's Bench ruling, which tested Alberta's legislation against the Supreme Court ruling and was the true impetus, the reason why we needed to do this. I am very confident that this made-in-Alberta solution is going to respond to our province's unique needs, making sure that the right to strike, which is fundamental and was ruled on by the Supreme Court, will be protected while making sure that we are protecting the public safety, the health, and the well-being of Albertans, protecting the rule of law during the case of a strike or lockout. We need to make sure that Albertans are able to rely on that, and that's what this legislation does. We've had a lot of discussion here in this Chamber about the importance of some essential work, and we all agree that's important. That is what this framework is here to recognize, that essential work, essential services need to continue in the event of a strike or lockout.

This is a fundamental change to how labour relations will move forward here in the province of Alberta. I look forward to working collaboratively with all of those in the labour relations community to start implementing this legislation and putting it into practice once it has been proclaimed. We believe the courts have been clear. It's every Canadian's right to strike, and we have set up a framework so that that can happen safely, securely, protecting first and foremost Alberta's public health, safety, security, rule of law.

Again, thank you to all members who've contributed to the debate on this bill. I very much enjoyed the discussion. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 4 read a third time]

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 5

Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act

The Deputy Speaker: I'll hear from the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Madam Speaker. On behalf of Minister Sigurdson I'm pleased to move second reading of Bill 5, Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act.

Madam Speaker, I'm pleased today to rise and speak in support of Bill 5, Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act. The bill will help senior homeowners remain secure and independent in their own homes. It speaks to the needs of an aging population and addresses the current economic reality. Home means comfort and security for all of us. Our homes and communities contribute greatly to our sense of well-being. Seniors have told us that being able to stay in their own homes and their communities as long as they choose to or for as long as they are able is enormously important to them. Being able to live in a place they have called home for years or even decades is often critical to an older person's quality of life and sense of independence.

We all have aging parents, family members, or friends who are facing difficult decisions about whether they can stay in their own home. We know that more people are facing this decision and more want to remain in their homes and communities. Life expectancy is increasing as well, and many seniors are enjoying more active lives and are able to maintain full independence for longer than was possible in earlier times. Right now there are more than 515,000 seniors in Alberta, and the numbers of seniors are growing faster than the general population. We as government want to support

seniors to be self-sufficient in their homes for as long as possible, and it is our responsibility to address the needs and priorities of a growing population who are aging.

Under the previous government the special-needs assistance program provided eligible low-income seniors with a grant to cover a portion of certain home repairs. The previous government made a decision to cut that funding of \$8 million and replace it entirely with a loan program. Today our government is presenting a new option that would help more seniors to finance the home improvements they need to do to remain in their homes. The program, housed in Bill 5, provides a loan program to help seniors with home equity to make needed repairs and stay in their homes. In addition to the loan program, we are restoring \$2 million in grants to help the seniors who most need it.

The act we are debating will support the seniors' home adaptation and repair program, a great example of how we can help more seniors remain independent in their own homes. Now, the program could help as many as 145,000 seniors' households or about 260,000 seniors afford a wider range of home repairs and renovations than what is currently offered under the previous special-needs assistance program for seniors. We know that the majority of seniors own their own homes in Alberta. About 90 per cent of seniors live in private households, and of these about 83 per cent actually own their own homes.

Now, a low-interest home-equity loan with the Alberta government would help seniors make those repairs or adaptations to homes that are not currently covered by these grants. Many senior homeowners have home-equity value that they can draw on to improve and adapt their homes. Now, this is a voluntary loan program that will give seniors another option to make the repairs and improvements they need in order to stay in their homes as long as possible. As I mentioned, the loan program is designed to cover a broader range of supports to more seniors than is currently available under the special-needs assistance program. We are proposing an implementation date of July 1, 2016, to allow time to develop the regulations and for communication activities to be planned and implemented.

Now, as I mentioned, to ensure that we continue to support the most vulnerable of our seniors, the loan program would also include a grant component. We want low-income seniors who are currently eligible to access the special-needs assistance home repair benefit program but lack sufficient equity or are mobile-home owners who do not own their land to still be able to access supports for essential home repairs.

We also must ensure that the Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act includes strong consumer protection measures to ensure that seniors know their rights when they apply to the loan program. The act includes four sections to legislate consumer protection concerning a range of important issues. The act will ensure

measures to consider the reasonableness of the cost to the individual for the home repair, renovation, or adaptation as part of the loan approval process. It will require the contractor to advise the consumer that the loan program is available to eligible individuals. It will ensure that consumers are made aware of their cancellation rights if they are not eligible for a loan. It will state how contracts may be cancelled and how the consumer may notify the contractor. It will state the effect of a contract cancellation and the responsibility of the contractor to refund any money paid if a contract is cancelled. As well, the regulation under the act will confirm that cancellation rights must be prominent and in writing and included in the contract.

