



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, April 12, 2016

Day 13

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

Party standings:

New Democrat: 54 Wildrose: 22 Progressive Conservative: 9 Alberta Liberal: 1 Alberta Party: 1

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| Shannon Dean, Senior Parliamentary Counsel/Director of House Services | Nancy Robert, Research Officer | Gordon H. Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms |
| Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel and Legal Research Officer | Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms | Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i> |

Executive Council

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| Rachel Notley | Premier, President of Executive Council |
| Sarah Hoffman | Deputy Premier, Minister of Health |
| Deron Bilous | Minister of Economic Development and Trade |
| Oneil Carlier | Minister of Agriculture and Forestry |
| Joe Ceci | President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance |
| David Eggen | Minister of Education |
| Richard Feehan | Minister of Indigenous Relations |
| Kathleen T. Ganley | Minister of Justice and Solicitor General |
| Christina Gray | Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal |
| Danielle Larivee | Minister of Municipal Affairs |
| Brian Mason | Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation |
| Margaret McCuaig-Boyd | Minister of Energy |
| Stephanie V. McLean | Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women |
| Ricardo Miranda | Minister of Culture and Tourism |
| Brandy Payne | Associate Minister of Health |
| Shannon Phillips | Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office |
| Irfan Sabir | Minister of Human Services |
| Marlin Schmidt | Minister of Advanced Education |
| Lori Sigurdson | Minister of Seniors and Housing |

STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund

Chair: Ms Miller
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

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| Cyr | McKitrick |
| Dang | Taylor |
| Ellis | Turner |
| Horne | |

Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

Chair: Mr. Sucha
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

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

Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee

Chair: Mrs. Littlewood
Deputy Chair: Ms Miller

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| Anderson, W. | Nielsen |
| Clark | Nixon |
| Connolly | Renaud |
| Cortes-Vargas | Starke |
| Cyr | Sucha |
| Drever | Swann |
| Jansen | van Dijken |
| Loyola | |

Standing Committee on Families and Communities

Chair: Ms Goehring
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

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| Drever | Pitt |
| Hinkley | Rodney |
| Horne | Shepherd |
| Jansen | Swann |
| Luff | Westhead |
| McPherson | Yao |
| Orr | |

Standing Committee on Legislative Offices

Chair: Mr. Shepherd
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

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| Cooper | Littlewood |
| Ellis | Nixon |
| Horne | van Dijken |
| Jabbour | Woollard |
| Kleinsteuber | |

Special Standing Committee on Members' Services

Chair: Mr. Wanner
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

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| Cooper | McIver |
| Dang | Nixon |
| Fildebrandt | Piquette |
| Jabbour | Schreiner |
| Luff | |

Standing Committee on Private Bills

Chair: Ms McPherson
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

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| Anderson, W. | Kleinsteuber |
| Babcock | McKitrick |
| Drever | Rosendahl |
| Drysdale | Stier |
| Fraser | Strankman |
| Hinkley | Sucha |
| Kazim | |

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

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

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

Chair: Mr. Fildebrandt
Deputy Chair: Mr. S. Anderson

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| Barnes | Luff |
| Cyr | Malkinson |
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| Fraser | Renaud |
| Goehring | Turner |
| Gotfried | Westhead |
| Hunter | |

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

Chair: Loyola
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

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| Aheer | Kleinsteuber |
| Babcock | MacIntyre |
| Clark | Malkinson |
| Dang | Nielsen |
| Drysdale | Rosendahl |
| Hanson | Woollard |
| Kazim | |

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, April 12, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Welcome. Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal.

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is a pleasure today to rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of this House the fabulous students of Meyonohk school, who are here for School at the Leg. and will be spending the week with us. I've had the pleasure of hosting them in my office. There were quite a few of them – it got very crowded – but they had lots of wonderful questions. I'd like them to please rise and accept the warm welcome of this Chamber.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Minister of Seniors and Housing.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 41 grade 6 students from Notre-Dame elementary school, located in the beautiful riding of Edmonton-Riverview. They're accompanied by their teachers, Mr. Paulin Larochelle and Ms Monique McBride.

Maintenant en français. Il est un honneur de présenter 41 élèves de la sixième année de l'école Notre-Dame. Ils sont accompagnés par leurs enseignants, M. Paulin Larochelle et Mme Monique McBride. L'école Notre-Dame est une école française.

They're seated in the public gallery this afternoon, and I ask that they all rise to receive the warm welcome of the Assembly. Bienvenue.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister. Welcome.

Hon. members, I'm privileged on behalf of all of you to acknowledge, because I'm about to acknowledge him at the first point in the Alberta Legislature, the Member for Calgary-Greenway.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you to all the members of this Assembly my guests who are seated in your gallery. First is my wonderful wife, Harmeet. She is a constant source of inspiration and is a wonderful mother to our two boys. Without her I wouldn't be here today. My two sons, Arjun and Jeevan, are here as well. Arjun is in grade 6, and Jeevan is in grade 3, and both attend a science charter school. I'm so blessed to have them with me here today as well.

My aunt and my uncle, Sukhwant Sandhu and Surinderpal Sandhu, are here with me today. They have been integral to my successes and a source of strength over the course of my life. I'm honoured they could join me for this special day today.

Next is my brother, Kanwardeep Gill. He is both my brother and a close friend. As a result of my family, a great deal of any successes I have had, including my election as an MLA, wouldn't be possible without my brother.

Last but not least is Mr. Mandeep Shergill. Mandeep was my campaign manager and a point person throughout my campaign. Now he's working out of my constituency office in Calgary-Greenway, where he will have the difficult task of keeping me on

schedule – as you know, Calgary-Greenway is a lot of fun – and making sure everything runs smoothly. He was an integral part of the campaign team, and I thank him for his tireless effort in getting me elected.

I ask them to please rise, which they already did without my permission, and accept the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome, and welcome to the new member.

The Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal.

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly many individuals from the Alberta Federation of Labour who are here for a lobby day event. The focus of this year's lobby day was child care, something we can all agree is important to this government and important to all Albertans. They met this morning with a variety of MLAs over breakfast and in meetings, and I trust that their conversations were productive. Our government is working to meet the early learning and child care needs of Alberta families. There are quite a few here in the gallery, so I will simply ask them to rise together and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this House my husband, Scott Payne, who, actually, many of you already know. It is no exaggeration to say that I wouldn't be here today in this House if not for his love, support, and encouragement. I am eternally grateful to have him as my life partner and as coparent to our one, soon to be two daughters. Scott is a tireless advocate for workers' rights and social justice and a steadfast campaigner for progressive values in our province. Many of my colleagues had the opportunity to work with him during last year's election, and I think I speak for all of us when I say that we're happy he could join us today to watch our government in action. I would ask that he now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Minister of Human Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of our Assembly two sets of guests. The first is Dr. C.V.B.T. Sundari. Her full name is Dr. Chintalapati Venkata Bala Tripura Sundari. She is the retired principal of an undergrad college in Nellore, India, and is visiting Canada these days. She has a PhD in English literature and is an avid artist who specializes in the Tanjore style of painting. She is also the mother-in-law of my constituency assistant, Roop Rai. Joining them today is Arohi Rai Elapavuluri, the four-year-old daughter of Roop Rai. They are also joined by Gurpal Gill, a friend and a firm supporter from my constituency of Calgary-McCall.

I also would like to introduce three Calgary Sikh youths representing the Basics of Sikhi, an organization. We are joined here today by Harman Singh Dhillon, Parmeet Sidhu, and Yog Sadra from that organization. The Basics of Sikhi is a Sikh educational campaign that uses digital and printed media to tell the story of Sikhi at faith-based and multifaith events. They are working to spread a spiritual and social message and to effect change by making educational resources free. They are supported by Everything's 13, a registered Sikh education and humanitarian charity.

I ask all my guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Minister of Infrastructure and Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As Minister of Transportation and of Infrastructure I'm blessed to have a hard-working, very diligent public service to serve the people of this province. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to members of this Assembly staff from the strategic services branch of Alberta Infrastructure. They are Correna-Lyn Kerich, Kieren Trimbee, Martijn Groen, Jacqueline Lee, Bev Ricard, and Francis Santiago. They are visiting the Legislature as part of their public service orientation, and I would ask these guests to please now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

1:40

Ms McKittrick: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two individuals, Linda Stewart and Merrill Stewart. Linda and Merrill were constituents of Sherwood Park for 28 years, from 1976 to 2004, before they moved to Belleville, Ontario. They were very active in the Sherwood Park NDP riding association, and both worked in the NDP Legislature office for the Hon. Brian Mason and for Raj Pannu, who was the former leader of the NDP here in Alberta. In 2001 Merrill was the provincial NDP candidate for what was then called the Clover Bar-Fort Saskatchewan constituency. Merrill ran again as the NDP candidate in the 2014 Ontario provincial election. They returned to Alberta to attend the NDP convention, held last weekend, and to visit their son and his family. As the MLA for Sherwood Park I am very honoured to introduce them to the House today. Would Linda and Merrill please rise to receive the customary welcome from the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to introduce to you and through you to the members of this House Dr. Trent Keough. Dr. Keough is the president and CEO of Portage College, and he's here today in his capacity as lead partner in the Boyle pipeline training centre, which is the subject of my member's statement later today. He is joined by Mr. Stan Delorme, vice-president of Metis Settlements General Council, a board member of Portage College, and the former chair of the Buffalo Lake Métis settlement. Buffalo Lake Métis settlement is a charter partner in the pipeline training centre. I now ask both gentlemen to rise and receive the customary warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Mr. Speaker, I'm so pleased today to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly Miss Krysty Munns, a friend and fellow advocate for affordable and safe child care. Krysty moved to Lethbridge from B.C. in 2004 to complete her bachelor of science degree and then her master's of science in molecular biology from the University of Lethbridge. She is a scientist at the Lethbridge agricultural research centre and an active member of her union, the Public Service Alliance of Canada. Today she is very involved within her community advocating on women's and aboriginal issues. I ask that Krysty rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

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

Nord-Bridge Seniors Centre

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to stand up and share a beautiful story from my constituency, Lethbridge-East. There is a lovely building on 13th Avenue and 18th Street north in Lethbridge. It is the home of Nord-Bridge Seniors Centre, one of two seniors' centres in Lethbridge. The centre is a home away from home for its 1,300 members. On Monday morning the doors are opened at 8:30, and members begin to trickle in slowly. However, by 9:30 the rooms are packed because it is the Monday morning jam session. One can listen, sing along, or be the lead entertainer. As the music plays, coffee and tea are served, and sometimes people have breakfast. Above all, what you see and feel are comradery and pure enjoyment. There is so much energy in the air.

There are always events happening. It could be the first Wednesday of the month for the breakfast buffet, or it could be the president's dinner. The Dunford dining room is always packed. If you step into the hall, you can feel the energy buzzing with activity. It may be yoga or table tennis in the gym, a card game, a game of chess, or selling raffle tickets on my Irish whiskey bread pudding with Irish whiskey caramel sauce.

On the first Friday of the month you would probably see myself, as the MLA for Lethbridge-East, and one of the city councillors there meeting with the membership. On any day you would see volunteers helping out, seniors helping seniors with OAS . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Government Policies

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, it's grass fire season again. MDs and towns all across this province are already putting on fire bans and restrictions. Towns in my riding all have concerns about the damage fire can do. As a firefighter I've seen grass fires grow from small, controllable flames into a wall of flames 12 feet tall in just seconds. Frankly, that's scary and dangerous.

Similar to grass fires, municipalities across this province are also concerned about what this government will have done in less than a year and what it will do with their upcoming budget. For instance, the costs of grants in lieu will cause towns not to go up in flames but in taxes. They are being burned nonetheless. In fact, this will cost Holden over 2 per cent in tax increases and will result in the removal of grants in lieu. The accelerated shutdown of coal will torch Forestburg and single Heisler and Killam by turning down the coal-fired heat and turning up the tax heat. Not only these towns will get smoked but so, too, will Hanna and 10,000 Albertans who rely on these good-paying jobs.

The royalty review made oil companies see red, and many fled. The NDP government is putting accelerants on this fire to the tune of a projected deficit of around \$18 billion, with a record debt sure to be announced this Thursday, leaving Albertans feeling like they're going from the frying pan right into the fire. The leap of flames from a grass fire is like the Leap Manifesto, that could potentially cause damage all across the province, killing oil field jobs. The combustion caused by the carbon tax will make many jobs

go up in smoke and smother a thousand dollars out of every Albertan's pocket.

On behalf of Albertans I ask this government not to fan the flames of economic disaster with further bad legislation. Please put out the fire.

The Speaker: I continue to be impressed by the hidden talents in this Assembly.

The hon. Member for Calgary-North West.

Homelessness in Calgary

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2008 the homelessness rate in Calgary was growing exponentially. We saw an increase of 35 per cent every two years. Using those calculations, we should now have more than 10,000 homeless Calgarians, but we don't, and the reason is the 10-year plan to end homelessness.

In 2008 Calgary became the first city in Canada to create a plan to end homelessness, and the results have been phenomenal: 7,000 people have found permanent housing, and we've seen a 17 per cent reduction in Calgary's homeless population. This is a remarkable achievement considering the phenomenal rate of Calgary's growth. Even with over 200,000 new people moving to Alberta, the rate of homelessness in Calgary has slowed. Since 2008 more than 12 cities across Canada have adopted Calgary's strategy.

Recently I saw comments from Edmonton's police chief giving the homelessness plan a failing grade. I could not have been more disappointed. Those comments undermine and devalue the heavy lifting done by government staff, front-line professionals, community organizations, and, most importantly, the Calgary Homeless Foundation and its CEO, Diana Krecsy, who have dedicated their hearts and souls to this critical endeavour.

I am privileged to contribute to the Calgary council on homelessness, which is a nonpartisan systems check on homeless supports in this province. Along with my esteemed colleague the Member for Calgary-Elbow we are charged with identifying gaps in the system and looking for solutions. I would ask the government to consider the work we are doing on the issue of homelessness in Alberta. We believe the answer to this issue lies not in criticizing current efforts but in building on successes like Calgary and Medicine Hat and sharing our resources and information by working together through collaboration, not criticism.

1:50

Oral Question Period

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

Carbon Levy

Mr. Jean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When the Premier announced her carbon tax plan last fall, she said that the \$3 billion price tag that Albertans would pay was simply the cost of a social licence we need to build pipelines. She claimed a buy-in from the energy industry and the radical environmentalists who have opposed our pipelines for years. Since then a billionaire energy CEO has moved away due to the higher taxes, and this morning the Premier's environmental ally is claiming that Energy East would poison the drinking water of eastern Canada. Premier, what are Albertans getting exactly in exchange for the \$3 billion carbon tax?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, our plan is helping to change opinion around the country and internationally. It is not something that will happen overnight; difficult things are not, but good governments take on difficult tasks. We have been working on this for five months; that member over there worked on a plan for 10

years and got nowhere. Suggesting that our five-month-old plan has failed, while it fits into their political objectives, is not helpful and quite frankly denies the kinds of good governance that we are demonstrating, which will get us to yes on a pipeline and improve our record on climate change.

Mr. Cooper: Point of order.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Jean: That's simply not true, Mr. Speaker.

It seems the only buy-in the carbon tax has gained is from the former pipeline opponents in the Premier's caucus. Unfortunately, it's going to cost Alberta families \$1,000 a year to keep her backbench from protesting. The unelected opponents, however, continue their opposition. Energy East risks our drinking water, they say, while the federal NDP debate how to keep our oil in the ground. Why does the Premier continue to try to appease our opponents instead of calling them out for their outright lies about our energy industry?

Ms Notley: Well, speaking of outright lies, the member opposite has been misinformed and has incorrect information with respect to the implications for families around our carbon levy. That being said, as I've said before, we are going to move forward with our carbon plan because it's the right thing to do for our environment, for future Canadians, and also for our energy industry. These folks over there want us to react, to panic, to stop doing anything, and to go back to the 10 years of failed policies that have gotten us nowhere. We will not do that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Jean: So let's actually review the Premier's progress from that day in November when she proudly announced her new social licence for Alberta. A billionaire who she linked arms with thinks taxes are too high now to stay in Alberta, and the environmentalist who joined her on the stage continued to campaign and fund raise against our oil sands. Her own party – her own party – signs on to a plan to end all oil and gas development in Canada. Premier, if this is the social licence Albertans have paid for, can they please get a refund?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, let us review the member opposite's progress on the issue of a pipeline. Ten years, no pipeline. And you know what? Albertans asked for a refund, and they got one. They have a government that's taking action, and that's what we will do.

The Speaker: The second main question.

Government Policies

Mr. Jean: Yesterday we found out the Premier was against the Leap Manifesto. Well, actually, I should correct myself. The Premier's statement says that the government of Alberta repudiates the sections of the Leap Manifesto that addressed energy infrastructure. End quote. I'm curious to know how the Premier feels about the rest of the four-page, large-font document. Why didn't the Premier reject the section that says that the drop in oil prices isn't a crisis but a gift or the part calling for financial transaction taxes or even the increased resource royalty request?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, I've been exceptionally clear from coast to coast on our position with respect to that manifesto.

Interestingly, as I mentioned in this House yesterday, conservative supporters have actually come out and called building a pipeline a doomsday scenario. I asked the hon. member to repudiate that comment, and interestingly, Mr. Speaker, he has not

because they are still willing to put their political interests over the interests of Albertans because they want Alberta to fail for their outcomes.

Mr. Jean: I would reject any supporter that suggested pipelines are that, but I would ask the NDP leader to reject the NDP federal party for all their ridiculous comments.

Another section of the manifesto calls for an end to the animal agricultural industry as we know it, saying that it relies too much on the energy products extracted by our number one job-creating industry. The Premier's qualified repudiation of the Leap Manifesto didn't mention that part. Does the Premier agree with the sections of the Leap Manifesto that pit our number one wealth-creating industry, oil, against our number two wealth-creating industry, agriculture?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the member opposite ought to do his homework because, in fact, in my speech on Saturday I specifically addressed that issue, and I did specifically repudiate that issue.

You know, I'm hearing from a former MP who sat in government for 10 years and failed to do anything to build a pipeline. We have no lessons to learn, Mr. Speaker, from the Official Opposition on this issue. They want us to do nothing. They want us to walk away from our plan to deal with climate change. They want to cut \$2 billion. They want to just sit in their offices and cross their fingers and hope that things change. That's not the . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Jean: That's simply untrue, Mr. Speaker. Hundreds of thousands of kilometres of pipeline were built across this country.

