



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, May 30, 2016

Day 35

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 29th Legislature

Second Session

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

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Anderson, Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND),
Deputy Government House Leader
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),
Deputy Government House Leader
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)
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Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),
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Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (ND),
Government Whip
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W),
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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC),
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Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)
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Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)
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Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (ND)
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Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)
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Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)
Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC)
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Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC),
Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

Party standings:

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

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Kazim	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, May 30, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let's bow our heads and reflect, each in our own way. We often find ourselves trying to be understood when we should firstly try to understand. We sometimes act when we should listen. We sometimes listen when we should act. Finding the balance can be difficult at times.

Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. Robert Clark. I would invite all of you to sing in the language of your choice.

Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!
True patriot love in all thy sons command.
Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,
Il sait porter la croix!
Ton histoire est une épopée
Des plus brillants exploits.
God keep our land glorious and free!
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

The Speaker: Thank you. Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: Hon. members, I'll just remind: given the scarcity of time, keep the introductions as brief as possible.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Legislature 37 special guests from my riding of Edmonton-Whitemud. These are students from the French immersion class at l'école Monsignor William Irwin Catholic elementary school. They are accompanied by Mme Carol Dyck, a teacher, and Mme Carrie Lefrancois. I would ask them to rise and receive the usual warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 32 people from l'école Father Jan in St. Albert. If I could get them to please rise when I say their names: Mme Natalie Jurick, Mme Lise Dunn, Mlle Ann Heggart, Mlle Annette Perreux, and all the students. Please welcome them.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege today to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly 28 grade 6 French immersion students from Landing Trail intermediate school in beautiful Athabasca. They are accompanied today by their teacher, Jennifer Jones, and a parent volunteer, Melanie Giroux. If the class and teacher could please rise and receive the customary warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other school groups today?

Hearing none, the Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal.

Ms Gray: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm really delighted today to introduce to you and through you some of my former colleagues and friends from Iomer Internet Solutions. Prior to the election I worked at Iomer for seven years. They are a locally owned and operated information technology consulting company. They are located only two blocks away, but I have to say that it has felt like worlds apart since I became elected. They provide emerging technology solutions for business and government and help customers to realize their goals and expectations, and they're definitely known for innovative solutions. I would ask my guests to rise as I say their names: my former colleagues Joanne Knox, Kerry Wiebe, Jeff Mah, Kael Nicholson, Kaleb Dell, Scott Johnston, and Caitlin Smart. Thank you for joining us here today. I'd ask all members to give them the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

Ms Drever: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you the executive board of the Sindhi Association of North America southern Alberta division. This organization dedicates itself to fostering friendship and understanding between the Sindhis and other nationalities and educates people about Sindhi culture, philosophy, language, and heritage. In Calgary they have created a place for the Sindhi diaspora to celebrate and gather together as a community. Joining us in the gallery – and I'd ask you to rise as I say your names – are Mashhood Qazi, president and head of the delegation; Max Memon; Fayyaz Gajani; Jameel Ahmed; Ms Najma Fayyaz; Zulfiqar Ali; and Shahzad Qazi. I would ask my guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly today some constituents from my fantastic region of Leduc-Beaumont. Today I have with me four people. If you would stand when I say your name: John Slomnicki, a proud IBEW electrician; Kim Slomnicki, his wife, who is one of my CAs; her daughter Amber; and Kim's mom, Barbara Toews, who's joined us today to have a tour of the Legislature. I would appreciate it if all of you would give them the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Are there any other guests, hon. members? The Member for Calgary-Hawkwood.

Mr. Connolly: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly my mother, Linda Davies, and my sister Chantal Connolly. My mother has been a teacher with the CBE and an ATA member for 29 years now, and my sister will graduate from the education program at the U of C next week. I'd now ask my guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Now Edmonton-Meadowlark.

Mr. Carson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise in the Assembly today and introduce to you and through you a fine school group from the Premier's riding of Edmonton-Strathcona. There are 24 visitors altogether: Karri McKinnon, teacher; Jennifer Soon, educational assistant; as well as parent Renata Brunner Jass. I would ask the teachers and parent as well as the students to rise and accept the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.
The Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an absolute pleasure to introduce to you and through you a very faithful member of the Wildrose team who supports one of the biggest players on this side of the House – she recently was travelling around the southern United States and has just returned home to Canada to make sure that he's at work – Mrs. Tiffany Nixon, wife of my good friend and colleague the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

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

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly, from the diverse constituency of Drumheller-Stettler, Mr. Cody Borek. Mr. Borek, if you'd stand, please, and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

1:40 Members' Statements

Rural Health Service Providers

Mr. Hinkley: Mr. Speaker, today I have the privilege to read a précis of a letter thanking St. Mary's hospital of Camrose and, in particular, the early discharge stroke team as well as other rural health service providers. St. Mary's has been earning a fabulous reputation among Alberta Health Services for its excellent patient care.

This letter comes from the Hoffmans of Viking. Mr. Hinkley:

My husband suffered a severe stroke . . . He was very well cared for . . . at the Camrose Hospital. The staff . . . were very efficient. They did their work well but they also were good at an important part of recovery – they really cared . . .

Every one of the [early stroke discharge] team members were enthusiastic, kind and respectful. They were never hurried or impatient. They kept in contact by phone whenever we had questions . . .

The team members are very capable in their professions . . . Don was impressed by the variety of therapies they introduced. The teleconferencing with the Glenrose . . . was very successful.

We believe that without this program Don would have found coping with his limitations very difficult. The team introduced to him many techniques to help himself, they gave him hope . . . They also helped us with other medical contacts and equipment. I know that both Don and myself as a caregiver would have been floundering in all the details that come with coping at home if we hadn't had this help.

An important part of Don's care was the emergency service we received . . . We are so thankful that we have competent emergency care in Viking.

In closing I have to say that we are very thankful for the care received through the long 6 months of recovery. From the ambulance to the care at Camrose, to the physiotherapy at SAGE, to the Early Stroke discharge team, to access to neurologists and the Glenrose . . . we have been blessed.

Mr. Speaker, this letter provides one more reason why investments in health care are more important than making drastic cuts to balance our budget or gain a credit rating.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Canadian Hockey League Memorial Cup 2016

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Hockey is the best sport in the world. It brings Canadians together. It brings out the best in us Canucks. All over the world we're known for saying, "I'm sorry," and for being great at hockey.

This weekend central Alberta was proud to host the Memorial Cup, at which the London Knights took home the coveted trophy. They fought hard. They won it in four straight. In every game their game finesse impressed me and amazed the crowds.

The crowd was treated not just to a great hockey series but to the famous hospitality that central Alberta is known for. Along with the arenas set up for the main events, there were additional arenas set up for family games and kids' games. Everybody got to participate in the festivities as the greatest game on Earth was played by people of all ages and skills. And true to our country roots there was live country music.

On top of everyone having a blast and enjoying themselves, the people were also contributing to the economic well-being of the central Alberta region. People from all over Canada travelled to participate in the festivities. They ate at the restaurants, stayed at the hotels, visited local vendors, and explored the greatness of central Alberta.

I'm looking forward to the next games, when, hopefully, an Alberta team can actually take home the cup. I'm also looking forward to the other major tourism events that are coming to central Alberta. This summer the Tour of Alberta and then in 2019, specifically, the Canadian Winter Games will be economic and festive boons for the region.

It is events such as these that bring Albertans together in celebration and bring out our competitive spirit, but hockey does score high above all the rest in bringing out the best in Canadians. Some days I think that hockey might be the answer to all our problems. Life seems so much simpler when you're with friends enjoying an ice-cold drink and watching hockey.

I would like to thank the sponsors, the planning team, everybody who hosted the Memorial Cup, all the volunteers, and everybody who participated. Everyone who was at the Memorial Cup had the best weekend possible. I tip my hat to the great people of central Alberta.

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

Office of the Premier

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A veteran recently said to me: in my time in service I met some generals that I would not cross the street to say hello to, but I will salute every one of them out of respect for the rank they hold. Every party in this House would like their party leader to occupy the office of the Premier. Because of this, we must remember to respect the office even if we disagree with the party in government.

In this Legislative Assembly, where we are all equals, the Premier is the head of the House. When the head of any household invites a guest, common decency and good manners dictate that all members of the House greet invited guests with at least a minimum

level of courtesy and decorum and do so in a dignified fashion. The Premier's job is to build bridges with other jurisdictions, some of whom we may even disagree with. We hobble the Premier's ability to build those bridges when a simple, positive introduction cannot be achieved. Last week, when the Premier had a guest come in from another province, that guest and the office that guest holds were not given the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly by some members. The Premier of Ontario was greeted by bad manners by some members of this House. Bad manners can reflect on the entire province and the office of Premier.