The application form will ask if a senior entering into a contract has been notified by the contractor about their cancellation rights. Seniors who indicate they have not been advised will be contacted by phone to inform them of their rights if they are not eligible for the loan. Contractors will also be contacted to be informed about their obligations under the act and to be advised how they can access further information. The consumer protection mechanisms in the proposed act in no way diminish or exclude consumer rights or existing protections under the Fair Trading Act or its regulations.

The value of this act to seniors in our province is clear. We are, Madam Speaker, mindful of the need to propose fiscally responsible ideas, particularly given the current economic environment. The new program will not cost more to administer since the resources that administer home repair grants through the special-needs assistance program will be shifted to the loan program. We believe this is a positive step for seniors and is fiscally responsible for our government.

4:10

We have addressed the needs and priorities of our growing aging population. We will be able to help up to 260,000 seniors with needed repairs or modifications to their homes, and we will support seniors to remain safe, secure, and independent right in their own homes, exactly where they want to be.

Thank you.

With that, I move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I think we've made some good progress today, and I move that we adjourn the House until Monday at 1:30.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 4:11 p.m.]

Bill Status Report for the 29th Legislature - 2nd Session (2016)

Activity to April 07, 2016

The Bill sponsor's name is in brackets following the Bill title. If it is a money Bill, (\$) will appear between the title and the sponsor's name. Numbers following each Reading refer to Hansard pages where the text of debates is found; dates for each Reading are in brackets following the page numbers. Bills numbered 1 to 200 are Government Bills. Bills numbered 201 or higher are Private Members' Public Bills. Bills numbered with a "Pr" prefix are Private Bills.

*An asterisk beside a Bill number indicates an amendment was passed to that Bill; the Committee line shows the precise date of the amendment.

The date a Bill comes into force is indicated in square brackets after the date of Royal Assent. If a Bill comes into force "on proclamation," "with exceptions," or "on various dates," please contact Legislative Counsel, Alberta Justice, for details at (780) 427-2217. The chapter number assigned to the Bill is entered immediately following the date the Bill comes into force. SA indicates Statutes of Alberta; this is followed by the year in which it is included in the statutes, and its chapter number. Please note, Private Bills are not assigned chapter numbers until the conclusion of the Fall Sitings.

1 Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act (Bilous)

First Reading -- 5 (Mar. 8, 2016 aft., passed)

2 Appropriation (Interim Supply) Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading -- 96 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 162-67 (Mar. 15, 2016 morn., passed on division)

Committee of the Whole -- 239-49 (Mar. 16, 2016 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 251-59 (Mar. 17, 2016 morn., passed on division)

Royal Assent -- (Mar. 23, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force Mar. 23, 2016; SA 2016 c1]

3 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016 (\$) (Ceci)

First Reading -- 156 (Mar. 14, 2016 eve., passed)

Second Reading -- 201 (Mar. 15, 2016 aft., passed), 157-62 (Mar. 15, 2016 morn.)

Committee of the Whole -- 239-49 (Mar. 16, 2016 aft., passed)

Third Reading -- 259-66 (Mar. 17, 2016 morn., passed)

Royal Assent -- (Mar. 23, 2016 outside of House sitting) [Comes into force Mar. 23, 2016; SA 2016 c2]

4* An Act to Implement a Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services (Gray)

First Reading -- 180 (Mar. 15, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 285-88 (Mar. 17, 2016 aft.), 349-66 (Apr. 5, 2016 aft., passed)

Committee of the Whole -- 399-409 (Apr. 6, 2016 aft.), 378-84 (Apr. 6, 2016 morn.), 415-28 (Apr. 7, 2016 morn., passed with amendments)

Third Reading -- 450-55 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed), 428-33 (Apr. 7, 2016 morn.)

5 Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act (Sigurdson)

First Reading -- 398 (Apr. 6, 2016 aft.)

Second Reading -- 455-56 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft., adjourned)

6 Securities Amendment Act, 2016 (Ceci)

First Reading -- 447 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed), 447 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft.)

201 Election Recall Act (Smith)

First Reading -- 92 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 119-32 (Mar. 14, 2016 aft.), 303-304 (Apr. 4, 2016 aft., defeated on division)

202 Alberta Affordable Housing Review Committee Act (Luff)

First Reading -- 92 (Mar. 10, 2016 aft., passed)

Second Reading -- 305-16 (Apr. 4, 2016 aft., adjourned)

203 Fair Trading (Motor Vehicle Repair Pricing Protection for Consumers) Amendment Act, 2016 (Carson)

First Reading -- 280 (Mar. 17, 2016 aft., passed)

Pr1 Bow Valley Community Foundation Repeal Act (Westhead)

First Reading -- 447 (Apr. 7, 2016 aft., passed)

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