But capitalism is "designed to extinguish our dreams before they have a chance to be born." I haven't heard a repudiation of that statement from the manifesto from anyone on that side of the House, nor have I heard anything about the Leap Manifesto's desire to replace, quote, profit-gouging private corporations with co-operatives elected by, I assume, NDP members. Is there anything in either of those two statements that the Premier doesn't agree with?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, I've answered this question over and over and over again. Albertans know where we stand. We have been very clear that the Leap Manifesto – and I will say it again – is naive, is thoughtless, is ill informed, and is tone deaf, and we will not be moving forward on any part of it. What we will be moving forward on is a progressive climate change policy that moves the ball down the field, across the country, that supports the development of a diversified, progressive energy industry that is more successful in the decades to come.

The Speaker: Third main question.

Mr. Jean: While the Premier cautiously, slowly, and quietly distances herself from the Leap Manifesto, the fingerprints of many of her government can be found all over the ideas behind it. Her chief of staff, for instance, ran for the leadership of the federal NDP on a plan to end fossil fuels in Canada's cities, and the number of former anti-oil and antipipeline activists working for her ministers has been well documented and reported. Does the Premier recognize that the federal NDP is simply picking up the mantle formerly carried by members of her own caucus and cabinet?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, that is the most ridiculous premise I've ever heard. I believe that Albertans and Canadians have heard very

clearly what the position of my government, my cabinet, my caucus, our party is on the Leap Manifesto, and they have heard very clearly that we are on the side of Albertans, that we will continue to push for progressive, successful, sustainable energy . . .

The Speaker: I suggest that I should remind members – and you can go to the procedures book, page 502 – that we ought not to be seeking opinions during question period.

The first supplemental, I believe, hon. leader. Is that correct?

Mr. Jean: The Premier's own environment minister sought and received the endorsement of Avi Lewis, who is the main author of the Leap Manifesto, just prior to last May's election. Cabinet ministers and government backbenchers alike have campaigned for NDPers with radical opinions about Alberta and our energy sector. We're happy that the Premier's social licence has apparently convinced her own caucus to change their tune, but will the Premier acknowledge that what happened at her party's convention was as much the making of years of past efforts from members of her own government as it was anyone else's?

2:00

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite suggests that he believes that climate change is real, but his environment critic ran under their banner at a time when the party suggested that climate change wasn't real and the science wasn't settled. So, you know, I would suggest that the member opposite might want to focus more on what the statements are of the elected representatives who are here on behalf of the people of Alberta and what they say is the position of their government because the waters start to get a little murky if we start looking at statements made by supporters of parties in times past, not too far past.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Jean: Yesterday the Government House Leader argued that under his leadership the NDP tried to be more positive towards Alberta's energy industry. Some argue that they simply became less adversarial – as the Speaker ruled, this point is debatable – which is why Albertans are concerned that the Premier filled her government with NDP advisers from outside of Alberta who have a history of working against Alberta's interests. Were there no qualified or moderate Albertans ready to serve in this government?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of the staff who we have working for our government. We have managed to attract some of the best minds across the country to support us, and I would suggest that perhaps the folks over there might want to think about the same kind of recruitment drive. [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members, please.

The leader of the third party.

Environmental Monitoring

Mr. McIver: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, clearly, when the environment minister reviewed AEMERA, her mind was already made up. She refused to meet with AEMERA's leadership despite their repeated attempts to reach her. No amount of truth or facts was going to change her mind. It was set on something much more powerful, political ideology. Why else would she ignore advice from well-respected scientists and dissolve AEMERA anyway? To the minister: why are you ignoring credible advice from industry-leading experts?

The Speaker: The Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the question. You know, there was a third-party external review conducted of AEMERA by the former deputy minister of Environment Canada which found a significant amount of overlap and administrative issues that were already being dealt with within the department. In addition, we ensured that there was independence maintained through the role of the chief scientist and the legislated role of the Science Advisory Panel. There was no need for an extra board or an extra layer of administration in this matter, and that's what we've committed to.

Mr. McIver: Well, that's not true, Mr. Speaker. Last week top Canadian scientists raised questions and concerns about the environment minister's plan to dissolve AEMERA and move its functions back under her direct control. Not only does this discredit her, quote, independent review, which was actually a tightly orchestrated charade with a predetermined outcome, but they raised concerns around internal manipulation and politicization of scientific monitoring data. To the minister: now that you've shot the credibility of yourself and your ministry, how can Albertans trust anything that you call data that you present to them?

The Speaker: The Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the fact of the matter is that the Science Advisory Panel will be reporting directly to Albertans and providing the advice to the chief scientist in a peer-reviewed fashion on how we might fill some of the gaps of analysis and data collection within environmental reporting.

Now, what the scientists did flag was the future of environmental reporting. They did not want to go back to the failed past under the PCs, Mr. Speaker, and that is something that this government has pledged not to do.

Mr. McIver: Well, Mr. Speaker, the scientists discredited what that minister calls an independent review.

I find it curious that when the NDP was in opposition, the Member for Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview said, "When you don't have an independent arm's length, a distance between government and a body that they're selecting, questions arise, questions about judgment." Well, in government now it seems that the NDP no longer shares that same commitment to transparency and honesty. To the minister: when did your government decide that providing Albertans with independent scientific data was less important than your left-wing bias?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. The fact of the matter is that the independent arm's-length reporting to Albertans continues within the act. It will continue by maintaining the Science Advisory Panel and the traditional knowledge panel within the act. They will report directly to Albertans in a more timely and regularized fashion than the previous monitoring agency, which had some problems getting that moving, would have done. Now, the fact of the matter is that we've also maintained the role of the chief scientist and the role of the chief of monitoring in this matter. What we have eliminated is the previous government's penchant for appointing their friends to boards.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Rural Health Care

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For too many years the health care concerns of rural Albertans have gone unheard. Albertans want to ensure that our government will invest not just in health care in our cities but ensure that access to services is strengthened and protected in rural communities, too. How is the Minister of Health, after hearing concerns of rural Albertans, going to provide quality health care close to their homes?

The Speaker: The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the important question. Our government is absolutely committed to protecting health care for all Albertans no matter where they live, and that's why, immediately after being elected, we cancelled cuts that were proposed by the outgoing government and refused to move forward on cuts that were proposed by the Official Opposition. We think that it's important to work on listening to rural Albertans. That's why during the constituency break I toured communities like St. Paul, Bonnyville, Lac La Biche, Fort Vermilion, Vegreville, High Level, Olds. We're out on the front lines getting opportunities to meet with rural Albertans and to thank the public service for their excellent . . .

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

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister has been on tour and given that there is a need for quality care in rural Alberta, will the minister highlight some real health initiatives that will have positive impacts, and can she discuss any local programs that are working from the bottom up?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much to the member for the question. Certainly, there are a few announcements we did in the opportunities we had to tour during the break. One excellent example is the dialysis unit that will be permanently integrated in Lac La Biche. I'm also really proud of some of the work happening in the Lakeland regional health care initiative, where communities are working collaboratively. As well, High Level is doing excellent work around mental health. In terms of having an opportunity to be involved at the local level, Alberta Health Services launched just last week a recruitment initiative for 70 public members to the health advisory councils.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the opposition parties are calling for significant cuts in health spending and given that we need to ensure that rural Albertans have access to those professionals and the physical health infrastructure, equipment, and facilities to deliver quality care, can the minister outline her approach to ensuring that this happens?

Ms Hoffman: The member is right that opposition cuts would lead to rural hospitals closing and for our nurses and other health professionals being available for Albertans where Albertans need them most. On my most recent trip, of course, Lac La Biche received an announcement of their much-needed dialysis unit. These are the kinds of things that we're moving forward on because this government, this side of the House, voted for a budget that has new money and the infrastructure maintenance plan and will continue to move forward on making sure that Albertans get the care where they need it, Mr. Speaker.

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

Job Creation

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yesterday the government confirmed that they are finally ending their failed job scheme. Job creators, economists, and Wildrose were skeptical from the start. The NDP government doubled down, with the Finance minister saying that it will be, quote, good for business. Finally, yesterday the Premier said that the cancelling was based on evidence. Given the state of our economy, why isn't the government conducting economic impact studies first, not in hindsight? Is it because they don't care or because they don't want to see the results?

The Speaker: The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member for the question. You know, our government is responsive to Albertans. We've listened to the private sector and decided to pivot on a program that, quite frankly, wasn't going to deliver the outcomes that were originally intended, but I can tell you that jobs and the economy are the number one priority of our government, of our Premier. The opposition will have to wait for budget day to hear more details.

2:10

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that economist Jack Mintz has said that the failed job scheme is, quote, not going to be very effective, and the Calgary Chamber of commerce questioned why they were doing it at all, it's clear that the government didn't do their homework. Now they tell us that Thursday's budget will include new initiatives for job creation. Will the government commit to sharing all internal economic impact assessments so that Albertans know that these new initiatives will actually work this time?

Mr. Bilous: Mr. Speaker, let me start off by saying that our government will not exacerbate a situation by cutting billions of dollars from the front lines: nurses, teachers, health care professionals. Our government is committed to working with the private sector, the job creators. On Thursday the opposition will have to wait for a number of initiatives. But I'll remind the opposition that our government has already been proactive since last fall, announcing \$34 billion in infrastructure over the next five years as opposed to the opposition, that would cut more than \$9 billion.

Mr. Hunter: Apparently, Mr. Speaker, it's easier to come up with accusations than an actual job plan for Albertans.

Given that this past February Alberta's unemployment rate hit its highest level in 20 years and that weekly wages are plummeting, it's clear that when it comes to job creation, this government's record speaks louder than their assurances. We still don't know what Bill 1 will actually do, and neither does the government as they let it wither on the Order Paper. Will the government finally admit that their approach to putting ideological experiments over sound policy simply isn't working?

Mr. Bilous: I'll tell you what, Mr. Speaker, our government has a jobs plan. It is being proactive in acting on this as opposed to the opposition that, first of all, thinks that you get pipelines approved by jumping up and down and berating people over Twitter and social media.

The other thing that's quite interesting, Mr. Speaker, is that the member talks about the unemployment rate. Well, again, the Wildrose solution to unemployment is to create more unemployment by laying off thousands of public-sector workers. Our government values our public sector, and we will continue to invest in the economy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-West.

Environmental Monitoring (continued)

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week we saw the NDP government take an unprecedented measure by folding an independent, arm's-length organization back into the ministry. AEMERA provided a scientifically structured, industry-funded watchdog over energy development; however, the minister says that it cost too much. For a function that took up less than 3 per cent of the department's budget, it is not acceptable to sacrifice transparency and accountability to save minuscule amounts of money. To the environment minister: can the minister explain how these dollars will be repurposed, or is this just another time where we have to wait until the budget?

The Speaker: The Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the hon. member for the question. In fact, when we made the announcement, we made it very clear that savings that were realized would be reinvested back into front-line monitoring services. You know, the reason why we did it: the analysis showed that

previous administrations failed to fully consider the implications of transferring the bulk of scientific capacity from [Environment and Parks] to AEMERA and the impact such a transfer would have on AEP's ability to carry out its environmental stewardship role.

That's why we made the decision. We'll be reinvesting those dollars back into monitoring.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. Given that you said in your press conference that this measure to roll an independent, arm's-length body into two ministry-led panels will save money and given that you also outlined that all money saved will be recycled back into the environmental monitoring, evaluation, and reporting, which one is true, Minister? Are you saving money, or are you actually spending the same amount?

Ms Phillips: I'm sorry, but the hon. member just actually doesn't understand the structure of the issue here. We have a Science Advisory Panel, which advises the chief scientist on gaps in a peer-reviewed fashion. There was then a board, which we have dissolved, Mr. Speaker, and a full executive team of various VPs and so on to do the actual management of the day-to-day operations of AEMERA. So he's wrong; we're right. You know, that's really the explanation.

Mr. Ellis: Wow. That's all I can say.

Given that industry has funded more than two-thirds of the budget of AEMERA in 2015-16 through the joint oil sands monitoring initiative and given that many Albertans believe it would be inappropriate to take money provided by the energy industry and expense it to everyday department spending, to the same minister: how will you justify the redirection of the spending

towards two new panels, how many panels has this government now created, and will these new panels be reviewed by your current review of Alberta's ABC system?

Thank you.

Ms Phillips: Mr. Speaker, you have to forgive me, but I think it's a little weird that the previous government is asking me about how many panels when they were the ones who put them in the legislation in the first place. So it's the science advisory panel, the traditional knowledge panel, which will report to Albertans. They will flag various gaps in analysis and data and so on with the chief scientist. They will report to Albertans on the matter.

You know, I'll just read from what the McMurray Métis have said: the mandate was wrong from the get-go; core issues that were frequently raised by McMurray Métis and other communities just never made into their mandate; AEMERA needed to change. There you have it from the source.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Adoption

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Wildrose believes that strong families build strong communities and that every family should have the opportunity to thrive and grow. When families decide to reach out and grow through adoption, the last thing they need is to find this government standing in their way. Adoption profiles are often the easiest way for biological parents to connect with those wishing to adopt. Unfortunately, current regulations prevent Alberta families from posting those profiles online. To the minister: why is this regulation still in place, and when will it be removed?

The Speaker: The Minister of Human Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. Our government is committed to making sure that when children are not safe in their homes, they have homes to go to where they can stay and flourish. We will take steps to make sure that we review the policies in due course and make sure that we consult the relevant stakeholders and all Albertans going forward when we put into place a new policy, so we will work with Albertans and stakeholders.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, adoption is an issue that is near and dear to my heart, and it's something that parents and families face with equal parts of both sadness and joy. The decision a biological parent makes to allow another family to raise their child can be agonizing, yet their generosity gives incredible joy to an adoptive family. What is the minister's department doing to help biological parents and those who may have signed a permanent guardianship order to ensure the adoption process is as smooth as possible for all involved?

The Speaker: Hon. member, was there a preamble in there somewhere? I'll just remind you that after question 5 you are to manage that differently.

The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. As I've stated, our government is committed to working with the foster parents, with all of the stakeholders to make sure that when children can't stay in their home, we'll find them a

home where they can flourish and where they'll have opportunities to succeed in their lives.

Thank you.

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, given that we're talking about all types of adoptions and not just ones inside the department and given that we recognize that checks and balances must obviously be in place but there are significant hurdles that stand in the way of anyone that wishes to grow their family through adoption and given that in some cases the costs are high and there is often bureaucratic, stressful delays with little to no accountability, why isn't this minister's department doing more to break down those barriers so that families can more easily welcome adoptive children through public, private, or international adoption?

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It would have been nice if the member, in the name of disclosure, had disclosed his personal interest in that.

Every adoption case is different. There are many issues that need to be looked into, and every adoption case is looked into, the particular circumstances of the case. Our government is committed to making sure that all children in Alberta have all the needed and necessary resources to flourish in their lives and succeed in their lives.

Thank you.

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

Canola Diseases

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Clubroot is an extremely serious soil-borne pathogen that has already been found in well over 30 municipalities in Alberta as of 2014. Given it has devastating effects on canola yields and is so pervasive, it is declared a pest in Alberta's Agricultural Pests Act – it's been a problem since the 1970s, when it was first reported in Edmonton area greenhouses – to the minister of agriculture: what is your department doing to update their management plan on this dangerously pervasive pathogen?

The Speaker: The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member. He's absolutely right that clubroot and Fusarium – there are a lot of pathogens out there in the landscape that we continue to monitor, working with our agriculture services boards, with counties right across the province to ensure that pests don't spread and that we can control what we can right across Alberta. It's important to our producers and important to the industry.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Given that Canada exports nearly \$2 billion worth of canola to China and given that as of September 1 this year the Chinese will impose stricter standards on foreign material to our canola exports, can the minister tell us what programs and protocols are in place to ensure that other canola-based diseases such as blackleg don't end up destroying crops here and reducing trade with some of our largest partners overseas?

The Speaker: The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. Absolutely, canola is very important to Alberta. Our agricultural sector is our second-largest sector in the province. Recently I returned from China and Korea, where at every opportunity that I had I engaged with officials in China to talk about this issue and the fact that we are looking for science-based, evidence-backed decisions and are advocating very, very profusely for our agricultural sector. We recognize that China is an important market, and we will continue to grow that market.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Given that clubroot spores can survive in soil up to 20 years and given that landowners are seriously concerned that energy construction projects, including renewable energy projects, increase the risk of transferring infected soil, can the Minister of Energy tell this Assembly why there are no biosecurity protocols currently in place to reduce the spread of these dangerous pathogens across hundreds of acres of farmland?

The Speaker: The minister of agriculture.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I agree with him wholeheartedly that we all need to do what we can to stop the spread of pathogens, the ones existing. Perhaps there are new ones on the horizon that we haven't even yet recognized. Knowing that the producers are doing what they can around rotation of the crops, knowing that the energy industry as well needs to take responsibility for that, I will ask the member to give me some leeway to get back to the Energy minister to find out exactly what we can do about this issue because I would agree.

Thank you.

Energy and Environmental Policies

Dr. Starke: Mr. Speaker, the circus was in town this past weekend. On Saturday the Premier walked the tightrope. On Sunday the acrobats did a triple somersault and landed on the Leap Manifesto platform. On Monday we watched the contortionists. Well, actually, it was the NDP government caucus desperately trying to distance itself from this document. Now, we've seen this sideshow before. Just last week the environment minister was forced to defend her attempts to politicize AEMERA after harsh criticism from prominent Canadian scientists. To the minister: when will you stop flip-flopping on issues that have a profound effect on the energy sector and Alberta's economy?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker. You know, I'm pretty sure I was clear in the national newspaper on Friday where Alberta stands with respect to our climate leadership and our access to tidewater, but I welcome every available opportunity to underline the matter to Albertans that this province and this government has energy workers' backs. No problem.

Now, as to AEMERA, Mr. Speaker, we have acted on good external advice from the former deputy minister of Environment Canada, and I thank him very much for his advice. He found duplication. He found ways in which we can do better on monitoring. Certainly, indigenous peoples have welcomed this approach as well.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, there's a difference between having workers' backs and stabbing them in the back.

Mr. Speaker, every caucus has a ring, every circus has a ringmaster. Given that the Alberta NDP takes its policy marching orders from the federal NDP mother ship and given that the federal party has proven once and for all that they care nothing for the well-being of Albertans and our key industry, to the same minister: was the decision to make environmental monitoring in Alberta less transparent and less accountable a product of your own personal ideology or were you acting on a mandate from your federal bosses?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, the mandate that we were given last May 5, that the hon. member's caucus was not given, was a very, very clear mandate to review agencies, boards, and commissions given all of the silliness that had been happening under the previous government with ABCs. That is why we will see more action on this matter within the budget.

Now, the fact of the matter is that we found duplication, we found ways to do better with our environmental monitoring. And when we know better, Mr. Speaker, we will do better.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Dr. Starke: Mr. Speaker, you can always tell they've run out of answers when they start talking about the ABC review.