It is about respect for the democratic process. We don't have to like the politics of every guest that comes into this House, but we have to give the Premier a chance to work with them for the betterment of Alberta. We routinely greet each other's partisan guests warmly. We didn't pick the Premier's party; the voters did. That is part of the democratic process, and if we can't have the core amount of respect for the democratic process, for what brings all of us here, maybe some of us should think about who we work for.

The Leader of the Official Opposition and some other members did not stand for the Premier of Ontario. The hon. members who cannot bring themselves to live up to the most minimum levels of respect and courtesy for democracy maybe – just maybe – ought to consider if this is really where they want to work.

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

Public Transit

Mr. Horne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to share with you and this Assembly the joys of my daily transit ride from my constituency, beautiful Spruce Grove-St. Albert. As many of you are aware, I often take rush-hour transit with many of my constituents. Commuting by bus is a fun commute and gives me an opportunity to interact with my constituents. It's a great way to avoid dealing with the rush hour traffic, and I can get some reading done or respond to some e-mails while en route to and from the Legislature. Commuting by bus has also proven a great opportunity to connect with my constituents. As an added bonus, busing reduces my carbon footprint and eases congestion on the road.

My community is serviced by St. Albert Transit, a well-established system, and the city of Spruce Grove, which is currently serviced by Edmonton Transit, is moving forward with establishing their own network with the help of GreenTRIP funding.

Mr. Speaker, public transportation is an investment in our future. As green infrastructure, public transit creates permanent jobs in our communities. It reduces carbon emissions and makes our communities more accessible to Albertans.

Often the challenge in sprawling cities such as the Edmonton region is to find an affordable solution. I am glad that our government has taken steps to address this crucial issue in Edmonton. As part of their joint efforts to reduce and prevent poverty, the city and province are developing a cost-shared, low-income transit pass to increase access to public transit and connect families to community supports and resources. Eligibility for Edmonton's pass will be based on 100 per cent of the low-income cut-off. The city of Edmonton estimates that 20,000 people each month will be eligible for this pass and will make use of a low-income transit pass program. Mr. Speaker, this is good news for families and individuals who would like to use transit but simply cannot afford to buy a monthly pass.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Curtis Marshall Memorial Skate Park

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Suicide: it's difficult to talk about and often kept hidden. When someone has died by suicide, we speak of it in hushed, almost embarrassed tones. The notion of young people so filled with hopelessness that they see no option but suicide is profoundly disturbing. In my constituency suicide is far too prevalent.

But I'd like to share one particular suicide story. Curtis Marshall was a talented young man from Peace River. Friendly, outgoing, and kind, with a great sense of humour, Curtis cared about people. He was an avid reader and loved writing. Everyone thought he'd become a social worker or a journalist. But Curtis also suffered from depression. Although he managed to hide the pain of his illness for a long time, it eventually took his life.

Curtis's story, however, has become a positive and hopeful one. Wanting to honour his memory and find ways to heal, his family and friends embarked on a special project. Curtis loved skateboarding. He was good at it. Not only was it an active, creative sport; for Curtis, it was a way to belong to the community. His dream was to have a place in Peace River where young people could gather and share his passion for skateboarding. That dream is now reality. Through the generosity of people and businesses in the community along with contributions from local and provincial government, work on the foundation is scheduled to begin this summer.

1:50

Initially, some were reluctant to support the project, feeling it would glorify or idealize suicide. This is wrong. The Curtis Marshall memorial skateboard park will allow us to speak Curtis's name aloud and recognize that depression is an illness that is sometimes fatal. Perhaps most importantly, the park will help the community have open, honest conversations about suicide, about how we can encourage mental wellness in our youth and ensure that adequate mental health treatment is available when needed. The Curtis Marshall memorial skate park will be a social meeting place in Peace River where young people and families can exercise, enjoy the outdoors, and hone their skateboard skills, a place where the community can heal and grow together.

To Curtis's mom, Elaine, to Kris, and to all those who have worked so hard on the project: thank you. I'm proud to have the Curtis Marshall memorial skate park in my constituency, and I'm looking forward to taking my grandchildren to skate there this summer.

Thank you.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Restaurant Industry Support

Mr. Jean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One hundred and fifty thousand Albertans are directly employed in the restaurant industry. These are the entrepreneurs, the business owners, the cooks, the butchers, the bakers, the baristas, the servers who now more than ever need a job. What they don't need are new experiments that put their livelihoods at risk, but that's exactly what this NDP government is doing. With higher beer taxes, a massive minimum wage increase, and a new carbon tax, our restaurant industry is being hit hard. Why isn't the Premier at all concerned about the livelihoods her policies are putting at risk here in Alberta?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As was mentioned in the member's statement earlier by the leader of the third party, the people of Alberta had a choice. They had a choice between a number of different leaders, and they chose a party that had an increase in the minimum wage so that people who are working full-time can afford to live, you know, and do not have to stop at the food bank on their way home from work. Certainly, they gave us direction on where they want to see us moving forward. They want to make sure that people can afford to work full-time and buy food and pay the rent. That's what we're going to be consulting with Albertans on the specifics of how to get there in the weeks and months ahead.

Mr. Jean: Quote: there are many restaurants who are really surviving on a knife-edge right now. End quote. That's from Mark von Schellwitz, the VP of western Canada for Restaurants Canada. He's speaking on behalf of men and women who invest their lives into their small businesses and local restaurants. A bad exchange rate, a slumping economy, and bad NDP policies are making things much worse for Alberta businesses. How can the Premier stand there knowing that her policies are directly hurting those families who rely on a successful restaurant industry?

Ms Hoffman: Like, I'm sure, many members of this House, hopefully all members of this House, I have been engaging with business owners in our area. When I say, you know, "What could help your business?", they say, "If people had more money in their pockets and if they could be out spending it." That's why they want to make sure that we work to diversify our economy. That's why they want us to get a pipeline to tidewater, so that we have people working diligently on that pipeline, we're getting the best price for our product, and Albertans themselves can have a good revenue, good money in their pockets and be spending it in local business, Mr. Speaker. We'll continue working on all of those areas to move forward and strengthen our economy.

Mr. Jean: Albertans aren't going to have it in their pockets if you keep taxing them and taking it out.

The fact is that this government is experimenting with people's lives. While they get to sit in their nice, comfy chairs for the next three years, there are actually people in this province very much hurting: 75 per cent of restaurant owners expect their sales to drop even further than they have over the next six months. But all this government has to offer them is a new carbon tax and a drastic hike to the minimum wage, that will punish them. At a time when unemployment is at its highest in nearly two decades, how can the Premier possibly stand beside and behind these reckless and harmful policies, that really hurt Albertans?

Ms Hoffman: The fact is that we are dealing with a once-in-a-lifetime drop in the price of oil, Mr. Speaker, and that's impacting all of us in Alberta in a significant way. We have been working with our partners, including small business, by cutting their taxes by one-third this year. We're very proud of that. We're going to continue to work with Albertans to make sure that those who are working full-time can afford to spend that money in the local economy. Study after study shows that when low-income citizens have money in their pockets, it typically gets spent in the local economy as opposed to purchasing online or out of province. So we're really proud, and we're going to be moving forward with business and with workers.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Deputy Premier.
Second main question.

Carbon Levy and Energy Costs

Mr. Jean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Despite natural gas being a clean, low-carbon fuel that will be essential in efforts to reduce global emissions, the NDP government is increasing the price of natural gas by 50 per cent under the carbon tax. It's hard to imagine how jacking up added costs on this industry will help any Albertans whatsoever. It makes heating houses in the winter more expensive. It hurts job creators across the province and the economy and risks putting even more pressure on our electricity grid, which is already out of control under this government's policies. Why doesn't the Premier understand that this action, these extra costs on families, businesses, and our natural gas industry are damaging? They're just hurting us.

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

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In terms of moving forward, we're really committed to our climate change leadership strategy. We've had validators from all sorts of different industries stand up with us on that, and they are saying that it's positive to move forward with one-third of coal generation being replaced by natural gas to keep prices stable. The report, the FirstEnergy report that I believe is being referred to, also talked about how Albertans will be paying \$28 less per megawatt than they did in 2013.

Mr. Jean: Shirley's Greenhouse in Didsbury grows local produce like lettuce, bell peppers, and tomatoes. They sell in farmers' markets right across southern Alberta, including in Calgary. They told CTV news that they will see their natural gas bills climb an extra \$30,000 per year. For families it's hundreds of dollars gone. Businesses will see their costs certainly escalate, and for our industry it's even more uncertainty. How can the Premier stand behind this tax on a clean, low-carbon fuel when Albertans simply can't afford to pay the price?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you for the question. Mr. Speaker, certainly, for people who are nervous about what's happening moving forward: it's no wonder, with some of the misinformation that's being spread by the members across the aisle.

To go back to the facts, performance standards are being drafted for natural gas power plants to ensure that prices remain competitive for consumers. The report itself, again, predicts that when a carbon price is fully implemented, Albertans will still be paying \$28 less per megawatt than they did in 2013, Mr. Speaker. This is good news for consumers, it's good news for the environment, and it's good news for Alberta.

Mr. Jean: Across all industries and sectors this hike on natural gas is going to hurt Albertans a lot. Charities will see natural gas costs skyrocket, especially those who provide shelter for our most vulnerable citizens. As schools and hospitals see their natural gas costs climb, it will mean less money going towards classrooms and emergency rooms – it will – and for businesses across the province it will mean less money to hire and to invest in Albertans. With this in mind, how can the Premier possibly justify this massive tax increase on every Alberta family?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much for the question. Mr. Speaker, we've been connecting with lots of stakeholders, and they have said

that they're really grateful to have a government that's committed to stable, predictable funding, as opposed to what's being proposed opposite, which is the cutting of billions of dollars from public spending. With that stable, predictable funding they will find ways to do their part in terms of reducing emissions. Everyone wants to except the members opposite, who want to pretend that climate change isn't actually a problem, or maybe they're middle of the road, or maybe they're on the far extreme of denial. We're not really sure. But do you know who is? The mayor of Calgary. He says: it was interesting to hear someone say that things are going to help Canadians' investment and moving forward with the fact that Canada is making real steps in pricing carbon.

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy Premier.
The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Essential Services Commissioner

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Essential Services Commissioner wields significant power over Alberta's labour agreements. It's imperative that they be fair-minded and independent because they make final, binding decisions that impact public-sector employers and employees. But this government has hired a long-time NDP supporter who has personally donated to the NDP over a dozen times, giving that party over \$20,000. How can Albertans be sure that the Essential Services Commissioner hired is going to represent Albertans' best interests and not just be the latest supporter getting a return on their investment?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Certainly, I think our track record on making sure that we're pulling in the best experts from across the country is proven: for example, former Bank of Canada governor David Dodge, who advised us on our \$34 billion infrastructure plan; Joseph Doucet, University of Alberta School of Business dean, chair of the Premier's Advisory Committee on the Economy. The list goes on, and I'm very proud of our latest appointment. She certainly brings forward great expertise, both from Saskatchewan and Alberta, in terms of labour relations and will be a tremendous asset in this role.

2:00

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, she forgot to mention Manitoba in there. This same government gave a sole-source contract for a staggering \$25,000 of taxpayer money to a former NDP MLA to share lived experience. Not sure what that means. This same government demonstrated blindness to conflict of interest in their hiring of a top labour negotiator. This same government couldn't even commission a simple report on media accreditation without a conflict of interest. Will the Premier make public why other applicants for this position were turned down and who made the final call for hiring?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The applicant was chosen by a search committee which conducted a thorough talent search for the best possible person for the job. For example, Andy Sims, who's been commended in this House as being of excellent character and understanding this file very carefully, said that he knows the woman, he knows that she has personal integrity, and she is a first-rate person. We certainly stand behind the process that was put in place to select the best person for this panel moving forward.

Mr. Hunter: Mr. Speaker, it's integral that the Essential Services Commissioner be fair minded. The new Essential Services Commissioner personally donated \$5,000 to this Premier's leadership campaign. That same Premier's government represents the employer's side in any dispute brought before the Essential Services Commissioner, and the same government had a say in the hiring of that commissioner. When the NDP were elected, was this the change the Premier championed?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Albertans certainly elected us to put forward the best work possible, and Gwen Gray and her experience and expertise as an Alberta labour lawyer will serve us well as the Essential Services Commissioner. Commissioner Gray has more than a decade of experience, again, in Alberta labour, employment, human rights, and law. In addition, she also previously served as chair of the Saskatchewan Labour Relations Board. Of course, again, as I've said, we've appointed people from all sorts of different backgrounds, including ATB president Dave Mowat, who we chose to conduct our royalty review. We're bringing the best people forward to help do this work, and Ms Gray is certainly one of those.

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

Job Creation

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Premier and cabinet talk a lot about job-creation programs, yet when you ask them for specifics, they never have any. Nearly every week this government issues a news release about creating jobs, yet Albertans are not finding new jobs. In fact, Alberta government stats indicate increasing unemployment and falling job vacancies. Alberta lost 20,800 jobs in April alone. To the Premier: other than giving jobs to one minister and some out-of-province, NDP-world-view hacks, how many new jobs for Albertans has your government actually created?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to respond to this question. There are two approaches to dealing with economic shock caused by the drop of price in oil as well as natural disasters, including the wildfires. The opposition would have us turn back the clock. Actually, they spoke philosophically about how great it was, the 1990s, when they fired thousands of teachers, nurses, and public servants. Instead, we're using a very balanced, reasoned approach, moving forward with a number of different economic stimulation plans. We'll continue to support public service.

The Speaker: So far so good, but I remind you again: keep the volume down, please.

Mr. McIver: That would be one job less tens of thousands of energy jobs.

The economic development minister has said that 80 per cent of contracts for the Fort McMurray rebuild have gone to Fort McMurray businesses, yet I've heard the number is false. The Fort McMurray Construction Association has said that workers from the community are being overlooked for jobs. Since the minister said that there's information out there, I'm going to give the minister a chance to clear that up. To the minister: will you commit to tabling

a list of the 532 contracts signed, who they were awarded to, and where those employers will get their workers from?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member for the question. Being a former municipal leader, the member should actually know that the bulk of these contracts – in fact, the government of Alberta has only issued five contracts. The over 500 contracts the member is speaking of were issued by the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo. It is up to them to decide if they would like to disclose the list, but I can tell you that 80 per cent, or 4 out of 5 contracts, of the 500 that the regional municipality has issued have been to Fort McMurray workers and owners.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A vibrant and viable Fort McMurray is critical to the successful rebuilding of the economic structure of the region. We know that the province has already contracted an Ontario company to map the fire damage using unmanned aerial vehicles. Can the minister explain why the contract was outsourced away from the province without hiring somebody from Fort McMurray or even Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again, as the member will know, under extraneous circumstances there are times that governments use sole-source contracts. In the example of the Fort McMurray fire the five contracts that have been issued were a combination of the fact that they needed to be done in a very critical, timely manner. As well, our government will only look outside of Fort McMurray and outside of Alberta when there are contracts that cannot be filled by Alberta-based companies. But I can tell you that we are working with the regional municipality to ensure . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Renewable Energy Strategy

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, this government has made it clear that it's phasing out coal-fired electricity, and I believe this is the right thing to do. Less clear is how quickly coal electricity is going to phase out and what mix of natural gas and renewables will replace coal and the impact of that on the public. We're already seeing a massive public debt burden and an oversupply of electricity in this province, so this energy shift will not come cheap. Can the government provide Albertans and the House with a cost-benefit analysis for the optimal balance of renewables and natural gas replacing coal?

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. Our government is pursuing the long-term phase-out of coal-fired plants in the best interests of Albertans, including the health and economic impacts. We're building on robust climate leadership panel recommendations, and we have tasked the AESO to consult with energy industry experts to recommend the program to bring on more renewables. The AESO has already consulted with

hundreds of companies, experts, and citizens on how we can keep costs low while bringing on renewables. We expect this report to be here soon, and we will make the . . .

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

Dr. Swann: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. It would be nice to know what the cost-benefit analysis was before we make the decisions about the pace of phase-out.

What impact will the decisions have on consumer prices?

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Well, unlike our former government, we are putting the protection of ratepayers first. A key part of the AESO's analysis is to achieve this important transition away from coal at the lowest possible cost to consumers. We look forward to their recommendations. For the first time ever we will be investing in programs through Energy Efficiency Alberta that will help Albertans reduce their electricity consumption and reduce their bills.

Dr. Swann: I guess that's why they call this question period, Mr. Speaker.