Given that the environment minister believes that a \$3 billion carbon tax and dissolving independent monitoring agencies will give her government the social licence to build much-needed pipelines and given that her government was unable to convince even their most vocal supporters of the merit of these decisions, to the minister: if you can't persuade your own comrades who share your ideology to stand in solidarity with you, how do you expect to convince people outside your circus tent, you know, the ones who actually have the authority to approve these projects?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm not super sure if there was a question in there, but let me give it a try. Okay. I think we were pretty clear over the weekend that this government is committed to a climate leadership plan that will lead the country, stop being a laggard, that will embrace the science of climate change, unlike some of our friends or those who would propose that we do nothing. That's a form of rejecting the science. We will move forward on a plan that is thoughtful, that is carefully calibrated to respond to the existing environmental conditions, and we will make sure . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Job Creation (continued)

Ms McKittrick: Mr. Speaker, last year the government announced in Budget 2015 a job-creation incentive program as a way to help businesses hire new employees. I am pleased to ask the Minister of Economic Development and Trade about an issue that is very important to my own constituents in Sherwood Park. Could the minister please explain why the government decided not to proceed with this program?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question. First and foremost, creating jobs and diversifying the economy is the number one priority of our government. I can tell you that that priority has not changed from last year's budget to this year, but I'll tell you what we did do. We heard feedback from businesses, from chambers of commerce, from industry, and what we've decided to do – the focus of the job-creation program is the same, that we are going to support the private sector to create jobs – is to retool that instrument and instead have a . . .

The Speaker: Thank you.
First supplemental.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for listening to the business community.

Given that business owners throughout the province are continuing to look at our government for ongoing support to help get Albertans back to work, can the Minister of Economic Development and Trade explain what incentives the government will provide to start-up companies and entrepreneurs to support innovation and job creation?

2:30

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, quite frankly, in challenging economic times people tend to seek new opportunities and to explore starting up their own businesses and to innovate. That's why yesterday I announced a \$10 million investment that will be provided through Alberta Innovates to Innovate Calgary, to TEC Edmonton, and as well to regional commercialization organizations to support start-up companies, innovation, and job creation.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to tangible, concrete action. There is a suite of initiatives that we'll be rolling out on Thursday, and there will be more news to come.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Can the Minister of Economic Development and Trade explain why expanding funding for incubators is important as part of the government's plan to create jobs and diversify the economy?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member for the very pertinent question. We have great assets in our province with two of the best university-based business incubators in the world. They are already at capacity. That's why our government is providing \$10 million in new funding to these initiatives and strengthening their supports and the support that they give to businesses.

I want to give a quick statistic here. TEC Edmonton's clients have grown an average of 25 per cent per year in revenues and employment compared to the national growth rate of 10 per cent for early-stage Canadian companies. This is a success story which needs more support.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Agriculture and Energy Policies

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Leap Manifesto has farmers and ranchers in my riding worried. The Premier says that she rejects the pipeline components of this manifesto, but she hasn't said anything about agriculture. Meanwhile, the Leap Manifesto document states, "One single industry is destroying the planet more than any other. Animal agriculture," and calls for an end to the entire industry. Will the Premier give our farmers and ranchers some peace of mind and clearly state her opposition to this component of the manifesto right here and right now?

Ms Hoffman: It's always fun to be able to take an opportunity to clarify and reclarify and say it yet again. Our government repudiates the entire Leap Manifesto, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, there were many provincial delegates there who voted in opposition to it, not just from Alberta but from across Canada. We're going to keep making sure that they understand the importance of having wide industries, including strong energy, agriculture, forestry. The list goes on. We're going to fight for workers.

The Speaker: First supplemental question.

Mr. Stier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, the issue of trade is also very important to ag producers in my riding. They're worried about access to foreign markets given that the Leap Manifesto calls for an end to existing free trade deals. Does the Premier understand the importance of trade to producers, or, like her federal brothers and sisters, does she think that these deals should be thrown out?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just to clarify, this is an opportunity to debate government policy, but I'll make it very clear yet again. A document that was debated this weekend by a different party, not by the provincial NDP, was passed. [interjections] It is not government policy. We repudiate it. We will continue to stand up for Albertans. I was proud to do so throughout the weekend and will for the rest of my days.

The Speaker: The volume in here is getting excessive. Could you please listen to each other?

Second supplemental question.

Mr. Stier: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. Well, the Premier says that this manifesto has not been adopted, but she also says that it will be discussed. Given that the Leap Manifesto calls to end trade deals, oil and gas, and our farming and ranching industries, why doesn't the Premier fight hard for these industries instead of discussing such radical, anti-Alberta ideas?

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, every day our government is working to increase market access to make sure that we get a fair price for our commodity, get workers back to work. The opposite members' sole priority is to make this government fail instead of making Alberta succeed. That's irresponsible. We're going to stand up for Albertans, and I'm proud to do so.

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

Environmental Monitoring (continued)

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This past week the environment minister received a letter from well-respected scientists from clear across Canada warning her about dissolving

AEMERA. These experts stated that the minister was mistaken in her assumptions regarding public trust in government science. Now, by ignoring this advice, the minister has demonstrated that she believes she knows more about environmental monitoring than trusted experts. Minister, please clarify while all Albertans are watching. What was the exact methodology utilized in this review of AEMERA, and why was it completed by an economist and not an environmental monitoring scientist?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. To be very clear, the problems with public trust were under the previous government's approach to environmental monitoring, which were found so wanting over a period of years that the only, the last idea that they could think of was to outsource core government business. That is not the way to govern this particular matter. We are committed to independent reporting to Albertans to ensure that that piece stays in place. The chief scientist and the chief of monitoring of AEMERA move over into the department.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
I will recognize the second supplemental.

Mr. Rodney: Mr. Speaker, with respect, that's not what the scientists said.

I wonder: are Albertans actually asking the NDP to stop blaming and start governing? Given that the predetermined review was neither robust nor a fair analysis of the so-called arm's-length agency and given that just because the minister rejects something over and over again and repeats it over and over again to herself doesn't make it true, to the same minister: your commissioned review highlighted a number of other options to improve AEMERA instead of dissolving it. So please tell us: why are you throwing the baby out with the bathwater and refusing to even consider other options over ideological preferences?

Ms Phillips: Well, Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that environmental monitoring is core business of government like public health and public safety. The accountability for monitoring rests with government, not an outsourced agency run by a board with a former PC environment minister as its chair. So we have retained the best aspects of AEMERA's work, including the chief scientist, including the chief of monitoring, and including the best parts of the enabling legislation, the Science Advisory Panel and the traditional knowledge panel, which indigenous peoples in the lower Athabasca have embraced.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Rodney: In the words of the minister, given the fact that the scientists are pleading with the minister – they're leaders in the field from across the country; they've refuted every aspect of the minister's dubious report such as the fact that AEMERA was working hard to build stronger working relationships with the federal government and the fact that their salaries just happened to be comparable to or less than other public servants in the same rank – will the minister utilize this opportunity to take the professional, expert advice from these scientists, to put their respected opinion over personal political bias?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Mr. Speaker, thank you. You know, environmental monitoring in the lower Athabasca has been governed by the joint oil sands monitoring agreement between the federal and provincial

governments. It actually became quite difficult to negotiate that agreement between an arm's-length agency, that was outsourced, core government business, and the federal government and, I would argue, a government-to-government-to-government relationship, which is why indigenous peoples had so many questions about AEMERA. We are going to fix that and ensure that we've got the appropriate governance in place so that we've got a monitoring system that everyone can agree on.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Calgary-Bow.

2:40

Services for Seniors

Ms Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's clear that we are all concerned about the difficult economic times in our province and the impact on Albertans, especially on more vulnerable people like low-income seniors who live on strict incomes with little flexibility. To the Minister of Seniors and Housing: what is our government doing to protect vulnerable seniors and provide them with the financial and social support they need?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the hon. member for advocating on behalf of seniors. It's true that low-income seniors have restricted incomes and often face the challenge of dealing with limited funds. The Alberta seniors' benefit helps protect low-income seniors most in need by supplementing old age security and the guaranteed income supplement provided by the federal government. Alberta's benefit program supports about 150,000 low-income seniors each month here in Alberta. This summer we will be adjusting qualifying thresholds to ensure that seniors don't see a reduction or clawback of their benefits because the cost of living . . .

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

Ms Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many seniors have told me that remaining in their communities for as long as they choose or are able is vital to their independence and well-being, again to the same minister: how is the government helping seniors to stay in their own communities and remain independent?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many seniors have told me that remaining in their communities for as long as they choose or are able is vital to their independence and well-being. How is the government helping seniors stay in their own communities and remain independent? We're doing this through supporting them with programs like the seniors' home adaptation program, that supports seniors' staying in their home through home renovations that they couldn't afford otherwise, and we're very proud of ourselves for doing this.

Thank you.

Mr. Fildebrandt: A point of order.

The Speaker: The point of order is noted.
Second supplemental.

Ms Drever: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many seniors are struggling to find transportation to get to medical appointments, to buy groceries, and to get around their communities, back to the

Minister of Seniors and Housing: what is your ministry doing to help seniors with transportation challenges?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Sigurdson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that affordable and accessible transportation options help seniors remain independent and active in their communities. Seniors may need to get around town, go to medical appointments, run errands, or visit family and friends. I was pleased to announce in February the launch of the new tool kit to help communities build their own seniors' transportation programs. The Wainwright and District Handivan Society built a successful program that provides 150 rides per month for local seniors. It served as a pilot project for the tool kit. I encourage communities across Alberta to get involved.

Statement by the Speaker

Decorum

The Speaker: Members, one of the members of the Legislature pointed out to me and I have noted in the past that when members are speaking in the Members' Statements portion, there has been a practice, as I understand it, to not be disrespectful and disruptive. There have been conversations throughout the House on various occasions, and I'd just like to remind you of that practice. I believe it's a good one.

Members' Statements

(continued)

The Speaker: The Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Portage College Pipeline Training Centre

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm proud to rise today and recognize a world-class pipeline training facility in my constituency. Portage College's pipeline training centre is located on 130 acres near the village of Boyle. The college provides a live-in learning environment with a 40-person camp. Eventually the college hopes to accommodate as many as 300 students at this facility.

Portage College is currently in the design phase of a process loop, a pipeline track used to train workers by simulating operations, maintenance, loss and leaks, and design testing in a real-world environment. This project will make technology-based education available in the north and provide students with hands-on experience on an environmentally secured pipeline. The project is also the first of its kind in Canada and represents an estimated \$25 million investment.

Portage has an exemplary record when it comes to aboriginal engagement over their nearly 50-year history. In the college's heavy equipment operator program, which shares the same site as the pipeline college, approximately 75 per cent of the graduates have been aboriginal students. These students have an 85 per cent rate of posttraining employment. Seven First Nations and four Métis settlements were consulted on land use for the pipeline training college, and they have supported the project, with the Buffalo Lake Métis settlement being a charter partner in the site.

Portage College pipeline training centre not only trains Albertans for the economy of today and tomorrow, but it also makes sure that Alberta's pipelines workforce remains second to none in the world for technical ability and commitment to safety. I'm extremely proud that my hometown will be able to make this contribution to our province's and our nation's economies.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be a member of a party that stands up for pipelines, stands up for First Nations, and stands up for Albertans, and that's why I'm proud to support the Portage College pipeline training centre.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

Volunteers in Edmonton-South West

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This week is national volunteer appreciation week, and it's my privilege to rise today and talk about the amazing, hard-working people who volunteer in my constituency of Edmonton-South West. Their contributions can be especially felt in newer areas such as my constituency, which is experiencing such phenomenal growth. Parents and neighbours work hard every day to promote community development in our area, especially when it comes to gathering resources for building facilities like playgrounds in our neighbourhoods.

Mr. Speaker, Edmonton-South West currently has six schools, with another eight schools being slated to open in just the next two years. In these schools parent council groups have taken an active role in fundraising and in developing resources for their children. To give you just a little bit of an idea of how hard these parents work, it took the parent council of Sister Annata Brockman school over five years to raise enough money to build their playground, and the Bessie Nichols school group has spent the last four years fund raising for theirs.

Mr. Speaker, I really do want to take this opportunity to thank the Minister of Culture and Tourism for making funding available for playground and community projects through the community facility enhancement program grants and the CIP programs. Building a playground or a facility is expensive, and it takes years for these groups to raise the hundreds of thousands of dollars required for these services. These grants make our neighbourhoods and schools much more family friendly.

I want to thank all the volunteers of the community leagues that I represent as well. Edmonton-South West has Glastonbury, the Hamptons, Twin Brooks, Greater Windermere, and Blackmud Creek community leagues, that rely on countless volunteers to run programs, to raise funds for halls, playgrounds, sporting facilities, and other community activities. In Edmonton-South West we simply could not have achieved all that we have without support from these tireless, unsung heroes. I'm proud to dedicate my time today and honour all the volunteers that make Edmonton-South West the best place to live in Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Grain Rail Hopper Car Fleet

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertan and Canadian farmers are experiencing record harvest, but now they're worried about a new issue, a lack of railway hopper cars for their grain. There are 21,000 hopper cars for grain between our two railways; 9,000 of these cars are owned by the governments of Alberta, Saskatchewan, or Canada. Alberta bought 1,000 of these blue-and-yellow cars over 35 years ago with money from the heritage fund to ensure that Alberta farmers could get their crops to market. Those hopper cars also serve as rolling billboards for our province, advertising Alberta's productivity across the country and around North America.

CN and CP combined have 6,000 hopper cars of their own for grain. Those cars are forecast to reach the end of their useful life by 2020, only four short years from now. Between the years of 2022 and 2027 the 9,000 government-owned hopper cars, including Alberta's, will also reach the proverbial end of the line. Within 10 years, Mr. Speaker, there will only be 6,000 hopper cars left to move our grain unless orders for replacement cars begin to be placed soon. If they're not, we risk a situation where the hopper car fleet is reduced to 28 per cent of its current size at a time when crop yields are growing. There's no denying that the industry needs new hopper cars, but there is no certainty on who is responsible to replace them.

The longer we delay orders for new hopper cars, the longer they will take to make and deliver, which will put the livelihood of farmers at risk. One thing is certain, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry is in the perfect position to help bring all of the stakeholders together to find solutions on the best way forward for this critical issue. I encourage the minister to start these conversations now and stop this crisis in its tracks.

2:50 Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Bill 7 Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2016

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce first reading of Bill 7, the Electoral Boundaries Commission Amendment Act, 2016.

Bill 7 proposes amendments to the Electoral Boundaries Commission Act in order to authorize appointment of an Electoral Boundaries Commission on or before October 31, 2016, which is earlier than is currently allowed under this act, and to clarify the commission's authority to consider recent information respecting population that is not collected on a province-wide basis such as municipal population information. This information would be used along with the federal decennial census of the population and the more recent province-wide census.

A commission's role is to review existing electoral boundaries, hold public hearings, and make recommendations for the Legislative Assembly to consider. Under the current wording of the act the commission cannot be appointed before July 31, 2017. If the act is not amended to allow earlier appointment of the commission, there will not be enough time for new electoral boundaries to be drawn before the next general election. This change was necessitated as a result of the early election call.

Bill 7 also seeks to clarify the current section of the act dealing with information the commission must and may use when determining population in Alberta.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 7 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As chair of the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices and in accordance with section 22 of the Auditor General Act I would like to table five copies of the report by the Auditor General titled Report of the Auditor

General of Alberta April 2016 Education and Infrastructure: Systems to Manage the School-Building Program. Copies of this report are being distributed to all members today.

The Speaker: Hon. members, it's been requested by the Minister of Human Services that he would like to make a comment about a question that was asked earlier in the House. If I can do that now.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I'm sorry. Could you just wait a second?

Again, a sequence of events I might have missed. There was another item that the Clerk was to be drawing to. But now that you have the floor, hon. minister, let's proceed on it.

Member's Apology

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During question period the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills asked me an important question that certainly impacts the lives of many Albertans. He certainly as an elected representative has interest in that important issue. I may have misunderstood the question, and in response the reference to his personal interests was not appropriate, was not respectful, and I would like to apologize without any reservation.

Thank you.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you. I appreciate your apology, and I accept it without reservation.

The Speaker: There are, I believe, two points of order. The first one was raised by the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Point of Order Factual Accuracy

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today in question period members of the government side – I guess I should begin with that I'm rising on Standing Order 23, in this case 23(i): "imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member." During question period today and, in fact, for a large number of days in the past number of weeks we've heard government members stand up and spread untruths about the Leader of the Opposition, and I could no longer stand idly by while these untruths and statements, that are not based on fact, were made.

The government likes to say that while the Leader of the Opposition spent time in Ottawa, 10 years, that he did nothing. These are the exact words that they like to use. Mr. Speaker, nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, over a 10-year period, between 2006 and 2015, there were a number of major pipelines that were built in Canada, including Keystone phase 1, Hardisty, Alberta, to Illinois in June 2010. The Keystone pipeline phase 1 delivers oil from Hardisty, Alberta, over 3,400 kilometres, or 2,147 miles, for those following along at home, to the junction at Steele City, Nebraska.

The Alberta Clipper was April 1, 2010. Alberta Clipper, also known as Enbridge line 67, is an oil pipeline in North America. It is owned and operated by Enbridge and is part of an extensive Enbridge pipeline system. The pipeline runs from Hardisty, Alberta, in Canada, to Superior, Wisconsin, in the United States, integrating the company's Canadian oil sands pipeline system with the Lakehead system in the United States. Construction of the pipeline began in the summer of 2008. The pipeline was placed into service on April 1, 2010. The first shipment was moved October

2010. It has pump stations at Hardisty, Alberta; Kerrobert, Glenboro, Viking, Clearbrook, and Deer River, Minnesota. The diameter of the pipe is 36 inches. That's 910 millimetres.

The major pipeline expansions in the time while that government . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, can you speed it up a bit?

Mr. Cooper: I'm clearly making the point that they have been saying untruths about the Leader of Opposition. That's disrupting the House.

There is additional expansion of the Kinder Morgan anchor loop, the Trans Mountain expansion, Enbridge line 9 reversal, and so on.

The Speaker: Hon. member, could you speak to the . . .

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, what happens is that in this House disorder is created by that side when they spread untruths and, some would go as far as to say, lies about the Leader of the Opposition doing nothing during his time in Ottawa. I think it's clearly an untruth and should not be spoken in this place any longer.

The Speaker: Are there any other parties?

The Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member. I've been listening to him very carefully, but I do not hear in what he is saying any argument for a point of order. This is a matter of debate over the facts. The fact of the matter is that when he was in Alberta, the Leader of Opposition didn't get done over decades something that he is criticizing us for not getting done in ten months, and that is actually a pipeline to tidewater.