Given that the cost of implementing renewables is likely to be high but potentially able to earn attractive and stable long-term returns, has the government considered creating a publicly held corporation similar to the Alberta Energy Company under Premier Lougheed, allowing individual Albertans to invest in their renewable energy future? [interjections]

The Speaker: The Minister of Energy.
Quiet, please.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. At this time our focus is to carry out our first renewable energy auction within the context of Alberta's unique electricity market. We have had significant interest from renewable energy companies around the world, who are looking to invest billions of dollars in Alberta. That's the work that is under way right now. It's on time, and we are on course to hold our first renewables auction this year. Our intention is transitioning our electricity system away from coal towards a cleaner, healthier, and more stable mix of renewable power and natural gas. We will continue to listen to the advice of . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Forest Industry Issues

Mr. Westhead: Mr. Speaker, Alberta's forestry industry is the third-largest industry in our province. Forestry supports good jobs and is a renewable resource. But concerns have been raised about the impacts of clear-cutting on the landscape. Can the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry explain what his department is doing to address these concerns?

The Speaker: The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member. Our government is committed to the protection of the land, water, and environmentally sustainable industry practices. We'll continue to monitor harvest operations to ensure companies maintain high standards. In cases where communities have raised concerns over operations in their areas, my department officials have worked closely with concerned citizens and the industry to modify operations to increase buffers for habitat, watersheds, and other

valuable parts of the landscape. We're also looking at changing the directive on structural retention in harvest areas. This will clarify what portion of trees and large stands are expected to be left in a cutblock. This directive remains under consultation with stakeholders.

2:10

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

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that a significant amount of timber harvesting in our province occurs in the traditional territories of indigenous Albertans, to the same minister: can you tell the House how our government is partnering with indigenous groups to ensure their valid issues are addressed?

Mr. Carlier: Mr. Speaker, our government made the bold decision to implement the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. As part of this government's commitment to renew and improve its relationship with indigenous peoples, we are examining ways in which we might find a common and practical understanding of how to implement those principles. That work is ongoing. This will be an evolving conversation with our indigenous partners. The department has also awarded timber quotas to a number of indigenous communities. I am heartened to hear of new partnerships being formed between forest companies and indigenous communities.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the softwood lumber agreement expired last October and given that this is a very sensitive issue and many in the industry are relying on Alberta's leadership on this file, can the minister tell the House what his department is doing to ensure Alberta's interest is looked after?

Mr. Carlier: Mr. Speaker, the Canada-U.S. softwood lumber agreement expired on October 12, 2015. Discussions have begun between Canada and the U.S. to negotiate a new agreement. Canada's forest industry relies significantly on exports. It is very important for our province that Alberta's companies have secure markets for their lumber. Alberta would support an extension of the recently expired agreement. There is currently a one-year standstill agreement where we can negotiate the softwood lumber agreement. We'll continue to work with the federal government, our lumber industry, and other provinces. We want to see a long-term solution. It is in the best interests of all parties and of Alberta.

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

Carbon Levy and Education Costs

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The carbon tax is going to have severe implications on costs for school boards as well as for families. This government knew that they wanted to pass a carbon tax that would impact transportation and heating costs for school boards, yet the Education budget has minimal increases for heating costs and only minimal increases for transportation funding. Why did the Minister of Education not do an economic assessment of the carbon tax regarding education and build in the costs of the carbon tax into his recently passed Education budget?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. Certainly, our climate leadership plan has an

integral connection with our schools. We know that education, teachers, and students are very interested in reducing our carbon footprint, and what greater place to start than schools across the province. Now, we are working very closely with all of our school boards to make sure that that analysis is done and that we are taking our carbon tax money – yes – and we will invest it back into the school boards so that they can have projects that will reduce their carbon footprints.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. An impact assessment might have solved the problems this next question is going to bring up.

Given that we are hearing from school boards that they are preparing to lay off aides and other front-line staff to reduce costs and given that school boards are facing hundreds of thousands of dollars in additional costs to their budgets due to the carbon tax, is this minister content with laying off front-line workers in order for school boards to be able to afford this government's downloading of the carbon tax onto schools?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. Certainly, we are working very closely with all of our school boards to make sure that the cost of the carbon levy is affordable and that they can work through it in the most expeditious way possible. Certainly, this notion that they are going to actually be laying off any workers is absurd.

Mr. Smith: The minister needs to talk to his school boards.

Given that school boards are able to raise funds only through school fees and other fundraising opportunities and given that the carbon tax is going to have a major impact on school board funding and given that school boards like Rocky View school division are increasing their transportation fees and since the Minister of Education seems to be stalled in giving school boards direction regarding school fees, is this minister supportive of passing on the carbon tax to parents through increases in school fees?

Ms Phillips: Well, Mr. Speaker, of course, on this side of the House we embrace the science of climate change. We accept it as a fact, unlike the other side of the House, where we have many, many different examples of folks who deny the science of climate change outright. They call it a hoax. On the other hand, we have 500 schools that have signed up to be powered by wind, 25 school boards that have signed 25-year contracts with Calgary-based BluEarth Renewables, and here's what the teachers had to say: instead of just talking about how green energy can be, we can actually do it right here. That's because they understand climate change.

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

Carbon Levy and Agriculture Costs

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I've heard concerns from Alberta's ag producers about what the carbon tax will cost them. Unlike this government's record on consulting with ag producers, I hope that there's a plan for consultation with farmers about the new carbon tax. To the minister of ag: I know it's been said before, but will you clearly state today that marked fuel for farmers will be exempt from the carbon tax?

The Speaker: The Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. I'm happy to reiterate what we said on November 22, 2015, when we indicated that marked fuel would be exempt. It is also contained within Bill 20. In addition, we've had a number of conversations already with the agricultural sector, through last fall, the technical engagement and consultations we did, and since then the minister and I have met with a number of different groups and interests, including the irrigation districts and others. We're happy to work with them going forward to reduce their costs and therefore their emissions.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that there are a lot of input costs for ag producers on farms that will be affected by your government's carbon tax and given that the carbon tax will not only impact the cost of fuel to transport fertilizer but also impact how much fertilizer will cost to produce since fertilizer production uses large amounts of natural gas, to the minister: have you calculated how much more fertilizer will cost farmers because of your carbon tax?

The Speaker: The minister of environment.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Of course, last fall's consultation included technical engagements with the fertilizer sector in order to move forward on a series of performance standards for the fertilizer sector as we move them from the specified gas emitters regulation to the performance standard system, which, of course, will phase in in 2018. We're going to make sure that we design those policies in consultation with them so that we do not adversely affect our energy-intensive, trade-exposed industries, of which fertilizer is one.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It may not affect the fertilizer industry because they just pass it on to the farmer.

Given that there are not just input costs but also output costs that affect Alberta farmers, that they'll have to absorb, and given that when farmers sell their products, they'll have to pay higher transportation costs, which means farmers get it both ways, coming and going, to the minister: how much more will farmers have to pay to export their products because of your government's carbon tax?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, there are a number of different inputs as well as outputs in agricultural production. We are working with the sector to ensure that we've got the right set of policies for farmers, ranchers, and others to ensure that we can move forward on bioenergy and other innovative solutions and work with the agricultural sector. This has formed a large part of our consultations to date and will continue to do so.

Thank you.

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

Tourism Industry Support

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This NDP carbon tax on everything will systematically hurt each and every industry in our province, including tourism. Plain and simple, this tax will make things worse going forward. Albertans understand that international

flights are the gateway to tourism in Alberta, and now on Thursday we heard that international flights are being permanently cancelled. The carbon tax will apply to all flights in and out of Alberta. It'll be another blow to the industry. Why is this NDP government damaging our province's tourism potential by taxing Albertans and the aviation industry?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of environment.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Interjurisdictional flights are not subject to the carbon levy. They're exempt.

Mr. Orr: Just fuel.

Building a tax bubble is not going to help tourism. Given that tourism is a significant economic driver for our province, particularly during this economic downturn, and given that the NDP government on the one hand talks about diversifying the economy but on the other hand is taxing everyday Albertans, hotel owners, tour outfitters, visitors even, will this government acknowledge that you can't have it both ways, that you can't tax the people out of business that you are relying on to grow the economy?

2:20

Miranda: Thank you to the member for the question. I'm happy to report to the House the positive growth in tourism, both in spending and visitation, in 2014, with 900,000 visitors actually travelling to Alberta, which is up 17 per cent from the year before. We have seen an increase in tourism. We will continue to support the industry. We're very excited about what we've seen so far.

Thank you.

Mr. Orr: Given that this NDP government is going to make hotel owners and operators feel a double whammy of both a carbon tax and a mandatory increase to the minimum wage, those in the tourism industry are rightly worried. Now we actually begin to see signs that it is not growing as supposed. These risky policies will have a profound impact on communities and tourism across the province. Will the NDP government commit to cancelling both the carbon tax and the minimum wage increase since to date they have refused to provide any form of an economic impact assessment?