Another, I think, point we need to be aware of, Mr. Speaker, that I know that you've ruled on before, is that a point of order can't be made for something that happened weeks and weeks in the past. I don't think that argument is being made . . .

Some Hon. Members: It happened today.

Mr. Carlier: It just wasn't today. It was, you know, previously as well, the matter that we are arguing.

As a matter of the fact, the Leader of the Official Opposition, you know, wasn't able to while in government get a pipeline to tidewater, and we stick by that. It's matter that we're debating, and it's matter of facts. It should not be a point of order.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

3:00

The Speaker: Are there any other members who would like to speak to the point of order raised by the Opposition House Leader?

I, in fact, am provided with a copy of the Blues with the comment that was made, as I understand, that was the point of order that was raised. "That member over there worked on a plan for 10 years and got nowhere." That was the phrase that I think the member was addressing. In my opinion, this is somewhat similar to the issue that we dealt with yesterday. It doesn't appear that this is really a point of order; it's, rather, a difference of opinion. I would again draw the House's attention to page 510 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, the second paragraph. This is a dispute amongst members on the facts surrounding the issue, more a question of debate, not a point of order.

To that end, the Member for Strathmore-Brooks, I believe, also had a point of order. Is that correct?

Point of Order Anticipation

Mr. Cooper: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll rise on the point of order that the Member for Strathmore-Brooks called towards the end of question period. I specifically speak to a similar section in the standing orders, Standing Order 23. The letter in this case is (e), anticipation: "contrary to good parliamentary practice, any matter already on the Order Paper or on notice for consideration on that day."

During the end of question period the Member for Calgary-Bow rose and asked – and I don't have the Blues in front of me – something very, very similar, asking specifically about programs that the government had announced on seniors' housing issues, which is Bill 5, and the name of the bill escapes me at this point in time.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Bill 5.

Mr. Cooper: Bill 5, the Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act.

It's my belief that the member was asking specifically about programs that were announced in Bill 5, which is on the Order Paper to be debated later today. Under Standing Order 23(e), anticipation: "contrary to good parliamentary practice, any matter already on the Order Paper or on notice for consideration on that day." Clearly, Bill 5 is on the Order Paper for today. She was speaking about Bill 5. I believe that the question should be ruled out of order.

The Speaker: The Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the Opposition House Leader. On this matter I have a tendency to agree with him, so on behalf of the Minister of Seniors and Housing I would offer an apology and do what we can to endeavour that that will not happen again.

Thank you.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the apology and will consider the matter dealt with.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Orders of the Day Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 6 Securities Amendment Act, 2016

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

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am pleased to rise today to move second reading of Bill 6, the Securities Amendment Act, 2016.

I'd like to take this opportunity to say a few words about this bill and our government's approach to securities regulation. As members of this Assembly are likely aware, our government recently announced that we will continue to regulate our own capital markets right here in Alberta instead of joining the national securities regulator. [some applause] That's a first from that side.

We will be sticking with the Alberta option, with our first-class provincial regulator, the Alberta Securities Commission. We firmly believe that our unique capital markets, driven by the enormous needs of the resource sector, are best served by a street-level

regulator in Alberta, a regulator that knows the industry and can provide local oversight right here in Alberta, not thousands of kilometres away on Bay Street.

Our government was also pleased to announce a new chair of the ASC, Stan Magidson, an accomplished securities expert with roots right here in Alberta. Stan is an excellent choice to lead the ASC as our government ensures that we have a robust framework for capital formation while ensuring strong investor protection. Stan is an Albertan.

This bill, the Securities Amendment Act, 2016, is an important piece of legislation. It codifies our government's commitment to ensuring that our capital markets are well regulated and done so within the framework of a provincially led regulator.

As members of this Assembly are well aware, the securities landscape is becoming more complex, sophisticated, and international in scope every year. It is being driven by technological change like never before. Therefore, our system of securities regulation must keep pace. We must keep pace with evolving international standards and global regulator reform initiatives.

As part of the government's commitment to effective oversight, we have been working with our partner regulators in other provinces to create a more harmonized regulatory framework across the country. The proposed amendments in this bill will further update and harmonize our laws and meet international standards while still respecting our decision to continue with a provincially led regulator in the ASC.

Before I address the most important aspects of the bill, I should state that it is common for the Securities Act to be amended every year. It is just good governance. The act has been amended every year since 2003 with the exception of 2012. Amending this act will ensure that we have effective investor protection, strong market integrity, and an efficient system of capital formation.

Now let me draw the members' attention to the more important items in this bill. First, the bill will update definitions of a derivative, a reporting issuer, and a security in section 1 of the act. Updating the definition of a derivative will allow the Securities Commission to regulate hybrid products, those with characteristics of a security and a derivative, more effectively and on a harmonized basis across the country. Updating the reporting issuer definition will eliminate a gap in section 2 of the act as the current definition is not necessarily complete, and updating the definition of a security will ensure that a security that is prescribed by rule to be a derivative is not also captured in the definition of a security. These are the common-sense reforms to this Securities Act. They are supported by the ASC, regulators across the country, and, I hope, by all members of this House.

Second, Mr. Speaker, amendments to sections 29 and 42 of the act will allow our regulator to act more quickly when there is risk of potential illegal activity. Currently the ASC is required to follow the *Alberta Rules of Court* notice requirements before a witness can be summoned to appear before a hearing or an investigative interview. While these rules are appropriate for civil matters, the 20-day notice requirements are just too slow when it comes to the rapid nature of our capital markets. Therefore, the ASC is proposing a shorter time period of a 10-day notice period, and our government agrees.

Third, Mr. Speaker, this legislation will amend the wording of the halt-trade provision of section 33. The halt-trade order is a new tool and one that ensures investor protection. It allows the ASC to quickly and temporarily halt trading in securities.

Fourth, Mr. Speaker, the act proposes an amendment to section 42 which will allow a justice of the peace to issue search warrants rather than a Court of Queen's Bench judge. This will allow the

ASC to move quickly again and free up the courts so they can deal with more pressing and substantive matters.

Fifth, Mr. Speaker, the act will update regulation provisions related to exchanges, self-regulatory organizations, trade repositories, and clearing agencies. These updates will make the provisions more consistent and easier to understand and are part of this government's commitment to keeping securities regulation current.

Sixth, Mr. Speaker, as part of this government's mission to harmonize regulatory provisions across the country, through our work with the CSA we are proposing changes to part 17 of the act related to civil liability provisions.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, this act will make amendments to the Lieutenant Governor in Council regulation-making powers to assist Canada in meeting the G-20 commitments relating to the use and trading of derivatives. This is a fine example of how we can work together with other regulators across the country to meet national and international standards while maintaining a provincially led regulator here in Alberta.

3:10

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, we're on the right track. We're sticking with our provincial regulator, but we're also ensuring that we have a world-class regulatory framework. Alberta is doing its part and more to ensure that we are protecting investors, and we are ensuring that the Alberta spirit will continue to thrive with one of the world's most vibrant and efficient capital markets.

It is in the interests of all Albertans that we adopt this bill. I ask for all members of the House to support the proposed amendments.

Thank you very much for listening.

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

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 6, the Securities Amendment Act, 2016. This might be one of the rare times where I find myself mostly in agreement with the Minister of Finance. Even a broken clock is right twice a day. I will congratulate and thank the minister for standing, I think with all-party support in this House, in support of an independent, Alberta-based Alberta securities regulator to ensure that Albertans control their own financial destiny right here. This may not be the most exciting and colourful bill we've debated before the House, but it is an important one nonetheless.

Securities and derivatives are complex financial vehicles. Most people aren't familiar with what exactly they are or how they work. A show of hands from members in this House as to who here has ever bought or sold a security or derivative.

An Hon. Member: I don't think you actually get to do that.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Well, perhaps I'm not allowed.

Well, it is a rather small minority of the House who have traded securities or derivatives, so for the record I would like to lay out exactly what we're talking about here. A security is a financial instrument that represents an ownership position in a publicly traded corporation, or stock; a creditor relationship with a governmental body or corporation, a bond; or rights to ownership as represented by an option. A security is a negotiable financial instrument that represents some type of financial value. The company or entity that issues the security is known as the issuer. In other words, when you invest in stocks and bonds and mutual funds, you are buying securities.

A derivative is a security with a price that is dependent upon or derived from one or more underlying assets. The derivative itself is a contract between two or more parties based upon the asset or assets. Its value is determined by fluctuations in the underlying

asset. The most common underlying assets include stocks, bonds, commodities, currencies, interest rates, and market indexes. In other words, derivatives are not real, but you can buy them. It's like making a bet on someone else's bet, if you will, Mr. Speaker.

Bill 6 is talking about the regulation of our capital markets here, and the market works best when everyone is playing by the same rules. In capitalism the market thrives on innovation and ingenuity. What would happen if we took a security and bundled it with a derivative and then sold this hybrid investment vehicle? What would this hybrid be? A security? A derivative? Is it neither? Is it both? This is what the core of Bill 6 is about, and may I say that it is a significantly less exciting Bill 6 than the last one this House debated.

The Alberta Securities Act is being amended in order to accommodate these rather exotic financial products of hybrid securities and derivatives. This is in keeping with the passport system of the 13 provincial and territorial securities regulators to enable harmonization across Canada given what we do not have and Alberta does not want, one single national securities regulator. It is also in keeping with international agreements that Canada has made with the G-20 on the international financial system. Alberta's investors need these amendments in order to ensure the Alberta Securities Commission is able to regulate and police these products and protect consumers from fraud.

Now, besides changing these definitions, the Securities Commission will also be allowed to go to a justice of the peace to obtain a search warrant for an investigation instead of waiting to see a judge of the Court of Queen's Bench. This change aligns with the criminal law process. In addition, there will be some changes and definitions amended.

Wildrose has approached a number of stakeholders in the financial services industry, who have reported no concerns with Bill 6 but have encouraged additional amendments to the Securities Act to further protect consumers. Securities laws can be very difficult for the layperson to follow. They can be very dry and boring, yet they are fundamental to our capital markets, that we enjoy and rely on to produce wealth and prosperity in this province.

We need to align ourselves with our provincial and territorial cousins, and we need to be able to regulate the various products that the market engineers in order to protect consumers. But we also want to make sure that with every change we are enhancing a competitive advantage for Alberta's investors and encouraging more investment here. Given the complexity of these issues and our desire to fully understand and assess them, we believe the minister should consider our recommendation that all bills go to committee and allow us to have a little more time to go through this carefully with expert witnesses to ensure that we are getting it right for Alberta's securities market.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that members will consider this referral to be in the best intention, to make this bill right. The Wildrose supports the principles of it, in fact even the contents of it, but we hope that when a member of the Official Opposition comes forward soon with a motion for referral, all members of this House will support it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise today to speak to the government's Bill 6, Securities Amendment Act, 2016. I suspect that we may have more points of agreement on this particular bill than the last Bill 6 that was put forward by this government. My caucus doesn't expect that there will be people from all corners of Alberta standing on the steps

of the Legislature, carrying placards that say "Kill Bill 6" in this instance.

Now, on its surface this is a housekeeping bill, generally administrative. The proposed changes would update the legislation and keep Alberta operating in a co-ordinated way with other Canadian provinces. It speaks to a certain need in the world of securities. Most sections pertain solely to updating and harmonizing definitions. More substantively, the proposed legislation before us today looks to authorize a justice of the peace to issue search warrants under the Securities Act; this instead of a judge of the Court of Queen's Bench, as is the case in criminal law. This move would shorten the time taken to potentially catch criminals in the act.

The market has put forward something as it pertains to securities and derivatives, and it appears that the regulators are just catching up. But given the subject matter and the economic climate that we find ourselves in, this bill certainly deserves proper scrutiny. The reality is that the securities regulatory landscape, not just across Canada but globally, has become more complex, and it has become more sophisticated. It is understandable that the government would wish to undertake a regular view, a regular update of its securities laws in order to simply ensure that the securities order of the regulatory system reflects the realities of today's markets and then that it stays in line with international standards and global regulatory reform initiatives. So it makes sense that in section 1 of the bill we seek to update the definition of a derivative, the definition of a reporting issuer, and the definition of a security.

But, Mr. Speaker, the fact is that over the last two decades the focus of Canada's securities regulatory system has also been changing. I believe that this is an important context whenever we are discussing any proposed changes to the Securities Act. For better or worse, the regulatory environment has in many Canadian jurisdictions, Mr. Speaker, been tightening. For a time regulatory authorities, well, in most Canadian jurisdictions, anyway, only resorted to regulation when a clear problem presented itself, one that the market itself could not resolve. Now this has been replaced by a new approach – a new approach – that resorts to regulation first before a clear need arises, a system wherein a solution is identified before there is a manifest problem.

3:20

For these reasons, legislation of this nature, however much it's a technical, housekeeping bill, should not be waved through the legislative process without asking proper questions. It seems to me that we should have the opportunity to put questions to officials from Finance or Treasury Board. It is not adequate to simply ram this legislation through this place.

I would hope that the government is able to answer this question: how do the proposed changes to this legislation compare to other Canadian jurisdictions specifically, and how is Alberta's securities climate taken into consideration here? Part of the Alberta advantage stemmed from the fact that Alberta had its own securities regulator and made decisions conducive to a good environment.

The role of this place we sit in today is not to give rubber stamps to whatever proposed legislation members of the government and their ministries have put forward but to give whatever has been put forward the due scrutiny that it deserves. Members, the government should refer this bill to the proper standing committee. The relevant departmental officials should be able to speak to this bill, this bill that contains very specific and complex suggested protections for those that invest. It would be helpful to have other subject matter experts speak to this bill. This is not only for matters pertaining to this bill but more broadly than that.

Mr. Speaker, I've had the privilege to represent my constituents in the great riding of Little Bow for just about one year now. I have to be honest. The frequency with which the government lets proposed legislation receive due scrutiny in the proper standing committee is astonishingly minimal. What we have witnessed since we first sat in this House as members of the 29th Legislature is a government that has demonstrated a profound disregard for doing due diligence on their legislative initiatives. We saw this with the last Bill 6 that was put forward in this House. Imagine the mess that could have been avoided if they'd actually done their due diligence beforehand and actually bothered to consult with farmers and all those affected. Regrettably, this government's inability to properly consult with Albertans and those most affected by prospective legislation has poisoned the well for anything they're trying to put forward.

Mr. Speaker, it's difficult not to be skeptical. When this government is in a hurry, it is amazing how fast they can pass a piece of legislation. Consider Bill 4, which pertained to essential services. Very impassioned speeches were given throughout this House from members across that had strong opinions on the content or potential content of that bill. It was introduced on a Thursday, which is the last day of the week that we sit in this House. By the end of the following Thursday it had passed its final vote. Alternatively, when this government is not in a hurry, they have a way of dragging legislation out. We saw this with Bill 1, which was allegedly a job-creation bill, that the government paraded as a priority. It withered for a month on the Order Paper.

Mr. Speaker, Alberta's recent economic situation, as we all know, is startling. In many ways this is the worst economic situation in a generation. This proposed legislation before us today deals with securities and investment considerations for Alberta at a time when we have before us a shaken economic climate. We owe it to ourselves to be familiar with the subject matter and speak in the best interests of our constituents.

While speaking about this proposed legislation, one point that I do want to acknowledge is that I appreciate, as should all members of this House, that we are able to have this debate here today in our Alberta Legislature. Successive federal governments in Ottawa have been seeking to establish a single, centralized regulator. It is something they've been trying to do since the '60s in one form or another.

Looking forward now, it is integral that Alberta develop its own expertise when it comes to Alberta's securities regulation, something that helps build Alberta's own financial services sector. Each of us as members of this place would likely have significantly less information to deal with if matters pertaining to securities were not made here in the Legislative Assembly of Alberta and at the Alberta Securities Commission. Discussions about security amendment acts such as this would be more difficult if they were done through long-distance first ministers' conferences, held regularly probably down east somewhere, in which Alberta would be but one voice among several.

Recently Bill Rice, the former chair and CEO of the Alberta Securities Commission, addressed this issue, and he said, I quote: I believe the independence of the regulation of that territory becomes more important when times are tough because certain adaptations can be made, local imagination can be used, and certain changes or differentiations can be undertaken in the province to accommodate difficult circumstances. End of quote. I would say that the fact of that matter is, Mr. Speaker, that Albertans know Alberta best. I'm sure that the members on the government benches can sympathize with this concept given what went on at the convention of their federal organization here just this past weekend.

Alberta governments of all stripes have stood proudly in favour of Alberta's jurisdictional right to regulate its own securities. Therefore, it was a relief, quite honestly, to see the current Finance minister do exactly the same thing. This is not just an isolated Alberta concern. Six years ago Alberta's Finance minister and Quebec's Finance minister stood up jointly to Ottawa's attempts to centralize security regulators in Canada. Given the inclination of Ottawa to pursue a single, centralized regulator, we should not take what we have for granted.

If we are simply to fire through this House the matters pertaining to securities regulations without the proper scrutiny, are we not helping to make the case for the next attempt by Ottawa to encroach on this matter? We make the case for Alberta to maintain its own regulator not through complacency but by having a successful and thriving system, a system where we maintain a vigilant eye, recognizing both what's best for the market and what is needed by international obligations.

Accordingly, I strongly urge the government to ensure that this bill finds its way to the appropriate standing committee before it becomes law. After all, when it comes to our securities regulator, we want Alberta to be an example to other provinces. This is relevant and should be at the top of our minds in any situation where we find ourselves with a proposed change to the Securities Act such as the one in front of us today. Having a routine housekeeping bill in front of us should never be an excuse to not give legislation the due scrutiny it deserves.

Any discussion about securities in Alberta should be seen in the broader context of the ongoing debate on a national securities regulator. The new federal Finance minister made it clear in January that the new federal government supports a national securities regulator. It was something they did not campaign on, something they had no mention of in their platform. This was, of course, also supported by previous federal governments and supported by many in provincial jurisdictions as well. To this effect we have British Columbia, Ontario, Saskatchewan, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Yukon, who last year announced a draft capital markets act, one that would form the basis of a new co-operative regulatory system. This means that Alberta's geographic neighbours on both sides as well as Canada's largest province, an Atlantic province, and a territory are all on board with a centralized approach. As that plan moves from draft to reality, there will be an increased pressure in Confederation upon Alberta to not hold out.

3:30

Again, Mr. Speaker, we make the case for Alberta to maintain its own regulator not through complacency but by having a successful and thriving system. We do that by paying attention, by giving scrutiny where needed to any proposed change to the Securities Act.