The Speaker: The Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the hon. member is incorrect. Interjurisdictional flights are not covered by the levy. Now, additionally, on these matters of economic impact, this is why we have reduced the small-business rate by one percentage point. It's a one-third reduction in the small-business tax rate, and we're very proud of that. In addition, because we accept the science of climate change and we do believe it is real, we will have a series of energy efficiency programs that will be available to small business and to medium-sized business as well. We, unlike the Official Opposition, do not deny the science of climate change.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The Member for Little Bow.

Educational Delivery Choices

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many of my constituents are concerned about continued parental choice in education. I was pleased to see unanimous consent supporting the original wording of Motion 504 earlier, but there are ongoing concerns in the home education community about financial clawbacks. Many families make major sacrifices in order to home-school their children. Can

the minister clarify this and reaffirm that funding for home education isn't being clawed back?

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. Certainly, it's important that we look carefully at the funds that we put to education in all forms. Certainly, it's true that we have not clawed back home-school funding. In fact, we increased funding for enrolment right across the board in all forms of education here in the province of Alberta, so the ongoing rumours about clawing back the home-schooling money are simply not true.

Mr. Schneider: Mr. Speaker, given that this Assembly has recognized the right of parents to make decisions on educational delivery for their children and given that there are lengthy waiting lists for some charter schools in our province and given that some hostile special-interest groups are publicly calling charter schools an outdated idea that should be rolled into the public system, can the minister reaffirm that the current government will not cut funding for these educational institutions in this or any future term?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. Certainly, our side of the House is very happy to know that he recognizes there'll be many terms of this current government here to serve. Certainly, I have made a very solid commitment to each of the forms of education delivery that we have. I was just at the Westmount charter high school graduation last week, where they were very happy to know that I had extended their charter for another 15 years. They are certainly doing a great job, and I think that our caucus here is doing a great job affirming education.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Schneider: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that a recent report showed that independent schools saved taxpayers \$750 million over five years, between 2010 and 2014, and given that the cost to taxpayers in private schools is less than half the public school cost, can the minister reaffirm that private schools save public money and that the current government will not cut funding or change this model in this or any future term?

Mr. Eggen: Well, certainly, as the minister now for just over a year, I've seen lots of really good work in all forms of education delivery that we have here in the province of Alberta. Certainly, independent schools exemplify a lot of good work as well. Certainly, the 70 per cent funding, in fact, that we do give to independent schools has remained with the increase in enrolment right across the province. I think that the organization that represents that has affirmed to me that they're very grateful for that, and they recognize the good work that we're doing to make sure that education is properly funded in this province.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

Fort McMurray Wildfire Economic Recovery

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Our caucus is glad to see the rebuilding efforts begin in Fort McMurray. Local businesses are ready and willing to help, which is why I was concerned when the Fort McMurray Construction Association stated that they were told

by this government that the contractors would need to have a previous contract with the province to be included in the rebuild effort. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: will contractors looking to assist with the rebuilding efforts need to have a previous GOA contract to be considered?

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. There are no prerequisites as far as contracts for companies bidding in Fort McMurray. In fact, we have been working with the regional municipality, the economic development committee, a number of organizations up in Fort McMurray, including the chamber, and encouraging all companies from Fort McMurray and Alberta-wide, if they are interested in contracts, to register at the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo website, rmwb.ca, and they will be eligible companies.

Thank you.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister of economic development stated that external companies would only be used in complicated, specific projects where no local expertise was available and given that the complicated nature of these projects may require subcontracting, to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: what mechanism has your government put in place to match up out-of-work contractors with external companies who may need extra labour for their projects?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll thank the member for the question, a very good question, but it goes back to the same answer. First of all, the government of Alberta is working with the regional municipality. In fact, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and I had a very productive meeting with a number of local businesses, local business organizations just last week to look at ways the government of Alberta can support the rebuild effort. We've committed to using local companies wherever possible – I know that's the will of the mayor of Fort McMurray as well – so I would encourage any interested company to go to rmwb.ca and register.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that these projects will be going on for some time and given that local contractors will be looking to help rebuild their community until the job is done and given that the government has committed to providing support to an on-the-ground small-business support centre, again to the Minister of Municipal Affairs: what is the dollar amount allocated to this support centre, what types of staff will be assisting small-business owners, and when will the facility be operational?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Bilous: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I'll thank the member for the question and for drawing attention to the fact that our government has committed \$750,000, \$500,000 of that to go to an on-the-ground support centre that will provide supports for businesses, including a space for them to get access to information, a workspace. We're doing that working in partnership with the municipality of Wood Buffalo's economic development organization in addition to the chamber of commerce, the Canadian Red Cross,

the Athabasca Tribal Council, the Northeastern Alberta Aboriginal Business Association . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Support for Low-income Albertans

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In Edmonton-Centre we're certainly well aware of the challenges that are faced by lower income Albertans, and my office often works to help provide supports to individuals, students, families who are struggling to get by, so I'm proud of the work that our government has been doing in freezing tuition, increasing the minimum wage, investing in affordable housing, and protecting Albertans from predatory lending. Still, there are many who need help in accessing the supports and services that they need in their communities, often because their monthly budget leaves little room for transportation. To the Minister of Human Services: how are you taking action to ensure that lower income Albertans can access . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The Minister of Human Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. I was pleased to announce last week that as part of our effort to reduce and prevent poverty, our government and the city of Edmonton are developing a new low-income transit pass to make public transit more affordable for families. We are also cost sharing half of the existing program with the city of Calgary. The government will provide Calgary with \$13.5 million and Edmonton with \$12.4 million over a three-year period. This project and this new investment will make sure . . .

2:30

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

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, I'm proud to hear that we're making it easier and more affordable for lower income families to get around the city.

To the same minister: could you give us a sense, then, of what kind of impact this initiative will have on the lives of these families?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you again to the member for the really important question. Low-income transit passes make it easier for families to get around the city to access jobs, education, their appointments, health care, community resources, and government services. The city of Edmonton estimates that the fully implemented program will benefit 20,000 lower income people in Edmonton. The Calgary program provides services to 25,000 Calgarians.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Shepherd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. An excellent reminder that even seemingly small supports like access to transit can have large impacts on reducing poverty.

To the same minister: what other such initiatives has your ministry put in place to help improve the lives of lower income Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you again to the member. Our government wants everyone to have the opportunity to contribute to and benefit from their communities. The low-income transit passes in Edmonton and Calgary are just two pieces of our ongoing work and commitment to helping Albertans. Other notable initiatives include the Alberta child tax benefit, which will begin this summer. Under this program a single parent who makes \$25,000 a year with two children will get \$1,650 this year. Our government is committed to supporting . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon.

Coal-fired Electric Power Plant Retirement

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unemployment in my riding of Drayton Valley-Devon has hit an all-time high. Coal-powered plants like Genesee 3 will close early under this government's early phase-out of coal, causing hundreds more people to lose their jobs, despite the fact that in my constituency overall air quality is the best it has been in 30 years and all measured concentrations were below Alberta ambient air quality objectives. Can the minister of environment explain to my constituents why she's pushing her party's risky economic manifesto and killing jobs by closing plants even when air quality . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
I believe the question was to the minister of environment.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, it is true that post-2030, 14 years from now, some plants will close early, and that will be over and above the current federal schedule that begins in 2019. Of course, it is well known – the science is well established – that pollution from coal-burning power plants is harmful to our health, is costing Albertans hundreds of millions in additional health care costs and lost productivity. We understand that on this side of the House because we understand that climate science is real . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Smith: Mr. Speaker, given that the Genesee 3 plant in my riding is on the cutting edge of clean-coal technology and that it received a special exemption from the federal government to operate beyond 2050 for this reason and since retraining and unemployment insurance are feeble replacements for good jobs with stable wages, can the Minister of Economic Development and Trade please explain what industry he intends to replace the coal industry with that will provide an equivalent standard of living and quality of life for the people in my riding?

The Speaker: The minister of environment.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, our government has made a commitment to investing in training and other opportunities in coal-fired electricity affected communities, including out by Genesee, Wabamun, and elsewhere. That is because we know that phasing out coal is the right thing to do. We know that across the industrialized world this is occurring in order to avoid both greenhouse gas emissions and harmful effects from coal pollution. We understand this because we understand the science, and we accept the science, unlike the . . .

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

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that new major economic projects in our province are required to conduct environmental assessments to measure their impact and given that these assessments are a crucial step in the process and are a way to ensure legitimacy and stability in Alberta's energy sector, when the future of so many Albertans, including my constituents', is at stake, why is this government still refusing to conduct an economic impact assessment on the early phase-out of coal?

Ms Phillips: Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, it's very clear that the world's global financial markets, big banks and others, have moved away from the financing of coal-fired electricity. One only needs to read the *New York Times* to know this.

Every 150 megawatts of wind energy capacity represents \$316 million in new investment. Every solar project of that scale creates 2,000 full-time construction jobs. We accept the science of climate change, and that's why we are moving this province forward. The Official Opposition would have us stuck in the past.

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

Bail Process Review

Mr. Ellis: Great. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A few weeks ago the province finally released its review into Alberta's bail hearings system. The majority of the recommendations will make our streets safer by ensuring that thorough reviews of bail applications take place to safeguard against another tragedy occurring like the murder of Constable Wynn in St. Albert. However, during budget estimates I was surprised when the minister said that her department does not have a time frame for implementing the potentially life-saving recommendations. To the Justice minister: can you now please give us an idea of a timeline for acting on these recommendations?

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Well, of course, we know that this report is critical, which is why our government moved forward with it in an expeditious way. This is a report which balances the rights of the individual when they come into conflict with the justice system along with the safety of the public in general. We need to consult with a number of our partners because, obviously, police will be significantly impacted by this. Once we have had those consultations with our partners and once we understand our responsibility, we will move forward with a plan. You know, the Official Opposition really needs to understand that consultation is a thing . . .

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

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that during my time as a bail hearing officer with the Calgary Police Service I took pride in ensuring that public safety was of utmost priority and given that I received push-back from some elements within the bail process about the increased use of section 524 of the Criminal Code, which can ensure that repeat offenders are held to account, and given that section 524 is a critical tool for keeping repeat offenders off our streets and maintaining public safety, to the minister: how will you promote and facilitate the use of section 524 in order to save lives and protect the public?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, one of the recommendations that came out of the report was to ensure that all presenters, whether they be Crown presenters or whether they be police presenters, are given the appropriate education. We have moved forward already on taking steps to ensure that there is education around section 524 of the Criminal Code, which, as the member noted, is a really important provision when considering judicial interim release. Those education programs are already under way; they're starting to move out. We will be working with our partners going forward to make sure that that education is ongoing.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Minister, this is not rocket science; it's a two-minute refresher course at best. Thank you.

Recommendations 1 and 3 of the bail review report recommended using prosecutors for all bail hearings, and the federal Crown has already acted on these recommendations by ensuring that its prosecutors are available for all bail hearings. To the Justice minister: what are you doing provincially to address this critical recommendation? To my knowledge nothing has occurred, so what are you waiting for?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, I think I'd like to first point out, in refuting the premise, that section 524 of the Criminal Code is actually a fairly legally complex mechanism, and that's why it's important that we ensure ongoing training for our Crown prosecutors. I think that the bail review report made that pretty clear, and the hon. member ought to go ahead and read it.

In terms of moving forward with Crown prosecutors, we are consulting . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, your voice is too loud. I didn't hear that.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

2:40

Tourism Promotion

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we work to get Alberta off the resource royalty roller coaster and its constant boom-and-bust economic cycle, the government has made its commitment to diversifying the economy a top priority. Given that we all know that in this current economic climate the tourism industry has a critical role to play in our future and our economic diversification, we need to ensure that we're strengthening this industry. To the Minister of Culture and Tourism: can the minister please update the House on the growth of the tourism sector in Alberta?

The Speaker: The minister of tourism.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for the question. Of course, tourism is an important tool to both economic diversification and the development of jobs in our province. I'm delighted to report that both tourism spending and visitation from 2014 has increased to almost 900,000 visitors from overseas travelling to Alberta, representing about a 17 per cent increase from the year before. Visitation from the U.S. has increased to more than 770,000 people, with \$34.7 million being added to the economy. I think that's pretty exciting.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is encouraging news for our province.

Given the combination of Alberta's diverse landscape offering various tourism opportunities and the low Canadian dollar making our province an attractive tourism destination, can the minister please inform the House on the economic contributions this increase in tourists has had on Alberta's economy?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for the question. As I mentioned, there's been a billion dollars to the province, an increase of 22 per cent from the previous year. There was a 12 per cent increase as well in tourism spending from U.S. visitors from 2013 and \$8.3 billion in 2014. This is very great news for our province.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Canadians are currently enjoying national Tourism Week and given that similar partnerships are needed in Alberta to both maximize tourism opportunities and bring in tourist dollars, can the minister please provide some examples of Alberta's new initiatives when it comes to tourism development and promotion?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the member for the question. We're working very closely with airports, destination marketing organizations, and industry associations to deliver tools to the new direct flights between Calgary and Beijing. We're also as a ministry leading the development of the Castle region tourism strategy. In addition, we are assisting in the development of tools to assist both municipalities and operators to develop and enhance tourism in the province by the tourism entrepreneurship program, which is an initiative that will provide tools and services to help entrepreneurs start new tourism businesses and help existing tourism entrepreneurs innovate . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Members' Statements (continued)

Firefighter Service Award

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, the events that have transpired over the last several weeks have reinforced how important firefighters are. While the rest of us are running from the flames, they're running towards the flames. Firefighters are running towards the inferno that threatens to engulf our cities, our homes, and our lives. They train to fight a force of nature that cannot always be contained.

This weekend I had the honour to be present at the ceremony celebrating those firefighters with exemplary fire service. The Lieutenant Governor of Alberta and the Alberta Minister of Justice gave awards to those who have gone above and beyond in their duty to protect Albertans. Considering what these men and women do on a regular basis, I do not know how they choose who goes above and beyond. To me, they all deserve to be honoured.

I was not able to greet him in person at the event, but I would like to congratulate the constituent from my Calgary-Foothills riding who received an award, Mr. Bruce Barrs. Thank you for everything you do for the people of my riding.

I would like to congratulate every single firefighter who received an award. It is a job that we're not all cut out for. It requires nerves of steel, that I do not have. It requires a calm focus and trust in their team while in the midst of a burning building. It requires an aspect of humanity that very few have. It requires the willingness to risk your life for another. For that and for so much more I would like to thank every single firefighter for everything they do for Albertans. My special thanks goes out to the firefighters who have travelled all the way from South Africa and other countries and other provinces of Canada.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to give oral notice of a motion for tomorrow's Order Paper, that motion being as follows:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to implement measures to regulate medical assistance in dying consistent with the decision of the Supreme Court of Canada in *Carter versus Canada* (Attorney General) and any legislative measures approved by the Parliament of Canada to ensure that Albertans can benefit from the orderly implementation of this court decision so that (a) Albertans may exercise their rights to access medical assistance in dying; (b) appropriate safeguards be put in place to protect vulnerable Albertans; (c) conscience rights are respected while ensuring the rights of patients to access this service; and (d) the practice of medical assistance in dying is closely monitored and measures regulating medical assistance in dying are reviewed within one year.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of the Minister of Municipal Affairs I would like to give oral notice of a motion for tomorrow's Order Paper, that motion being as follows:

Be it resolved that pursuant to section 18(4) of the Emergency Management Act the Legislative Assembly continue the state of emergency declared in the regional municipality of Wood Buffalo on May 4, 2016, Order in Council 107/2016, up to and including June 30, 2016.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Mr. Westhead: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the requisite number of copies of a May 26, 2016, UNESCO report entitled *World Heritage and Tourism in a Changing Climate*, which states that important UNESCO World Heritage Sites like the Statue of Liberty and Old Town Lunenburg are being threatened by climate change.

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

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to table the requisite number of copies of various documents showing Conservative MP and leadership candidate Michael Chong; B.C. Premier Christy Clark; the Ontario PC leader, Patrick Brown; the Newfoundland and Labrador PC leader, Paul Davis; and Manitoba PC Minister of Sustainable Development Cathy Cox endorsing carbon pricing to combat man-made climate change.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of two documents to which I referred in question period today: one indicating that wind power will now supply 500 schools, 25 school boards; and another indicating that Alberta can forge its own energy future, including with agriculture, wind, and solar.

2:50 **Tablings to the Clerk**

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following documents were deposited with the office of the Clerk. On behalf of the hon. Ms Hoffman, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, Alberta Innovates: Health Solutions annual report 2014-15; College of Midwives of Alberta annual report for the year ended December 31, 2015; pursuant to the Health Professions Act the College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta annual report 2014-2015; College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Alberta 2015 annual report; College of Medical Laboratory Technologists of Alberta 2015 annual report; Alberta College of Combined Laboratory and X-Ray Technologists 2015 annual report.

On behalf of the hon. Ms Ganley, Minister of Justice and Solicitor General, response to Written Question 9, asked for by Mr. Cyr on May 2, 2016: "How many maintenance enforcement accounts were in arrears, and by how much were they in arrears on February 29, 2016?"