Mr. Speaker, we saw in this House just yesterday a private member's bill that some in the House suggested, firstly, had not seen any consultation with the industry that the bill would affect and, secondly, contained verbiage that industry was offended by. We saw that this House can and indeed did refer that bill to committee for the proper input and scrutiny that it requires before pushing that particular legislation through this House. Shouldn't a matter as delicate as securities undergo the same examination?

With that, Mr. Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity.

The Speaker: Any hon. members under 29(2)(a)? Please proceed.

Mr. Orr: Yes, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to both respond and maybe ask a question. I think this is an extremely important issue in spite of the arcane boringness of it all in some ways. Truthfully, securities markets transact millions if not billions

of dollars a day or even in an hour nowadays, and this is an issue of the highest risk to Albertans, to Alberta pension funds, to Albertans' savings, to seniors, to anyone who might be invested in the market.

While I am encouraged to see some language here with regard to consequences for those who engage in criminal activity in the markets, I'm still a little bit concerned about issues of prevention. I think it's important to remember that this crime can actually be some of the most costly and most destructive of the criminal activity that is out there. We only need to recall Enron and some of the subprime mortgage scandals and other things that have been in recent history. So I do have a concern.

I appreciate the member's comments with regard to the importance of consulting experts in the field. I guess I want to push that a little further and ask the member: do you not think it would be important to have market risk experts review not only the legislation but also the systems that are in place, particularly with regard to the fact that most transactions today are millisecond software transactions? We need to ensure that we have the highest level of software encryption to work on this issue of prevention, not having to deal with consequences after it's too late.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to my friend to my right. Yes, of course. And I think all members of this House would agree one hundred per cent that most transactions are probably done electronically in today's day and age. The more security you can have to protect securities would be something that's advantageous.

I definitely want to cautiously support Bill 6, but as the member to my right said, having more eyes scrutinize any bill is always advantageous and something that this side of the House or at least this party certainly recommends, seeing more legislation passed through committee without going through the House in a hurried manner.

With that, I'll leave that alone. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Any other hon. members under 29(2)(a)?

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's always a privilege to stand in this House and address all the members of the Assembly. It's quite an honour, I would say, and I'm sure that the members from across the way completely agree with me. It's wonderful that, you know, we're here discussing Bill 6, the Securities Amendment Act, 2016, and that we have agreement yet again. So I want to thank the members across the way for that.

I would also like to share with them perhaps something that they don't know about me personally, and that's that, you know, when I graduated from university, I actually ended up working at RBC Dominion Securities as a marketing associate. I had the opportunity to work with many stockbrokers there at RBC Dominion Securities and learn a great deal about how markets work. It was at that time that it really became imperative to me that securities regulation – at the end of the day what we're talking about and what we're focusing on is ensuring effective investor protection, number one – right? – ensuring strong market integrity, and ensuring an efficient system of capital formation. So I'm glad that the members across the way agree with Bill 6 at least in principle. As they like to say: I agree in principle.

This bill will continue to regulate the province's capital markets right here in Alberta instead of joining the national securities regulator. I mean, I think on that we were in complete agreement, on no to a centralized federal regulator, which is interesting

because, you know, my understanding is that it was the Conservatives at the federal level that were trying to push this through, as I'm sure that the members across the way will agree, right? So this bill will stick to the Alberta option, with the first-class provincial regulator, the Alberta Securities Commission, as the unique capital markets, driven by the enormous needs of the resource sector, are best served with a street-level regulator. As the Minister of Finance stated in his opening remarks, a new chair of the Alberta Securities Commission was appointed, Stan Magidson, an accomplished securities expert with roots right here in Alberta.

It's important to update this piece of legislation to keep pace with a rapidly changing international market, as we have also agreed upon. In order to ensure that Alberta's securities regulator system reflects and evolves with the realities of today's international regulatory landscape, Alberta must undertake a continuous review and updating of its securities law. As the Minister of Finance also stated in his opening remarks, it's common for the Securities Act to be amended every year. It's just good governance. So there's already a practice of amending this act on an annual basis as we go forward.

Hence, we're creating some common-sense reforms to the Securities Act. The bill will propose to bring amendments in seven key areas: firstly, to update the definitions of "derivative" and "reporting issuer" and "security" in section 1 of the act, as has already been stated; secondly, to amend sections 29 and 42 of the act to allow our regulator to act more quickly when there is a risk of potential illegal activity by proposing a shorter notice period from 20 to 10 days; thirdly, to update the wording of the halt trade provision in section 33 to ensure investor protection; fourthly, to amend section 42, which will allow a justice of the peace to issue search warrants rather than a Court of Queen's Bench judge, as has already been stated by the Member for Little Bow; fifthly, to update provisions in regulations related to exchanges, self-regulatory organizations, trade repositories, and clearing agencies; sixthly, to update part 17 of the act, related to civil liability provisions, to harmonize regulatory provisions across the country.

Here's where I'd like to stress something really important. The Member for Little Bow asked a question: well, how does Alberta compare to other jurisdictions across our great federation? The truth is that Alberta is actually the leader when it comes to securities regulation here in the country. Something to be proud of, right? Indeed.

3:40

Lastly, it will bring amendments to the Lieutenant Governor in Council's regulation-making powers to assist Canada in meeting its G-20 commitments relating to the use and trading of derivatives. We've been working with our partner regulators in other provinces to create a more harmonized regulatory framework across the country, as I've already discussed. These amendments will update and harmonize our laws, meeting international standards, and uphold our decision to continue with a provincially led regulator in the Alberta Securities Commission. Alberta made a commitment with other provinces and territories and their securities regulators in 2004 to the ongoing support of the modernization, streamlining, and harmonization of securities law in Canada, and since then Alberta has typically reviewed and updated the securities laws on an annual basis, as has already been stated.

It's so wonderful to see the members across the way agree with what's being stated in this act. But, again, we've come to that crossroad, where they want to refer it to committee. I understand that you would want to have a consulting process in order to really look into it. I believe the Member for Little Bow called this a housekeeping bill. I wouldn't necessarily refer to it that way. We

have industry experts not only from Alberta but in other provincial and territorial jurisdictions that are constantly working on bringing forward new recommendations so that they can be introduced into what eventually becomes the act. This is ongoing practice not only here in our own jurisdiction, but we're working with others across the land.

I would recommend to all the members of this House that they strongly support the Securities Amendment Act, 2016, and that we pass it. In future if there are more recommendations, they can be brought forward again in another year. We're ready to move forward on this, and I strongly recommend to all the members to vote in favour.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there any questions of the member under 29(2)(a)?

Hearing none, the Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise on this bill. It's the Securities Amendment Act, 2016, which is Bill 6. The last time we had a Bill 6, it was a little more action-packed than this particular rendition.

Mr. Speaker, when the Finance minister stood in the House and introduced it, I think you heard people from all sides of the House pounding in approval because, basically, there's general agreement that this is a good idea, and I'm not going to vary from that. I'm just going to make a few comments because I think it's important.

A good thing that needs to be said – and you can't overemphasize it, in my mind, Mr. Speaker – is that there is an element here that will see investors receive slightly more protection in regard to misleading prospectuses, and that is important. It can't be overstated because not all who invest – you know, it's been said to me that if you put money in the stock market, then you are to some degree gambling. But you should be protected by having true and accurate information when you place that bet on a company or a group of companies. That is a protection for consumers that can't be taken lightly, and I think this bill is true to that.

It also allows for more ability for the government to act faster when they see something that looks suspicious, which I think is important. I think that's a good improvement by the government in this particular bill. It enables cabinet to make regulations around derivatives. While I'm not expecting anything bad, as long as they do that right, that's a good thing. Again, there's no subtext of a negative there. I'm just saying that as long as cabinet is careful, then that can be a good thing. It does explicitly point out some minor details of the Securities Commission's implied powers, clarifies the liabilities for parties issuing misrepresentative prospectuses and responsibilities in order to receive protections for correcting incorrect prospectuses. It clarifies the limitation period for purchasers of misrepresented securities to take action, which I think is important. If you happen to be – and, hopefully, Albertans in the future won't be, but some in the past surely have been – a victim, somebody that invested money on a prospectus that was not accurate, either through an inadvertent error or a fraudulent misrepresentation, either way, having a clarification about when you can take action on that is important, so I thank the government for that, too.

It also clarifies liabilities and penalties for insider trading. The sad truth, Mr. Speaker, is that while Alberta's system is a leader in Canada, as the member opposite said, we have not been without bad actors from time to time in Alberta. There are certainly a couple of shining examples of where Albertans lost money because they were taken to the cleaners by fraudulent misrepresentation. So for

clarifying the penalties and the liabilities for insider trading, again I'll say: good work. It's something surely worth doing.

It repeals an unproclaimed part of the act that the previous government passed in 2011 in regard to definitions of a clearing agency. I would say that since the previous government between the period of 2011 and early 2015 didn't see fit to proclaim it and the definition that served Albertans well not only up to 2011 but thereafter until today is still in place, I don't see any harm from the government getting rid of the unproclaimed portion. That might be one of those things that falls under the category of housekeeping, and there's someone in my life that would tell me that housekeeping matters. If you leave one coffee cup on the counter, Mr. Speaker, that's probably not a big issue, but if you do it constantly, it soon gets to the point where it's a problem that's not so easily solved.

While I will call some of the changes in the legislation housekeeping, I will try to make it clear while I'm standing here that that in no way demeans those changes, because if it's something that is better for the future, it's better to make those housekeeping changes before one or more of them create a bigger problem. While it may not make the headline on the evening news, it is nonetheless important to keep up with these things as they crop up and as those people that look at legislation take the time to discover them and recommend those improvements.

The bill does nothing, in our view, that would promote inbound investment. On the other hand, I'm not sure that that would necessarily be the proper thing for this bill to do. This bill's purpose, this legislation's purpose, is to make sure the financial transactions that take place are accurate, pure, true, and fair to all involved. That's a good thing.

Overall, I congratulate the government on this. The only not entirely positive point that I will make is that this is important because it does clear the way for people to invest in our province, and investment in here is what creates jobs in the future for Albertans. Of course, we've talked in this House, all of us, about how there are 100,000-odd Albertans that are out of a job right now, and investment really matters. Investment loves certainty. Investment loves honesty. Investment loves the rule of law. Accuracy and the rule of law I think are supported and bolstered by this legislation and even the changes from today. Some of the benefit of new investment coming in here may wait until there's a government in place in the future that does other things outside of legislation to promote investment more so than the current government has. So Albertans might have to wait for those benefits, but that doesn't change the fact that this piece of legislation the government is putting in place is a good thing even if there are other issues.

3:50

Mr. Speaker, overall, I have to say that I think it's a positive event, what we have here. I think protecting the security of Albertans who invest and protecting the security of people from outside of Alberta that choose to invest within our province should never be taken lightly even though this bill may be in the top five or six this year under the boring category. Nonetheless, it's still important. Important doesn't have to be exciting because when you're investing and you're talking about investing legally, none of us wants to be the investor when the rules make it exciting because then somebody gets hurt, and then somebody who doesn't deserve to lose their money loses their money.

On that note, I will say thank you to the government for this boring bill. Thank you for keeping it boring. I think that's the right thing to do in this instance. I think that in this instance that's a compliment, and I hope the government accepts it as such.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will stop talking.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills, do you have a question under 29(2)(a), or are you speaking to it?

Mr. Kleinsteuber: My apologies. I am speaking to it.

The Speaker: Please proceed.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise here today to speak to Bill 6, the Securities Amendment Act. This bill signals our commitment to the continuous improvement of Canada's existing securities regulation system. The changes in this act will update and further harmonize Alberta's securities law with the securities laws in other provincial jurisdictions in Canada. The bill will enhance investor protection, minimize systemic risk, and promote the operation of a fair and effective Alberta capital market.

Mr. Speaker, our local regulator understands our local market. This has been and will continue to be an advantage to Albertans. There is value in having a street-level regulator, a regulator that is on the ground where the activity is taking place. With this bill we are committing to stick with the Alberta option and with our first-class regulator, the Alberta Securities Commission. Alberta deserves and is best served by a local regulator who understands our unique capital markets and who understands the enormous capital needs of our resource sector. Let me clarify that our government will not be joining the national securities regulator, and we will continue to govern and regulate our capital markets right here in Alberta.

As we stick with the Alberta option, our government has also recently appointed a new CEO of the ASC to lead our world-class regulator. Stan Magidson is an accomplished securities expert and has deep roots in this province. We are confident that under his leadership Alberta will continue to have one of the most vibrant, innovative, and well-regulated capital markets in the world.

In closing, let me add that as we continue moving forward with the ASC, the government is committed to ensuring that our capital markets work efficiently and in tandem with those in other provinces. Therefore, this bill will continue to modernize and harmonize our securities laws with those of other provinces right across the country, and we will continue to work with other provinces through the Canadian Securities Administrators to modernize and harmonize.

Mr. Speaker, I'll be supporting this bill. It's a strong piece of legislation that ensures we can continue to effectively regulate our world-class capital markets. I strongly encourage all members to do the same.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Under 29(2)(a), the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to rise in the Assembly to discuss an important piece of legislation. There's nothing more riveting and engaging than hearing the Member for Little Bow, with his silky smooth voice, speaking about such an important piece of legislation.

I think that one thing we've seen here today is some agreement upon many parts of this legislation, and if the former government did things well, this was probably one of them, when it comes to having this securities legislation amended on a very regular basis to ensure that we are remaining as current as possible and to be addressing the challenges at hand.

Having said that, shortly after the election, about a year ago, the Official Opposition proposed some changes to the way the Assembly works. While there is widespread agreement on the vast majority of this particular bill, there certainly are a few nuances,

some might say uniqueness, around a couple of the clauses in this bill. I think it's important that on every piece of legislation there is the opportunity for experts in the field to provide feedback and education to members of this Assembly so that they can be assured that, in fact, everything that is presented is exactly as can be expected, that there are not unanticipated consequences or unintended consequences of legislation like this, and that we have a full and robust debate.

In that document from approximately a year ago we proposed the need for a change to our democratic process here in Alberta that would allow for more pieces of legislation to be studied at committee. In addition to the items that we agree on in the legislation, the other thing that I believe we can all agree on is that this piece of legislation and certainly securities and the regulation of those is a very complex and technical field that not all members of the Assembly have the benefit of experience on that the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie does. When it comes to his previous employment at RBC Dominion Securities, I wasn't sure in his remarks how many times he was going to be able to work that in, but I commend him for his efforts while he was there.

Given that we don't all have that background and a fundamental belief on this side of the House that the work of committees is valuable work – in fact, we had an acknowledgment from many members on the government side of the House just yesterday on the importance of committee. The Government House Leader indicated just yesterday that

we have the opportunity to refer a bill to a standing committee, which provides a little more flexibility. It allows the committee, if it wishes, to hear from the public or to hear from stakeholders that may be affected by the bill and to make amendments that could improve the bill.

I couldn't agree with the hon. Government House Leader more. I think that that's probably something we should do in this case. Now, he was speaking yesterday specifically to Bill 203, but the principle remains the same, Mr. Speaker.

I want to continue quoting from *Hansard* from yesterday. "I want to just indicate to all hon. members that I would encourage them to support the referral motion that has been moved by the hon. House leader of the Official Opposition." I do make it a bit of a habit to move this particular motion, and that's because I believe that this is important legislation and that value can be added.

4:00

Now, typically speaking, and often under the former government, while I am willing to heap praise where it's necessary, I'll also point out some shortcomings. While, typically speaking, in this Chamber committee was the place where bills went to die – we certainly saw that in the past with the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler's Bill 203 – I don't believe that that was the intention yesterday when we sent Bill 203 to committee. We've seen in the past the former government send bills to committee that became too contentious or a challenge, and they went there forever. So in light of that and the recognition that this is important legislation that needs to be passed this year, I've also included a timeline in which the committee could and should report back.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move an amendment, and if it's fine with you, I'll have that distributed and continue while that's happening.

The Speaker: Please proceed.

Mr. Cooper: Notice of Amendment. Bill 6, Securities Amendment Act, 2016. Mr. Cooper to move that the motion for second reading of Bill 6, Securities Amendment Act, 2016, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 6, Securities Amendment Act, 2016, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship in accordance with Standing Order 74.2 and that the committee report back to the Assembly no later than October 31, 2016, if the Assembly is then sitting or, if it is not then sitting, within 15 days after the commencement of the next sitting.

Mr. Speaker, here we have an opportunity to send an important piece of legislation through to committee, a reasonable timeline that doesn't add any undue stress to the work of the Resource Stewardship Committee and still allows the legislation to be passed this year. In fact, October 31 is currently the first day of the next scheduled sitting. The amendment does provide some flexibility should the House not be sitting on October 31 but then allows the committee to report back to the Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, one of our responsibilities is good governance, and we have that opportunity to provide good governance at every stage of the bill on every piece of legislation. Even when there's agreement amongst the members – and I think back to, if I'm not mistaken, the very first bill that this government introduced. It was Bill 1, an act to ban corporate and union donations, I believe. Even when there is significant agreement amongst members in this Chamber, as on that piece of legislation, the Official Opposition still feels it is our duty, responsibility to Albertans to strengthen legislation wherever possible. In that particular case we offered an extensive set of recommendations and amendments. We offered the opportunity to close some loopholes that, unfortunately, the government left in place when it came to Bill 1. I say all that to say that we agreed with Bill 1, but we all have a responsibility for due diligence. We all have a responsibility to ensure that the legislation that's passed in this Chamber is done in a manner that reflects the needs of Albertans and, in this case, the securities industry, those who are investing and those who are providing those securities.

While I appreciate the fact that we have this great agreement amongst members on the intention of the bill, I think it would be great for us all to be able to hear from stakeholders, not just the Minister of Finance, although he has done many things in the past that are reasonable, some more reasonable than others. My point is not just to hear from the Minister of Finance on the things that he has heard from stakeholders and industry players as well as those who utilize securities as an investment vehicle but for all members of the Assembly, particularly members of that committee, to be able to hear from those same stakeholders so that it allows us all to make a good, solid decision for the long-term viability of our province.

That's why I encourage all members in the Chamber to vote in favour of the amendment. I think the timeline is reasonable. It meets all of our needs and will allow the legislation to be reviewed in a manner that is appropriate.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we will refer to the amendment as RF1.

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Having been alerted by the Member for Strathmore-Brooks that there was an intent to move this to committee, I believe that in my initial statements I addressed the issue – right? – number one being that Securities Act amendments are something that happen on an annual basis.

I also want to bring light to what the leader of the third party said in terms of what we're really focused on here. The real question at hand is ensuring effective investor protection, ensuring strong market integrity, and ensuring an efficient system of capital formation. Now, as far as I know, the best of the best that deal with securities regulation all across this province are dealing with these issues on a regular basis, and we're harmonizing what is occurring across different securities regulators.