Orders of the Day

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker. I rise to seek unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 8 in order to proceed immediately to debate on Bill 206, the Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Second Reading Bill 206 Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to start by saying thank you to all the members in the House today.

It is my absolute privilege to rise today and move second reading of this bill.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to share with you a little bit about why this bill is so important. As a social worker that has practised in a variety of roles for 20 years, I have seen first-hand the impact of trauma on individuals. Children, youth, adults, and seniors can all be affected. I have worked with both the individual that has been directly impacted by trauma and then those family members, support people, caregivers, and professionals that are in their lives.

As a front-line worker, Mr. Speaker, I experienced direct trauma along with some of my co social workers. Initially, although upset, we minimized the situation and talked about this being part of the job. Our manager and supervisors were aware of the situation and within a few days brought in trauma support workers to do a debrief

with our team and any other staff that were indirectly impacted. I remember being so thankful to have the opportunity it gave us to talk about this experience.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, it wasn't enough for me. After a few weeks I still wasn't feeling myself. I cried uncontrollably. I couldn't sleep, and every time I closed my eyes, the situation was on a reel. I continued to come to work and gave the usual expected response with my peers when asked how I was doing. It wasn't until a friend and co-worker intervened and suggested that I might benefit from seeing a professional and my doctor – I didn't see the symptoms in myself and was so grateful for her help – that I was able to get treatment and was supported by my workplace to take care of myself. Because of this early intervention, I was able to get to a place where I was no longer suffering from the symptoms that were making everyday life absolutely unbearable.

Mr. Speaker, most of us have heard the term posttraumatic stress disorder, also known as PTSD. It's a disorder caused by a traumatic event that is outside the normal realm of human experience. With PTSD symptoms continue for more than one month and may include flashbacks, nightmares, severe anxiety as well as uncontrollable thoughts such as reliving the event. PTSD causes significant distress, which can result in impairment of the individual's social interactions, decrease in the capacity to work, or impairment of other important areas of functioning. Some jobs and occupations place people in situations of higher occupational stress. Military personnel, first responders, doctors, nurses, and other front-line workers experience higher rates of PTSD than other professions.

Repeated abuse and trauma such as that experienced in domestic violence and war can also result in PTSD. According to the Canadian Mental Health Association posttraumatic stress disorder is a mental illness involving exposure to trauma, including death or the threat of death; serious injury; sexual violence such as rape, assault, torture, being kidnapped or held captive; military combat; severe car accidents; and natural or man-made disasters.

The Canadian Forces mental health survey for 2013 says that PTSD symptoms include repeated reliving of the event, disturbance of day-to-day activity, avoidance of stimuli associated with the event, irritability, outbursts of anger, or sleeping difficulty. Veterans, front-line workers, emergency personnel, rescue workers, and first responders are some of the Albertans who are vulnerable to developing PTSD. The Canadian Forces mental health survey for 2013 says that within Canadian Forces personnel the rate of PTSD doubled between 2002 and 2012, with about 5.3 per cent of military personnel being affected. As well, according to the Canadian Mental Health Association PTSD also affects women almost twice as much as it does men. Refugees are more prone to PTSD, and aboriginal people who attended residential schools have higher chances of suffering from PTSD.

Mr. Speaker, when I decided to bring forward this legislation several months ago, I started consulting with groups and individuals who have worked with PTSD issues directly, individuals with PTSD as well as family members whose loved ones have PTSD. I feel truly honoured to have had the incredible opportunity to hear from so many Albertans who in some way have been impacted by posttraumatic stress disorder. The courage and the trust that it takes to share their story is something that I really admire, knowing that telling their story is part of breaking the stigma that for too long has been associated with PTSD.

In the last two months I have reached out to over 40 stakeholder groups comprised of front-line workers, including corrections officers, social workers, workers with child and family services; Alberta Health Services emergency; RCMP; Edmonton fire

services; the Edmonton Police Service; people from the Canadian Forces health services; Veterans Affairs Canada, the Canadian military; military families resource centre; a spouse who has run peer support groups; the Faculty of Rehabilitation Medicine; indigenous community representatives; members of the LGBTQ-plus community; unions; settlement and immigration agencies serving refugees and newcomers; journalists; emergency roadside assistance workers; as well as physicians and psychologists.

The list is endless, Mr. Speaker, and the powerful truth is that anyone can be impacted. PTSD can affect our parents, our siblings, our children, our grandchildren, our co-workers, and our neighbours. I have heard that individuals affected by PTSD will struggle to identify that they are suffering and often blame themselves or see this as a weakness when really, as Brigadier General Eyre articulated so well in his statements to me, this is a normal reaction for many when facing abnormal circumstances.

These stakeholders from diverse backgrounds have all indicated one common understanding, and that is that we need better awareness and advocacy for PTSD. Mr. Speaker, that is what this bill intends to do. By dedicating a day, June 27, as PTSD awareness day in our province, we will raise awareness and educate the general public about PTSD, its causes, symptoms, who is most affected, and how to find supports in Alberta.

Mr. Speaker, a lack of awareness is increasing the stigma associated with PTSD and putting people's lives at risk. Through this piece of unique legislation we will create a day to raise awareness and educate the general public about PTSD, its causes, symptoms, who is affected, and how to find supports. The day would highlight those most affected, such as veterans, front-line workers, emergency personnel, rescue workers, and first responders as well as those who have experienced trauma, such as survivors of residential schools and refugees who have escaped war. It would educate the public about the long-term effects and triggers and recognize the importance of accurate and early diagnosis.

Given the shame that still exists for those suffering PTSD, the day would serve to raise awareness and aim to reduce the stigma amongst those with PTSD and their friends and families and within Albertan communities. June 27 is national PTSD day in the United States. In Canada we do not have a PTSD awareness day act yet. We might be leading the way here in Alberta.

3:00

The fire in Fort McMurray is still prominent in all of our minds. The fast action, dedication, and hard work of the first responders has saved 90 per cent of the structures in the city of Fort McMurray. Mr. Speaker, while PTSD has a relatively high profile, it is only one of several possible operational stress injuries, OSI. The government of Alberta is addressing OSI among its workforce and first responders through a crossgovernmental OSI working group. This group is led by the fire commissioner's office, Municipal Affairs, and includes Labour.

The bill will create a bigger picture in constructing awareness and a support mechanism. Now is the time to legislate a day dedicated to PTSD awareness. It's the right thing to do. I encourage all members of the Assembly to unanimously support this bill.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the hon. member for bringing this bill forward. Thanks to all for the opportunity to speak on Bill 206, the Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act. It, of course, is very, very timely in the wake of all that has happened in our northern communities to

be discussing PTSD and the various ways in which it impacts the lives of Albertans. There were a great deal of people in these cities and towns who had to evacuate at a moment's notice and endure some incredibly harrowing and stressful circumstances to be able to escape with their lives. There were also many dedicated first responders who stayed to fight the fires that were sweeping across and to maintain order amongst the chaos. Their courageous actions are to be commended and remembered.

However, I do think we have a tendency to gloss over the tremendous emotional impact that these stressful and dangerous situations have on these brave men and women. Perhaps it's because we see them as heroes and we forget they are also people with very human needs. Who helps a person who helps the rest of us? Like many of us here, I was struck by the photos of firefighters in Fort McMurray lying on the grass, exhausted from many continuous hours of strenuous work saving a city and preserving Albertans' lives. I was struck by the image of such sheer physical exhaustion and commitment, literally going until the body could not go any farther. But behind the obvious physical exhaustion, the signs of which were clearly evident, what is the emotional and mental toll, which is less obvious, in the minds of those who serve us so well?

Mr. Speaker, PTSD has a long history but with not such a great understanding of it as we have today. In the First World War it was commonly referred to as shell shock, which gave way to battle fatigue and other related terms. Today we call it PTSD, but the nature of the affliction is the same. Severe psychological shock or injury can cause persistent mental and emotional strain. This can in turn manifest itself as physical symptoms such as insomnia, anxiety, or loss of concentration. The condition is often treated more successfully with early intervention. Finding an exact number of sufferers is a little difficult because studies of other North American populations peg the lifetime prevalence at approximately 8 per cent and the 12 month prevalence at 3 and a half per cent. I think it's safe to say that a high number of these are people who respond to emergencies as a career.

I do know people who have difficulty returning to work after a PTSD diagnosis, and these personal experiences form part of the Wildrose mental health recommendations, which included improved access to mental health supports for PTSD sufferers and increased awareness of their plight. I'm also happy that in Alberta front-line workers who receive a PTSD diagnosis from a physician or psychologist are presumed to have suffered it on the job and, unless proven otherwise, automatically qualify for workers' compensation benefits. I was pleased to vote with my Wildrose colleagues in support of that approximately three years ago, and I'm especially glad that we do take this seriously as a workplace injury.