What's happening is that good recommendations that are coming forward in B.C., in Quebec, in Ontario are then – you know, the Alberta Securities Commission and the CEO are taking a look at that along with other stakeholders, and they're saying: okay; well this makes sense that we would do this as well here in Alberta. Again, I want to remind all members of this House that Alberta is the leader in securities regulation as it is. If our primary concern is ensuring effective investor protection – I could read through all seven sections again, but I'm going to be easy on you guys. I'm going to be easy on you all.

We already have some great recommendations here that need to be implemented. Let me just stress a couple, though. The halt-trade provision: I think this is something that is incredibly essential. If we do see something illegal occurring, the Alberta Securities Commission needs the power in order to stop trading on a particular stock and address it so that nobody continues to lose money.

An Hon. Member: Agreed.

Loyola: Agreed. We're all in agreement with that.

I think these are things that just need to be implemented right now. Another example is amending sections 29 and 42 of the act, that would allow the regulator to act more quickly when there is a risk of potential illegal activity by proposing a shorter notice period, from 20 to 10 days, right?

I'm sure that all the members in the House would agree that we need to move forward on this. We need to pass this. So, perhaps without regret, I will not support this amendment, and I highly encourage all the members of this House to vote this amendment down.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

4:10

The Speaker: Are there any other questions or comments under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie?

Hearing none, are there any other parties that wish to speak to the amendment? Calgary-Northern Hills.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think I'd just like to echo the comments made by the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie when he said that, basically, we need to take a more prudent approach to this. The timeline that applies to this bill is somewhat essential because, I mean, the amendment here basically puts it forward to October 31, and that's nearly November. That's eight months away. Earlier we talked about the timeline on this bill, and it was mentioned that it comes up annually for these things to be reviewed. So it would make sense to me, then, with such a tight timeline that it just echoes what the leader of the third party said, the Member for Calgary-Hays, that kind of rings true, where I think he was quoted as saying that the passage of this item – and I don't have the Blues in front of me, so I'm just taking it from memory – clears the way for people to invest in our province, and the sooner the investment comes, jobs will follow.

On that note, I think that's all the more important reason why we need to proceed with this in a more timely fashion. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there any other members who would like to speak to amendment RF1? The minister – the Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: I'm pleased to rise as the minister for Strathmore-Brooks, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak in support of the referral motion before us here. I'm not sure why members across would be

opposing this. There is all-party support for the bill in this House. The government, the Official Opposition, the third party are in support of both the intent and, from what we can tell, even the contents at this time. The Wildrose had consulted with stakeholders before we took a position on this bill. We made sure we spoke to people who know what they're talking about. I spoke to many people in southern Alberta and in Edmonton who understand capital markets, and they could find no major, significant problems with this bill. And I imagine that even sending this bill to committee would not significantly delay the bill.

The government did the right thing yesterday when they sent one of their own private member's bills to committee. Now, I really hope that sending things to committee here is not just a way for the government to shelve bills that they don't want to pass without actually having to vote against it. No one wants to vote against a private member's bill from your own private members in the government. I understand the politics of that, but that shouldn't be a backdoor way to kill a bill. Sending something to committee – it should be sent there to be legitimately studied, to listen to experts and witnesses, and to debate the bill in more detail. In fact, it would probably, almost certainly, speed up the operations of this House. If bills were to go through individual, specific committees, we wouldn't have to spend time on the floor of the House here in Committee of the Whole. It would make our whole program more efficient.

Now, I thank the NDP for the most boring bill that they've brought forward so far. As far as I'm concerned, a boring bill is much better than the less boring bills they've brought forward. I'm grateful when their bills are relatively unexciting. I think that it's probably better for Albertans. We're talking about getting things right. I think that members would have the assurance of the Official Opposition that if this went to committee, it wouldn't be used to drag out the process. It wouldn't be used to even filibuster. I mean, this is a bill that has the support, I believe, of every member in the Legislature. I wouldn't be surprised if the bill received unanimous support.

Yesterday the Government House Leader stood right across from me here and spoke to the need to get things right, to consult with stakeholders, to consult with experts. Well, the Wildrose has consulted with experts and stakeholders, but I think that it would be appropriate for us to do so in a public forum. I hope that the hon. Finance minister has consulted with experts. I hope that the government has started to get in the habit of speaking to people, witnesses and experts in their fields, before introducing bills. We know that the private member's bill that yesterday was sent to committee for study very obviously had not seen consultation with stakeholders. They were absolutely shocked to see the contents of the bill before it was introduced in this Legislature. It's my opinion that the government has done a little more homework on this bill, and they're to be congratulated for that.

We are talking about having a public forum, where witnesses could come and speak before us. I think the bill would receive a relatively speedy passage through a legislative committee of this Assembly. I'm asking members to vote on the same principles of the way they voted on a bill just yesterday to send it to committee for study.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there any questions under 29(2)(a) of the Member for Strathmore-Brooks?

The question is called with respect to the amendment moved by the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, identified as RF1.

[Motion on amendment to second reading of Bill 6 lost]

The Speaker: We're now back to the original motion. Are there any members to speak to the motion?

Deputy Government House Leader, would you move a motion to close debate?

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I'd like to make a motion to close debate on second reading.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 6 read a second time]

4:20 Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

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

Bill 6 Securities Amendment Act, 2016

The Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm very pleased to speak to, really, the implementation and implications now of the Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act, a bill that proposes to establish new, low-interest . . .

An Hon. Member: We're on Bill 6.

Dr. Swann: We're on 5?

The Chair: No. We're on Bill 6, hon. member. Apologies.

Dr. Swann: Oh, I'm sorry.

The Chair: Any other hon. members wishing to speak to Bill 6, the Securities Amendment Act? Go ahead, hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm Liberal. I'm flexible.

I'm very pleased to instead speak to Bill 6, the Securities Amendment Act, 2016, a bill proposing to amend the Securities Act to provide for continued modernization, harmonization, and streamlining of Alberta's security laws and the ongoing reform of the Canadian securities regulatory system.

The Securities Act has been amended regularly for several years: Bill 15 in the spring 2015, Bill 5 in the fall of 2014, Bill 3 in the spring of 2014, Bill 42, which apparently died on the Order Paper in the fall of 2013, and Bill 4 in the fall of 2011. The bill is lengthy, technical, and somewhat esoteric for many of us, but a general overview suggests that it's vital to get on with the job of bringing us again up to date and consistent with the rest of Canadian securities law. It bolsters the investigative and enforcement powers of the Alberta Securities Commission. It proposes to authorize a justice of the peace to issue search warrants instead of a judge, to reduce the notice period required for people being summoned to attend an interview with the ASC's investigators or to appear at a hearing, and to amend the section of the Securities Act dealing with halt trade orders.

Other aspects of Bill 6 will update civil liability provisions, revise the provisions that deal with recognition of exchanges, clearing agencies, credit-rating organizations, and trade repositories, and it proposes to expand the ASC's ability to make rules to enhance derivatives regulation. An annual review and updating is required

to support the ongoing reform of our Canadian regulatory system, and the process is largely internally driven by our Treasury Board and Finance. It's not that political. Ongoing amendments proposed by both former PC administrations and the NDP are consistent in tone and intent.

The memorandum of understanding regarding securities regulation that was passed in 2004 included all except Ontario in these regulations, and it recognizes that securities regulations in Canada is a matter of provincial jurisdiction, that the securities regulatory system requires constant innovation and reform to keep pace with the rapid evolution of capital markets. The council of ministers is committed to maintaining and enhancing the status of Canada's securities regulatory system, which is already ranked by the OECD and the World Bank as one of the best in the world. One of the key objectives of the 2004 MOU was to establish a passport system, providing market participants with a single window of access to Canadian capital markets.

With respect to derivatives regulation, following the summit, the G-20 issued a formal declaration calling for common principles for the reform of financial markets, including derivatives. In the ensuing period there has been considerable and ongoing regulation around OTC, or over-the-counter, derivatives that pose significant risk to many unwary investors. Since Canada, unlike most countries, has a decentralized securities regime, it must rely on its provincial governments to enact legislation providing for increased oversight and regulation, specifically on over-the-counter derivatives, through individual provincial securities regulators.

My full support and that of my caucus will be put forward for this. Canada, unlike most countries, has had a decentralized securities regulatory regime. The changes proposed in Bill 6 are part of a national effort to harmonize securities rules, and they mirror those being made in other jurisdictions. Bill 6 builds on the earlier regulatory changes that caucus supported during the spring of 2015, the spring and fall of 2014, and earlier. As a province, as a country we need to be doing everything possible to protect investors and maintain the integrity of our capital markets.

If the 2008 global financial crisis taught us anything, it's that complacency and lack of regulatory vigilance can quickly and catastrophically shake world markets and all of our economies. No country or jurisdiction is immune from the effects of market collapse; therefore it's important that we do all we can to support the health and stability of the world financial system.

Alberta Liberals acknowledge that the proposed changes are necessary for Alberta to be able to honour its national and international commitments to improve regulatory security.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other hon. members wishing to speak? Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I wanted to take this opportunity to share with members of the House a couple of quotes referring to the very issue at hand that we're all speaking about right now. I wanted to touch a little bit on this whole issue of the centralized federal regulator.

I have a quote here from Eric Spink from the *Financial Post*, where he's quoted in an article called Why Alberta's New NDP Premier Rachel Notley Is Not for a National Regulator.

An Hon. Member: Uh-oh. Name.

Loyola: Oh, pardon me. The Premier. Well, I'm quoting the name. I'm quoting the name.

Okay. I'll go ahead with the quote.

Canada already has one of the best regulatory systems in the world; the current proposal is a massive constitutional power grab,

again referring to a centralized federal regulator, and Alberta should work together with Québec and other provinces to strike it down, as they did with the proposal that was struck down in 2011. From an Albertan's perspective, those are compelling reasons, and Tedesco's suggestion that our "affable" new premier might sign on to the current proposal (in effect, selling the constitutional farm) seems to underestimate her political acumen.

Bill Rice, the former chair and CEO of the Alberta Securities Commission, quoted in an *Alberta Venture* article by Robbie Jeffrey published on February 16, 2016, states that the oil and gas industry

consumes huge amounts of capital, so the raising of capital and the structuring of an environment in which capital can be raised and traded appropriately is a very significant issue for Alberta. I believe the independence of the regulation of that territory becomes more important when times are tough, because certain adaptations can be made, local imagination can be used and certain changes or differentiations can be undertaken in the province to accommodate difficult circumstances.

Again, we're all in agreement with how important this issue is and how we need to move forward on it.

Terence Corcoran, *National Post* columnist, business writer, quoted in a *National Post* article published on December 22, 2014:

Key industry associations, including life insurers and public sector pension funds, also weighed in on what they see as an unwarranted expansion of regulatory power. The Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan and other pension funds balked at proposals to add them to the list of institutions that should be regulated by the new authority, due to their potential contribution to "systemic risk." The pension brief said pensions are "concerned about the potentially onerous regulatory requirements."

I've saved the best for last, especially for the members across the way. Former Wildrose Finance critic Rob Anderson, quoted on the party website on May 7, 2013:

This government needs to immediately strengthen the Alberta Securities Commission and beef up enforcement measures so Albertans don't fall victim to predatory fraudsters. The livelihoods of thousands of Albertans are at stake. It's up to the government to do something to address this serious issue.

4:30

An Hon. Member: What year was that?

Loyola: In 2013, Member. There you go.

Albeit it's important that we move forward with this legislation – we're all in agreement on that – I think that we should have, you know, a buy-in from the members from across the way. I don't know if the members of the third party are – they're not speaking too much.

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

Loyola: Pardon me, Madam Chair.

Again, I will highly suggest to all the members of this House that they vote in favour of the Securities Amendment Act, 2016. Thank you very much.

The Chair: Any other questions, comments, amendments? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Dr. Starke: Are you going to quote Rob, too?

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, interestingly enough, I don't have a quote from the former Member for Airdrie ready this afternoon, but I can raise my fist angrily when I need to.

Well, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to Bill 6, the Securities Amendment Act, 2016, here in Committee of the Whole. Of course, Madam Chair, our caucus recognizes the need for administrative updates on legislation from time to time such as the Securities Act, but as previously mentioned, we would have appreciated seeing this bill go to the proper standing committee for adequate study to ensure members understand this particular legislation in greater detail.

The reality is that our securities legislation does not exist in isolation, and there are numerous factors at play. This includes changes in the markets. It includes what goes on in other jurisdictions. While I appreciate that we are a leader on securities regulation, it is important, or would have been important, that we take the necessary time to ensure the legislation allows us to continue to lead. In an economic climate like this one any amendments to securities legislation do not just exist for the purpose of housekeeping. They could potentially affect the draw of Albertans for business and investment where securities are concerned.

In my opinion, any legislation that pertains to securities, however routine or robust or modest, should be carefully scrutinized. In fact, the federal government sends virtually every piece of legislation to an all-party committee. For almost every legislative item that goes forward, officials from whichever department is affected will appear and speak to the proposed changes at that committee in the federal government. These are subject matter experts. They're able to explain and go into details on the implications of the proposed legislation in a way even some ministers cannot.

Those discussions, those committee proceedings, are a matter of public record. It means that we can have a more open Legislature. It means that Albertans can get the same sort of feedback that we get when we speak to industry experts and stakeholders, but then that feedback can also be on the public record as these issues around securities affect Albertans and their livelihoods, their future, and their past. Those discussions at committee are of critical importance to Albertans. They are of value to constituents who want to learn why a certain piece of legislation was introduced. They are of value to researchers and subject matter experts. It is a disservice to Albertans whenever the legislation here is fired through without the standing committee stage.

After 40 years of single-party governance in Alberta we find ourselves in a system where this resource of proper scrutiny is used far too infrequently, far too rarely. The rare use of committee for study seems to have been inherited by the new government, that was elected last May, just like the previous government, who also didn't believe in a robust committee system.

I have only seen the current government, nearly a year into their mandate, refer legislation to committee twice, once yesterday and once on a previous private member's bill, Bill 203. We recognize why the government put forward this bill, and we support it, but we would have liked it to go to committee to receive that proper scrutiny. Simply put, pushing securities legislation through in mere days or a short afternoon is bad precedent. We saw this particular piece of legislation introduced last Thursday under Introduction of Bills, only to be debated today at second reading. Now we are already in Committee of the Whole, and quite possibly this bill will become law tomorrow.

It's important that any changes sought in the Alberta Securities Act do not undermine competitive advantage in any way. The ability to have officials speak to this particular legislation would have been of immense value. Whenever any amending legislation

is proposed, the first question we should ask is not merely about what is being changed but also about what is not being changed. The officials who advise the government on matters such as securities are no doubt aware of matters pertaining to securities in other jurisdictions. They are no doubt well aware of the regulatory changes that have or are having a positive or adverse effect in other jurisdictions. That sort of subject matter expertise is invaluable to us as legislators, especially when we need to be thinking about what's best for Alberta in the long term.

Now, this bill is an excellent example of the importance of an independent securities regulator for Alberta. I appreciate the ability to discuss this legislation in the Assembly without having to consult a national oversight body and try to find relative agreement amongst nine other provinces before we're able to debate the legislation. I suspect that the government appreciates this ability as well, and we've certainly seen that in their support for a made-in-Alberta solution.

In no uncertain terms the federal government has made it clear that they will want a national securities regulator. The previous federal government had stated their ambition, and now we have a new federal government. In recent years some provinces have gone to court to fight this. The idea of a national securities regulator itself is not a new one. It's been discussed by Canada's various federal governments with various levels of intensity throughout the last number of years. There are certainly areas where harmonizing securities rules could make sense. It is, of course, advantageous to be harmonizing our securities rules with the provinces while still maintaining our independent control over securities regulation.

Breaking down any sort of provincial barrier is most often a net benefit to all Albertans, but it is important that Alberta ensures its independence when it comes to a securities regulator. In a recent *Financial Post* column it was noted that interprovincial red tape costs Canadian households over \$7,500 per year. Anything we can do to work against this costly red tape, regardless of whether it's trading securities or more straightforward commercial trade, makes for a stronger and more free Confederation.

4:40

But harmonization should not be confused with amalgamation or sharing of information. Having our own regulator means that decisions can be made with regard to Alberta's best interests. It has allowed investment in Alberta to be a consideration in how securities are regulated. It is responsible to conclude that a regulator that is headquartered on Bay Street in Toronto may not have the same priorities as one headquartered here in Alberta. The fact is that a great deal of Alberta's capital markets pertain to the natural resource sector. An Alberta-based regulator understands that sector. An Alberta-based regulator knows how to respond when those markets change; a Toronto-based one does not.

This government and this Finance minister have said that they will maintain an independent securities regulator. As long as they keep their word this time, our caucus will be happy to see our securities rules harmonized with other provinces' to improve interprovincial flow of capital. That's good for Alberta. That's good for Canada.

Whether or not Alberta is joining a national regulator, of course, is not what's being debated in this particular bill. If we're simply here to go through the motions, if we are simply here to wave this bill through without due scrutiny, we would be setting a bad precedent for matters pertaining to how securities are handled. Regulation is not the answer to every problem, of course, Madam Chair, but if we are to take pride in the fact that Alberta has its own securities regulator, if we are to think of ourselves as a successful

jurisdiction in this regard, then we should take securities and the matters around securities seriously here today.

I note that the Finance minister recently wrote a newspaper article favouring Alberta having its own regulator. The third party, when they were in government, also spoke in favour of having its own regulator. So if there's actual agreement here on the source of strength for Alberta, to have our own regulator, we should be paying particular attention to the matters pertaining to securities that come before us.

That said, this bill itself seems to be a responsive one. It's a response to market needs rather than telling the market what it needs from a top-down approach. The changes this bill introduces respond to the confusion in market trading surrounding hybrid securities and derivative products.

It would be immensely helpful if the government were able to answer a few questions on the legislation. Which experts were consulted? I know that the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie has mentioned some of those. On the need for amending legislation, presumably those experts had particular concerns in mind. On the securities or derivatives themselves, are any of those individuals potentially involved with a conflict of interest? This is speculative on my part, but it serves to illustrate why proper scrutiny is needed, even on matters where we deem them to be housekeeping such as the Securities Act. It is important that we debate and robustly discuss these important issues.

Madam Chair, as we have noted, there is a need for administrative updates to legislation. The Official Opposition has proposed in a number of cases in the past additional clauses to legislation that would require updates to legislation where necessary, and this particular legislation is an example where those updates are needed and required. On the surface there doesn't seem to be anything untoward or amiss, but given the subject matter it makes sense that we should have studied this at a committee. The decisions made pertaining to the Alberta Securities Act are important as it relates to Alberta's competitive advantage, and more broadly, as the saying goes, the devil is in the details.

I am pleased to support this piece of legislation at Committee of the Whole while I would have preferred the opportunity to hear from expert witnesses and testimony at a policy committee.

Madam Chair, it was my pleasure to speak to the bill today, and I look forward to the rest of the debate.

The Chair: Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the bill? Questions? Comments? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie.

Loyola: Thank you, Madam Chair. I know it's not customary to ask questions when you're in committee, but I wanted to ask specifically the Member for Strathmore-Brooks. As soon as I got my hands on this bill, as soon as it was presented, one of the first things that I did was that I sat down with friends who are stockbrokers to ask them: what do you think about this? Like the Member for Strathmore-Brooks, the stockbrokers that I spoke to didn't seem to have any issues with any of the regulations that were being brought forward. I don't have the Blues in front of me, so I'm paraphrasing, but I believe your statement was that the stakeholders you consulted with didn't seem to have any issues with any of the regulations that were being brought forward. I was hoping, if he's so inclined, that the Member for Strathmore-Brooks could speak to that issue.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. I look forward to the days when the member can ask me more questions in this House, perhaps about two hours earlier in the daily Routine.

The member is quite right. On this side of the House we've consulted with stakeholders. In fact, during this invigorating debate I've been corresponding with certain stakeholders involved in our capital markets, who know what they're talking about, and most of them have said that this is a bill that they have not seen any issues with.

I think the point that we've made on this side of the House is that every bill – every single bill – contentious and noncontentious bills, should go to committee. I contend that this Bill 6 would go through a committee rather quickly. The last Bill 6 may have been held up a little bit longer, and if that last Bill 6 had gone to a committee, it probably would have saved a lot of the members across a lot of sleepless nights and headaches.

I think that it's a basic principle that every single bill should go before a legislative committee, the way we do in Ottawa. When federal NDP members wish to make their views known on a piece of legislation introduced by the former Conservative government or the present Liberal government, they're able to bring stakeholders and witnesses and experts to testify at committees that develop a degree of expertise and knowledge. I mean, the number of members in this Legislature with any expertise on this bill is going to be rather slim, as it would be on many topics, and committees have people who develop a degree of expertise on topics, and we can bring witnesses forward. I think it's the process that we're talking about, not that there's any particularly disagreeable part of this bill.

Again, I have been speaking with stakeholders. I've not found anyone who had any negative problems with the bill. In fact, the only feedback I heard was from a single member, and I'll speak about this soon. I heard from a member who wanted the bill to be toughened up, potentially, on a particular part of the bill, who wanted it to actually go a little bit further. That's not to say that I agree or disagree with that position but that I would like to hear from witnesses like that so that they could bring their views forward to us and we can hear expert testimony. I think that bills should not be written only by the executive branch of government and rubber-stamped by the legislative branch. It should be that when the executive brings forward a bill to this House, this House has meaningful input into it, that this House has the opportunity to bring stakeholders forward, and that the only opportunity for stakeholder engagement should not be in the minister's office before the bill is actually written.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

4:50

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd just like to speak to some of the concerns that we've been hearing, I guess, from the Official Opposition, basically, with regard to some more comments about why there might be a need to further delay the bill for further inquiries and discussions. In the spirit of what the Member for Strathmore-Brooks just mentioned – I think he just mentioned there that he hadn't heard any direct disagreements to the bill, not to say that they couldn't come up. But, quite honestly, I just don't see the need to further delay this bill.

We just saw an amendment, which was RF1, that proposed kicking the can down the road, so to speak, on the bill nearly eight months, to the 31st of October. But what we're really talking about here is November. It kind of speaks to the point: why does the Securities Act need to be updated so frequently? I think one of the

points here is that Alberta must ensure that its 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 securities laws.

Another point is that today's financial environment is more complex and more sophisticated and more international in scope and more driven by technology than ever before. The proposed updates would further harmonize Alberta's securities laws with those of other jurisdictions across Canada as part of Alberta's commitment to improving Canada's existing securities regulatory system.

Finally, the changes will also enhance the protection of Alberta's investors and foster the operation of fair and effective Alberta capital markets and minimize systemic risks.

As we've mentioned here about the timelines, basically, one of the concerns is: what would happen, I guess, if these amendments were not passed? Maybe not too much in the extreme short term, but one of the points that we're trying to make here is that if these amendments do not promptly proceed, Alberta could jeopardize its leadership role in securities regulatory reform. Without continued modernization and harmonization of the Alberta Securities Act it would be difficult to ensure a continued vibrant capital market. This will require enhanced market transparency and investor protection along with the detection and mitigation of possible systemic risks and market abuse.

It's for these reasons, I think, that it is more prudent at this point to proceed with Bill 6. I just thought I'd make those comments.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Madam Chair. It has been truly an honour to hear about the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie's passionate commitment in defence of capitalism and market regulation.

I rise today to speak to Bill 6. I have some questions for the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board about this legislation that I hope he is ably able to answer, specifically on the origins of the amendments to the Securities Act before us here. This bill does not look like a traditional piece of legislation, thank the good Lord. We want to know where it came from. Can the minister explain the process for developing these Securities Act updates? Did the financial services industry request these changes, or was it the Alberta Securities Commission who asked for the changes in our law? Or was it officials in the minister's department who diligently did their job and this is just an annual update? Was it, in fact, stakeholders reaching out to the government asking for this?

We spoke with stakeholders involved in the financial services sector about Bill 6. One industry member indicated that they would be personally in favour of more stringent rules that protected investors around offering memorandums being placed in the Securities Act. For those who don't know, an offering memorandum is a legal document stating the objectives, risks, and terms of investment involved with a private placement. This includes items such as financial statements, management biographies, a detailed description of the business, et cetera. An offering memorandum serves to provide buyers with information on the offering and to protect the sellers from the liability associated with selling unregistered securities.

Sometimes investors are being sold a product by offering memorandums when they really shouldn't have been sold the investment to begin with. I understand there have been an increased number of enforcement actions against real estate promoters who

frequently try to rely on the offering memorandum exemptions although they might prepare deficient offering memorandums. We would like to know if the minister could tell us if he has heard this concern as well.

Another piece of feedback we received involves dealing with limitation periods, Madam Chair; that is, the time in which legal proceedings are brought forward for a transaction gone sour. It is my understanding that the Securities Act places this at six months presently. This is a very short period of time to take any action for damages. This needs to be extended to a minimum of one year, or more appropriately it ought to accord with the time period set out in the Limitations Act, which is two years.

These are a few of the changes the government may want to examine and consider changing in the near future. This is a technical bill with much to wade through about securities that are not securities, derivatives that are securities, securities that are derivatives, and derivatives that are not derivatives. Are members confused yet? I'm sure this is an exhilarating way for the new Member for Calgary-Greenway to spend his first day in the Legislature.

I'm glad that we have professionals like those at AIMCo who manage the heritage fund and pension funds, who understand all of this in depth and understand its ramifications. Those people can navigate all of the risks associated with these products and do a good job of creating a steady rate of return for these products. I'm also pleased to see the time and cost-saving measures brought in to allow the Alberta Securities Commission to get a search warrant from a justice of the peace instead of waiting for a judge of the Court of Queen's Bench. It is my estimation that this will increase the likelihood of halting a crime in progress.

Wildrose recognizes the need for periodic or even regular administrative updates to legislation such as the Securities Act, and we recognize the importance of our Securities Act in providing a competitive advantage for Alberta while protecting Alberta's investors. This government has said that it will maintain Alberta's independent securities regulator. As long as it keeps its word, we are happy to see our securities rules harmonized with other provinces' where it is needed to improve the interprovincial flow of capital.

We would caution, however, that we should always take time to reflect on whether these changes are actually good for Alberta. The ability to make that decision for ourselves based on our own province's need is the biggest reason for having our own regulator. Again, Madam Chair, I will repeat my call that legislation that is this serious, however much it may receive the potential unanimous support of members in this House, should be studied properly to allow for stakeholders and outside experts.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other questions, comments, or amendments with respect to the bill?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question on Bill 6?

[The clauses of Bill 6 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Madam Chair. I do now move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

The Chair: The committee will now rise and report.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Ms Woollard: Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 6.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the committee concur in the report? All in favour, say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Those opposed, say no. So ordered.

5:00 **Government Bills and Orders**
 Second Reading
 (continued)

Bill 5
 Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act

[Debate adjourned April 12]

The Deputy Speaker: Any hon. members wishing to speak to Bill 5? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I really am looking forward to discussing this vital piece of legislation. I think that looking after vulnerable seniors is one of the major responsibilities of any legislator, and I think that this bill really does go a long way to improving the situation, particularly for our low-income seniors.

The proposed seniors' home adaptation and repair program – and I'll call that SHARP in the future – will allow seniors to use their home equity to make modifications so that they can stay in their homes and maintain independence. More seniors will be eligible to access these funds to do a much broader scope of work than what was available under the special needs assistance program. SHARP will include consumer protection measures to ensure seniors know their rights when hiring contractors or having to cancel contracts. The SHARP program promotes effective and responsible governance, and it's anticipated – this is important – the proposed program will save this government about \$6 million a year. I think that for all of those reasons, all of us should be in support of this.

This is social justice. As I said the other day, all of us in this Legislature are interested in social justice. I know some of you across the floor might not want to be called socialists, but in this case I know you are all in favour of promoting social justice.

At the same time as we're promoting social justice, particularly for vulnerable Albertans, we're actually promoting the creation of jobs for Albertans, jobs that the contractors will create through the funding that comes out of this program. These are jobs that might not have been made for Albertans without this legislation being passed. It's a stimulus to the economy. Again, I'll go back to the importance of countercyclical investments. When the economy is at a low point, it's our time to actually invest in the economy, to promote job creation through programs such as this. For all of these reasons I'm fully in support of this.

It is a very important program that's being suggested here. A key part to this is the consumer protection. We have to recognize that low-income seniors may not have the financial literacy that we would like them to have. What this bill will help do is protect these consumers, these vulnerable seniors, from predatory activity by unscrupulous contractors. This is an important issue. You hear news reports of this all the time. It's a regular occurrence here in Edmonton, which I'm most familiar with, but I'm sure it happens

across the province. It may even happen in rural areas and smaller cities more often since the consumer protection services that we have available in large cities sometimes don't reach out to the outlying areas.

As a physician I also am interested in this. I have a lot of experience looking after patients in their later years, and I can tell you that people that might develop a stroke or might have cancer or might have a heart attack or might, for instance, develop kidney failure are often kept in our acute-care hospitals for very long periods of time solely because sending them home is not an option. Their homes are not capable of taking them back. With this kind of program we might actually be able to get some of those patients who are sitting in the hospitals for long periods of time back into their communities, and I'm sure that they would be much more comfortable there than sitting in the hospital or in a long-term care facility if it were available.

What this program is going to do is actually increase, for instance, accessibility to a home. That means putting in bars in the bathrooms, putting in lifts so that a person might be able to get from the first floor to the second floor if that's where their bedrooms are. I'm sure the security of the home could be increased. We could put in video cameras and other security equipment that would make the home safer and the person more comfortable in their home. It's even possible – and I would look at my own situation and hope I'll never be in the financial situation to qualify for this program – in my own home that if I were to have a stroke, I would actually need to do some renovations to allow the creation of a first-floor bedroom with bathroom facilities. That would mean that I could still age in place at home with this sort of thing.

It's going to help people stay in our communities, and, like the elders in indigenous societies, the seniors are a very important component of that. If we don't have seniors in the communities, we lose all that wisdom that they've accumulated over the years. I'm hoping that in some small way this legislation is going to improve the quality and quantity of life for seniors so they can stay in their communities and age in place.

I was interested to hear from my colleague in front of me about the insurance issues. I think this was a very important observation that was made. These homes often need renovations to meet codes or other things that the insurance companies require, not to mention just, say, replacing a roof or fixing a furnace or perhaps doing some alterations to the kitchen or to the bathrooms that would make the house livable.

I would urge all of my colleagues on both sides of the House to vote for this legislation because I think it is really an important piece of legislation. I'm proud to be part of a government that is promoting this program so that our seniors can live in dignity, can be proud of their own homes, can continue to contribute to the welfare of this province, and also that we as a government can save money – the \$6 million, I think, is not an insignificant amount – and we can get at one of the real problems in seniors' care, which is the overuse of acute-care facilities for our elderly patients.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

5:10

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Lac La Biche . . .

Mr. Hanson: Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

The Deputy Speaker: . . . St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Just say dialysis. We're good.

Thank you very much. The question is to the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. You mentioned a couple of times the savings

of \$6 million. I was wondering if you could expand on that a little bit and give us some details on how we're going to save \$6 million with this program.

Also, while we're talking about money, I had mentioned earlier in the day and had asked the question about where the money was going to come from. We're going to be potentially exposing Albertans to \$5.6 billion of debt with these loans, you know, based on 140,000 homes at \$40,000 per. If we maxed it out, that's what we'd be looking at, \$5.6 billion. So if you could expand a little bit on where the \$6 million savings is coming from and if you could share with us where the \$5.6 billion potential is going to be coming from as well.

Thanks.

Dr. Turner: Thank you very much for the question. I appreciate the opportunity to respond. This legislation basically allows us to make the approach to seniors' housing a lot more efficient. The special needs assistance program really has a lot of limitations, and what we're going to be talking about is a much broader scope of work than what was available.

We're also going to be saving money when you look at keeping persons in their own home in the community. This legislation really is all about making the senior who doesn't have the financial resources more capable of directing their own existence and adding to the quality of the communities as well as to the qualities of that individual's own existence.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka on 29(2)(a).

Mr. Orr: Thank you, and thank you to the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. Just a further question, curiosity in a way, but I think it helps to dialogue. I'm interested in the discussion between the home adaptation needs for seniors and the home services needs for seniors, home-care kinds of issues. Yes, there definitely will be homes that need adaptation, but I think we also all realize that seniors get to the point where they can't mow their lawn, maybe they can't care for themselves adequately, those kinds of things. I guess my question relates to: have you been able to do any studies or are you aware of any studies that would help us to understand sort of a cost-benefit analysis between the benefits and costs of home adaptation versus just providing home-care kinds of services, that would allow seniors to stay in their home for a longer period of time as well?

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member.

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and I thank the member for the question. I think he's raising an important issue. There are a lot of varying needs for our seniors population. We need to look at, for instance, the whole area of consumer protection and the area of supporting what I heard about earlier today, the sort of community centres that provide support. I think it was the MLA for Lethbridge-East that was talking about a really vital program in that community to support the integration of seniors into the community. That sort of thing is very important. We need, probably, some changes in the traffic laws to slow down traffic in areas around seniors' facilities or in residential areas. That might apply to the seniors' care as well.

Certainly, I think that looking at programs to improve home care, to improve access to other community services is vital. But what we're talking about here in this legislation, in my opinion, is looking at home adaptation as a way to make sure that the individual

can stay in that home and can . . . [The time limit for questions and comments expired]

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

Dr. Swann: Thanks, Madam Speaker. It's my time to get up again and give my support to this important innovation. To be fair, the past government had funding for renovations for seniors; however, it didn't carry the kind of weight and implications that this does. It's been alluded a little bit earlier by some of the members opposite that this could take a very sizable budget to cover if everybody jumped on board. Obviously, it would be a good deal to have an interest loan at prime to the tune of \$75,000, recognizing that it has to be paid back at some time. But it's pretty good. As my colleague from Edmonton-Riverview indicated, these are important and cost-saving renovations that could keep people in their homes for much longer, could get people out of institutions, whether it's long-term care institutions or hospitals, or in some cases perhaps even prevent them from going into a lodge or secondary assisted living program.

Tremendous leadership on this, I think, but a little bit uncertain about just how one might deal with a huge influx of many, many people taking advantage of this. So I hope that there would be some careful scrutiny of applications and that we don't get too far ahead of ourselves with this. Clearly, issues like widening doorways and hallways, installing walk-in tubs, roof repairs, and electrical repairs: these are essential, and obviously many people in our province, perhaps 10 or 15 per cent at a minimum, don't have the money to make some of these very basic changes that would keep them safe and keep them longer in their homes.

Section 2 of the bill authorizes the minister, then, to make low-interest home equity loans "for the purpose of making repairs, renovations or adaptations . . . reasonably necessary for the maintenance, structural integrity or energy efficiency . . . or for the health, safety or mobility of the occupants." That does give the minister and the department some discretion about approving or not approving some of these very generous offers.

Section 3 authorizes the minister to file a caveat in the land titles office against the certificate of title for an eligible residence in respect of the loan.

Section 4 contains provisions regarding loan repayment.

Section 5 permits low-income seniors who don't qualify for a loan to apply for a grant in accordance with the regulation. The government has suggested that \$2 million in grants will be available annually as a separate aspect of this. I don't understand fully how that would enhance some of the rest of the loan program, but again I would hope that there would be very careful scrutiny of that.

Section 6 allows an individual who was refused a loan or a grant to request a review of that decision in accordance with the regulations, and sections 7 and 8 offer measures to protect consumers, including provisions to review the reasonableness of the costs of a home repair as well as the right to cancel contracts.

The government has estimated that about 145,000 households will be eligible for the program. That, again, amounts to a very sizable potential budgetary item. The cash for the loans is coming from Alberta's general revenue fund, so it'll be interesting to see how this relates to the budget coming up this week. The program is believed to be the first of its kind in Canada. If passed, it will take effect on July 1 of this year. This will be the second home equity program available.

Senior homeowners have also got access to the seniors property tax deferral program, which was a progressive element that the last government put into place.

Dr. Starke: Bravo.

Dr. Swann: Yes. You can take credit for that.

I have no hesitation in supporting this bill given the caveats that I've mentioned. Anything that will keep seniors in their homes for longer and remove seniors from institutional care and the extremely costly implications of that as well as give them quality of life and much higher potential for rehabilitation in their own home, for mental health issues, for longer term connections with their community and family. So I'm very pleased to support this and will take my seat and wait for the rest of the debates.

Thanks, Madam Speaker.

5:20

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung under Standing Order 29(2)(a).

Mr. Dach: Yes. Thank you. I rise under Standing Order 29(2)(a), Madam Speaker, to bring clarification to some issues raised by the hon. member opposite regarding certain matters about the program. One number that was mentioned by the hon. member was that he thought the maximum loan amount would be \$75,000 under this program when it is actually a \$40,000 maximum loan, so that number should be clear.

He was right that the program does offer a lot of leeway to the government department members who are analysing these loans and requests for these loans to determine and positively grant such a loan because we're not looking to minimize under the loan program. After all, it is the senior's own money that they'll be lending; it'll be their equity that they're accessing.

In terms of what types of home adaptations or repairs will qualify for the loan program, the program will increase the types of repairs and adaptations over the current special-needs program, which was a grant. As far as being reasonable to repair or adapt to assist a senior who chooses to remain in their home, the proposed adaptations or repairs will be deemed eligible if they improve or increase any of the following in a senior's home in support of aging in place: their physical safety, their mobility, their independence, and their health. So within those wide-ranging parameters a lot of discretion is involved, and it was put in there on purpose so that we wouldn't be unnecessarily limiting what a senior thought might help with their ability to continue living in the house.

It could potentially mean painting the kitchen, and sometimes it's just something that they couldn't have afforded to do otherwise, and this could make that house more liveable. It's their money that they're accessing. We wanted to give the maximum amount of choice possible in this program to allow seniors to improve their property so that they would feel better living in it as long as possible because, as the hon. member will know, especially the member opposite who just spoke to the bill, it costs a whole lot more to have a senior in long-term care or acute care than it would to have them continue in their home.

Other hon. members have asked how the program will save the government \$6 million, and I can tell you exactly how it will do that. The current special needs assistance program provides about \$8 million a year in grants to low-income seniors for essential home repairs. Now, with the introduction of the new loan program, the special needs assistance program will no longer provide these grants. Thus, the government will save about \$6 million. As well, \$2 million is being retained to provide grants to those low-income seniors who need essential home repairs but don't qualify for the loan. That's where the \$6 million in savings is realized.

One might ask: is the government trying to save money on the backs of seniors? Well, we recognize the demographic shift and the

current economic reality. We wanted to maintain supports for seniors. The program not only allows us to do this, but it expands the range of supports to more seniors, gives them the choice of what improvements they want to make to their property to satisfy their physical safety, improve their mobility needs, maintain their independence, and look after health needs while they remain in their home, using money that basically is their own.

A program where people access the equity in their home isn't something that is going to be available or would be readily available through a typical home equity loan program. This is more generous, and it was designed to be more generous. Interest rate wise, it's going to be prime. Right now it's about 2.7 per cent. The 55-year-old minimum-age senior who is the surviving spouse of the initially eligible senior who got the grant can stay in the home as long as they live, and the loan will not have to be repaid until the surviving spouse passes away or sells the property. That's a bit more generous than what you typically find in the normal home equity loan market.

On top of that the home equity loan program typically will have a higher interest rate than what we offer at 2.7 per cent. You'll find also that there may be a variable rate, which could have a really onerous effect on the amount of equity or amount of debt that piles up in a regular home equity loan program, so it's designed to be generous and effective.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Before I call on the next speaker, just a little clarification. With 29(2)(a) the intent is that it could be a point of clarification for the previous speaker, not a response to other speakers in general, so if you could kind of keep it in that spirit. Thank you.

Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today and speak to second reading of Bill 5, Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act. One thing that we have certainly seen today is a sense amongst members of the Assembly that the intention of assisting seniors is of critical importance. We have also seen some significant concerns on this side of the House to . . . [An electronic device sounded] Some sort of legislative fine, I think, comes with whatever just happened there.

We have seen some concern, certainly from this side of the House, around the government's ability to administer the program. We've heard that no additional resources will be required to administer the program but that it's possible that up to 140,000 seniors would access the program or at least that that would be the number eligible. Now, the member across the way has said that they guesstimate a significantly smaller number than that, but the risk still is there.

As you know, Madam Speaker, I am of the firm belief that these types of pieces of legislation need to be studied. I know that the government has written into this piece of legislation that they would like to have the regulations dealt with by the 1st of July, which doesn't give committee a whole ton of time to study, but there is certainly time between now and even before the end of the session. Keeping in mind the fact that we have a couple of weeks of estimates to debate the budget, where committees can't sit, immediately following that, the week of what's likely to be the 17th, 18th, 19th of May and the following week, because there's no constituency week in the month of May thanks to the government's schedule, there is time in the month of May to allow the committee to sit.

One of the reasons why it would be so important is that we've heard from stakeholders, particularly those in the banking industry and those who have provided this kind of product in the past, that

they were quite surprised that this piece of legislation was being brought before the Assembly and that they didn't have an opportunity to provide any sort of feedback to the government on this particular legislation or even on the concept of the legislation. I think it's important that we hear from folks just like that.

I've also heard from some seniors' groups that while they are pleased with some portions, particularly the intention of trying to keep seniors in their homes, they're concerned about whether or not this is actually going to get to the core of what keeps seniors in homes. One of these groups in particular has said: you know, while it's important that seniors may be able to use some equity for a new roof, a new roof isn't going to provide the care that they actually need to keep them in their homes. These are the types of stakeholders that it would be important that we hear from.

5:30

Also, it would be important that we could hear from members of the public service and those in the Finance department because there does run a certain risk of significant liability that the government would be taking on: whether or not the government has the appropriate checks and balances in place to assess risk, whether or not they have the appropriate checks and balances in place to determine the viability of the home or the project. All of these sorts of things are significant exposures.

While I fully support the intent of trying to keep seniors in their homes, it's a good opportunity to stop and take stock about: is this the best path forward? I'm not talking about delays of months and months and months.

I would like to propose an amendment – and then I'll speak specifically to the amendment – to send this bill to committee. It's my personal favourite of all amendments that I rise to make. It's a notice of amendment, and if it's fine with you, Madam Speaker, I will send it out and proceed when you're ready.

The Deputy Speaker: Go ahead, hon. member. The amendment will be known as RF1.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you. Mr. Cooper to move that the motion for second reading of Bill 5, Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 5, Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Families and Communities in accordance with Standing Order 74.2 and that the committee report back to the Assembly no later than May 31, 2016, if the Assembly is then sitting or, if it is not then sitting, within 15 days after the commencement of the next sitting.

Madam Speaker, while we recognize that the government would like to move forward on this bill, passing this bill by introducing it last Thursday, when there was one speaker in debate, then debating the bill this morning at second reading, spending probably only close to an hour at second reading today, then Committee of the Whole, likely tomorrow morning, and quite possibly third reading tomorrow afternoon is passing legislation at breakneck speed. Often when that happens, there are errors or omissions or challenges that occur. We're not asking for the legislation to be delayed in such a manner that it would prevent the government from accomplishing their task of regulations by the 1st of July but certainly ensuring that we can get some experts to come and speak specifically about the bill and some of the potential risks that are included in the legislation.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung on the amendment.

Mr. Dach: Yes, on the amendment. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak against the amendment. I feel almost like I'm back in the real estate business on a referral marathon. The opposition members seem to be intent on installing a practice in this House of referring pretty much every motion it can to committee. Next we'll be asked to have a referendum on every motion that gets through this House. It seems to please opposition members.

However, the bill is rather straightforward, in my view, and this referendum simply looks to stall it and unnecessarily send it to committee. It's not rocket science. It's a straightforward bill which allows seniors to access the equity in their home and improve the property while they live in it so that they can avoid going into long-term care. It gives them lots of consumer protection that is above and beyond what would have been found under the grant program in that the contractors must inform the consumer that they have rights of cancellation. The rights of cancellation extend quite extensively beyond the time frame as to when they actually got the invoice, but as long as the work has not been started or supplies have not been made, the cancellation still can be made within, I believe, 30 days of having been approved for the loan. There are consumer protection elements in it. There is an ability to access home equity, which gives a senior a wider range of abilities to make different improvements to their home that will allow them to stay in it longer.

There's no need to delay the process. We'd like to have people working on seniors' homes very shortly after the bill is proclaimed.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm very pleased to rise again to speak to the referral motion on Bill 5, Seniors' Home Adaptation and Repair Act. There are so many unanswered questions that I have. I was very pleased that we got an explanation finally from the Member for Edmonton-McClung in regard to the \$6 million in savings that they expect from this new bill. He made it quite clear that it would be due to grants no longer being provided to seniors, but they will now have to apply for loans. As I said, I found it very interesting, and I'm sure that the seniors will as well.

We've heard from Albertans that they are worried about their future. They're worried about their parents' and grandparents' future. This government shouldn't be adding yet another concern that could potentially hurt Albertans' future. This is just going to end up being another mistake that we can add to the long list of risky mistakes that have already been made.

People are worried that our seniors will lose valuable equity in their homes and have to face even harder choices down the road when it comes time for them to sell their properties and move into retirement homes. What if the senior passes away? Will the family have to wait for the government to take their share before the estate is divided among family members? What if money that was meant to provide for that senior's bills is tied up in the estate? Will the family have to take care of the cost of the funeral and other bills the senior has until the government has taken its share, all because the government has placed a lien on the property?

Madam Speaker, this bill definitely needs to go to committee and be discussed further before we can possibly pass it. Thank you.

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

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would have to stand against this request for referral to the Families and Communities

Committee. As many of the members in the House will know, there is actually already work that's being done within this committee, with the amendments to the Mental Health Act, and that report is required to be done just soon after the May 31, 2016, date. They're in the middle of doing their consultations and looking at ensuring that they are calling witnesses and working on that process. In addition to that, we also know that they have to do the estimates process, which can take up to a couple of weeks. The timeline within this amendment is not a realistic timeline, so I would at this time have to stand against this amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) does come into effect now should anybody have any questions or comments for the previous speaker.

Seeing none, are there any other speakers to the amendment?

Mr. MacIntyre: Just a comment or maybe a question. It seems to me that the savings that this government is claiming they're going to realize from this thing are on the backs of the senior citizens in this province. I mean, this is unbelievable. You know, you're taking an \$8 million grant system, which I understand is an expense to the government, and turning that into a loan environment, which is actually an asset to the government. So, yeah, you can do some fancy bookkeeping now and look like you actually did something good, but it's on the backs of our senior citizens, for crying out loud. This is unbelievable from a, quote, socially democratic government over here that seems to claim to care for people.

5:40

Furthermore, it's apparent that the members opposite haven't learned their lesson from Bill 6. The Member for Edmonton-McClung was talking about how this isn't rocket science, that this is so straightforward, that this thing just needs to be approved because we need to hurry up, and we need to get this out there. Those are the identical, same kinds of comments that we heard about Bill 6, that they wanted to get shoved through in just two or three days. And then, after the farmers in this province – God bless them – rose up, this government woke up to the reality and issued six pages of amendments to a bill that they originally claimed wasn't rocket science, was just fine, and could be passed just like it was. And that turned out to be bogus. Now we're hearing the same kind of rhetoric from over here: "There's nothing wrong with this bill. We did our homework. Let's just push it on through the House here."

We have standing committees in our legislative process for this very reason. What will the senior citizens say if they could come to a standing committee and you presented to them, Madam Speaker: "Okay. We're going to take an \$8 million grant program, that is just money that we give to you, and we're going to change that to a \$6 million loan program on your back. Tell me something, Mr. and Mrs. Senior Citizen. What do you think about that?" I guarantee you that this government did not consult on that issue with our senior citizens, or they would have heard, loud and clear: "Don't you dare. We're on fixed incomes. We need those grants. We don't need to go deeper in debt. Thank you very much."

The committee process would solve these kinds of silly problems that this so-called not-rocket-science bill is going to create. This thing has to go to committee. It's the right thing to do for the good people of Alberta, for them to come into this building and talk directly to the lawmakers and fix this bill before it just gets shoved down their throat, like they have attempted to do with every single piece of legislation that's come through this House. Shame.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members under 29(2)(a)? Previous speakers?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka on the amendment.

Mr. Orr: I'll make it quick. I do think that this is going to come back and that it is not straightforward. There are a hundred questions here. How is the government going to administer this? I mean, are we going to create a legal loan corporation to manage this kind of money? How are they going to deal with defaults when seniors don't pay their interest? Are they equipped to deal with defaults? How is it going to look, taking seniors to court because they haven't paid their interest? What about approvals? How about terms? How about renewals? How about rates?

The real question, for me, is that this is going to come out of the lives of seniors: 2.7 per cent, which we just heard a few minutes ago, times \$40,000 is \$1,800 in interest per year coming out of seniors' income. And if you factor into that inflation – and the average senior lives today until their mid-80s – and they take this out at 65, the inflation factor is going to reduce their income even more. And if you take that over the 20 years, it comes to \$21,000 out of a senior's income in their senior years. If you multiply that by the 140,000 households we've been talking about here, we're taking \$3 billion over the next 20 years out of seniors. It's another tax on seniors.

The Deputy Speaker: Under 29(2)(a), the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Yeah, under 29(2)(a). I have to rise to challenge some of the comments that were most recently made with creative math by the member opposite. It was a calculation that I had a little trouble following, that's for sure. It didn't add up, that's for damn sure.

The loan program is one that doesn't have to be repaid until either the senior sells the home or passes away or the surviving spouse sells the home or passes away. It's not a matter of the senior making payments while they're still living in the home. It's a home equity loan program. It's not one that you make payments on at all until the home is either sold or until the homeowner passes away and the home is therefore disposed of by the estate. So there's a bit of misinformation there that we should correct right away.

Should this bill pass – and I hope it will – when the loan program is offered to seniors, the expectation is that seniors will say: yes; where do I apply? Beyond the grants that were available under the former \$8 million program, which were rather limited in their scope, what we have here is a program that allows seniors to do a whole panoply of things which are much more suited to their taste than the limited grant program might have offered them. So it's a whole lot more choice that they have to use their own equity to improve their own property.

Thank you.

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

Any other speakers to the amendment?

I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment RF1 lost]

The Deputy Speaker: We're back on the main bill. Are there any further speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am happy to speak in favour of this bill. I proudly represent the constituency of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, and one of those municipalities, being Vegreville, has a large aging seniors population. Twenty-five per cent of the population is actually made up of those over 65, so my constituency office is very busy. My constituency assistant has a large caseload, and she's out there working with seniors all of the time and is a huge asset to the community.

I know that one of the things that she talks to me about is how she runs out of the seniors' benefit program application packages all the time because seniors know where to go when they need help, and they know that we have things that make their lives better. Also, one of the reasons why they know about these programs is because of FCSS. They're a huge asset for sharing info, and these are just some of the ways where we want to make sure that seniors are aware of all of the options that they have.

You know, one of the issues in a community like Vegreville is that the housing stock is a lot older. Unfortunately, one of the things that happens is that when these houses are not renovated on a regular basis, they have a lower value, so it makes it much more difficult for them to be able to make home repairs against the value of their houses. They also have a greater need for repair. The figure I have is that 56 per cent of houses that seniors live in were built over 35 years ago.

Some of the concerns that are most often shared with me when I meet with constituents is that they're concerned that they are not going to be able to live in their homes anymore, and that impacts them being near their family. One of the hugest issues in my constituency is that there is not enough assisted living, there is not enough affordable housing. This is one of those ways that we can try and bridge the gap that needs to be bridged now. We're looking for ways to help seniors in the meantime, you know, between budgets, between infrastructure announcements.

You know, there's a lot of things that we know need to happen, but things like this can help seniors stay in their homes for longer periods of time. In small municipalities that are rural municipalities they're always concerned that they're going to be taken further away from their doctors. These relationships that they have, that lend to their quality of life, are incredibly important. They don't want to be sent to large urban areas where they don't have access to their regular doctors.

There is also the fact that they don't often have enough money to do repairs. I often hear from seniors that they're limited in the projects that they can do, the maximum amounts are restrictive for them to be able to actually do these renovations on their homes, and of course this just further leads to negative impacts on their lives.

5:50

I know that my grandparents have owned a home in Jasper Place for about 55 years. It's a community that they have strong ties to. They belong to the Lions Club. You know, my father grew up there, and my grandma does everything humanly possible that she can to keep her and my grandpa at home. She's lucky that she has children that are invested in their parents, that have experience with renovations.

I've shared in this House before that my dad is a master painter, but he's also a jack of all trades. So he's been able to do things over the last 25 years, renovating the bathroom to have the accessibility for my grandparents to be able to use it, to be able to use the shower, to be able to use the toilet, to be able to use the sink. It's incredibly important. Really basic things that we take for granted all the time. Also, the kitchen is something that is a huge expense. Without having family or friends or the means to do renovations, these

things, if left to deteriorate, make quality of life very difficult and dangerous. My dad also was able to install handrailing down the hallways. He was also able to install a wheelchair ramp out the front door.

This is a means for these seniors to be able to do this, to be able to find good, qualified contractors. A huge part of this is that we know that we need to make sure that we protect our most vulnerable populations, so we need to be really concerned when we put these sorts of things into effect in our province. We need to make sure that they're protected as consumers.

Some of these points here are incredibly important, you know, that the loan program will consider the reasonableness of the costs to the individual for the home repair, renovation, or adaptation as part of the loan approval process. Contractors will be required to advise consumers who are entering into a contract that the loan program is available to eligible individuals, which is a huge issue. We want to make sure that people who are accessing this are not being pointed in the wrong direction, to advise the consumer of their contract cancellation rights if they are not eligible for the loan.

Also, another point is how contracts can be cancelled and how the consumer can notify the contractor, the effect of a contract cancellation and the responsibility of the contractor to refund any money paid if the contract is cancelled. Really simple things that we know are important to protect our seniors. We know that, unfortunately, these populations can be targeted unfairly. Other members have mentioned things like phone scams. Unfortunately, the seniors population has a tendency to be isolated because of lack of mobility, isolated because of a lack of transportation, and these things make some of our populations really vulnerable to exploitation.

I'm really happy to stand and talk some more about my grandma and my grandpa. They lost their licence, so they couldn't drive anymore. We don't want to continually have to negatively impact these people. They're our grandparents, they're our parents depending on what age we are. You know, my grandpa volunteered at the Edmonton public library downtown, helping other seniors learn how to use the Internet. He volunteered at the Edmonton Space and Science Centre for decades, teaching kids science. The Telus World of Science is what it's called now.

When he lost his licence, he couldn't do the things that he wanted to do. He couldn't be involved in volunteerism. And I know all of the members in this House know that we need to keep supporting our volunteers. It's very difficult to recruit, and we need to have these people that have, you know, a real core passion. We need those people so that they can bring up the next generation of volunteers. So we need to not be putting these extra barriers for our seniors to having a good quality of life.

With that, I will say that I am happy to support this bill. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other speakers to the bill?

Seeing none, hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, do you wish to close debate?

Mr. Dach: Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. 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 homes and communities as long as they choose or for as long as they are able is enormously important to them. Being able to live in a place they've called home for years or even decades is often critical to an older person's quality of life and sense of independence.

We as a 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 aging population. This bill helps address those needs and is a great example of how we can help more seniors remain independent in their own homes.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 5 read a second time]

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

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I really enjoyed the debate today. I think we've done some very good work, and I would move that we adjourn until tomorrow morning.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:57 p.m.]

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