Now, my understanding is that this bill would have Alberta's PTSD awareness day coincide with the American version of the same name introduced by the U.S. Senate several years ago. Mr. Speaker, I think this is a common-sense move that we're all behind.

In closing, I will be voting in favour of this bill, as I'm sure all of my Wildrose colleagues will be as well. Thank you.

Ms McKittrick: Mr. Speaker, I'm delighted to speak in support of Bill 206, the Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act. I want to thank the MLA for Edmonton-Castle Downs for initiating this bill. Posttraumatic stress disorder, also known as PTSD, is a disorder caused by a traumatic event that is outside the normal realm of human experience. These symptoms continue for more than a month and may include flashbacks, nightmares, and severe anxiety as well as uncontrollable thoughts such as reliving the event. It causes significant distress, which can result in the impairment of the individual's social interactions, a decrease in

capacity to work, or impairment of other important areas of functioning.

I would have really liked to have known about PTSD when I worked with refugees in the early '90s fleeing the war in Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia because if I had known about it, then I would have understood why the people I worked with were acting the way that they were, especially their inability to move forward and to think of their future and what they could be doing rather than remaining in refugee camps.

Some jobs, occupations place people in situations of higher operational stress. Military personnel, first responders, doctors, and nurses experience a much higher rate of PTSD. Veterans, front-line workers, emergency personnel, rescue workers, first responders, and families of victims are some of the Albertans who are also vulnerable to developing PTSD. Repeated abuse and trauma such as experiences with domestic violence and war can also result in PTSD.

Mr. Speaker, while we in Canada have been fortunate not to have experienced war, bombing, or armed conflict on our soil, many Canadians have, either through their service in our military, RCMP, or as peacekeepers with United Nations operations. Others in our midst have experienced armed conflict, bombing, war, killing, rape, starvation, terror, and torture. They have come to our country as refugees and immigrants. Many find it very, very hard to speak about their experiences, about their loss of friends, family, possessions, careers, and hope for the future and about the sheer terror that they have faced.

Mr. Speaker, I've only had one moment of terror in my life, the day that I was shot at while on an international election observer mission in Bosnia. I still remember lying on the floor of the van, wondering what would happen if the shooters would hit the tires of the van I was in, immobilize the van, and capture us. Would they kidnap us, rape us, or kill us? I will forever be grateful for the UN peacekeeper base that was not too far away, where we were able to safely flee to. My one and only moment of terror reminds me daily of the reality of many in our communities who have had many, many moments of terror in their lives, that they cannot forget, that prevent them from sleeping, loving their families, thinking of the future, not feeling guilty about the actions that they committed or the actions committed against them. This haunts them hourly. Victims of torture find it particularly challenging to move on from their experiences. They need qualified and fully accessible support and counselling. We need to be sensitive to crosscultural issues in counselling and family dynamics as we support these Canadians who have come to our country from places that have seen so much destruction and horror.

3:10

Mr. Speaker, I have seen the impact on the lives of many and on their families. PTSD can impact a person in many different ways, and many different things can trigger an episode. It can prevent a person from working, going to school, being a parent, and it does not go away. Given that shame still exists for those suffering with PTSD, the day that is proposed in this bill would serve to raise awareness and aim to reduce the stigma among many in our communities that suffer from PTSD. Too many in our communities have been impacted by PTSD, either directly as sufferers or indirectly as their friends and families.

I would therefore urge all members to support this bill that would raise the awareness and educate the general public about PTSD, its causes, symptoms, who is the most affected, and especially how to find support in Alberta. No one should be alone suffering from PTSD.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. I continue to be amazed and feel privileged to hear stories every day in this House that I have not heard before.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to endorse this important initiative. Mental health is clearly an issue that affects every one of us, our families, our friends, our co-workers.

Trauma is something that comes in many forms, from childhood through to senior citizens in their final days. I guess one of the things that has become very clear to those who research mental illness and addictions is that if we don't identify it, if we don't help people to come to terms with it, talk about it, and find solutions to the disability that comes out of trauma, to the disease that comes out of trauma – indeed, some people with PTSD coming out of the armed forces say that this should not be called a disorder; it should be called a disease. It's a lifetime disease according to some of the veterans.

Some of them have found tremendous help, for example, with companion dogs. They've talked to me about just how profoundly dogs have influenced their ability to be present, find some kind of sense of control, which is part and parcel of the healing process, getting back control over your own life and feelings and the thoughts that keep creating tumult. Many different approaches have been tried over the years, and indeed a research-oriented program has come up with some evidence-based approaches that have made a huge difference in some of the most seriously affected people. The key is to get in early. If one doesn't identify it early, if one doesn't recognize it, if the family doesn't bring that person forward, if the person is isolated, it only gets worse and it becomes intractable, in fact, and impossible to treat if it goes on for years and years. Maybe not impossible – maybe that's the wrong word – but extremely difficult to treat.

If drugs are used inappropriately, they become more of a problem than a solution because they fail to address some of the cognitive and reactionary issues, even biochemical changes that have occurred in the brain. I'm afraid some therapists go through repetitive exposures to the trauma as an attempt to try to desensitize persons to the trauma. It may actually aggravate the problem in some situations. The evidence suggests that a combination of cognitive behavioural therapy and a recognition of not only the seminal event, the trauma, but previous events and how they have built a capacity or an incapacity to address some of these emotional and physical changes that occur either on re-exposure or memories coming back, the sleep disturbance that occurs, and the cycle then of stress and distress – on and on it goes.

I guess my point is that one of the major reasons we don't identify it early, one of the major reasons we don't treat it is that people are shy to bring it forward. This identification of a day for PTSD hopefully will increase people's level of understanding, acceptance, willingness to reach out to someone who has clearly been in a traumatic experience, willingness to facilitate some kind of therapy, whether it's financial help or transportation in the case of some people who don't have transportation, or whatever it happens to be.

The key barrier, it seems, is still stigma: I can't admit I have a serious problem, I can't admit that I am incapable at certain times in the day or certain times in my life, and I can't admit that I have a problem that's interfering with my life, my relationships, my work, my self-esteem, my capacity to be a full human being. Anything we can do to help both – well, since it's so widespread and all of us have experienced traumatic events in our lives, I think we can recognize that at some level that has to be dealt with, and if it isn't, it continues to impress itself and interfere with day-to-day

life. I see the importance of this day in helping educate everyone that it's okay to have this condition, that it's okay to survive a trauma, that it's okay to talk about that. Indeed, it's important that one reaches out for the kind of help that one should be able to receive under these circumstances.

Stigma is alive and well. I know health professionals who've been through traumatic events, EMS workers who have seen decapitations and dismemberments of people in motor vehicle accidents who somehow feel they have to carry on and not seek or be provided with the supports they need to deal with their continued nightmares or the inability to be present to their family, the inability to be actually present and find any kind of inner peace themselves.

I really congratulate the government on bringing this forward, especially at this time, obviously, with the fires, with some of the recognition that's come forward through the mental health review, the recognition that we don't have the supports we need, necessarily, either the number of professionals or the competence of the professionals, to deal with what's called trauma-informed therapy. It's now got its own name.

Trauma-informed therapy is a special branch of mental health that has prepared people, based on the evidence, to be able to provide the kind of mental and at times spiritual supports as well as a recognition that physical symptoms are part of it and that they have to be properly assessed in a holistic way. A physician often needs to be involved to make sure there aren't any other physical problems. There may well need to be a counsellor; almost certainly there would need to be a counsellor. There may need to be peer support, with peers in that particular profession who understand what the individual has gone through and can be there over the days and weeks and months and years that it may well involve, with the families engaged, and perhaps if this person is involved with a church, the spiritual leader of that church would be involved.

There is a tremendous need for, I guess, widespread recognition that this is very much a whole-person experience, and it needs to be dealt with in a whole-person way, not simply with a prescription and then "Come back in six weeks, and we'll see how you're doing," that sort of thing. No, this has to be a very planned, comprehensive approach, and the first step, as I say, is in engaging the public and the community in recognizing that it's a real issue. It has to be identified, and people have to be encouraged and supported in that experience.

I'm fully supportive of this initiative and will be voting so. Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour and pleasure to rise and speak to this bill, in favour of this bill. I thank the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs for bringing this very important piece of legislation forward.

As I've talked in this House in the past, I've talked about my experience in this country as a refugee. Although the questions have been asked, I haven't really before talked about that part of my life. I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, that it was not a very pleasant one, and I distinctly remember the sound of gunfire. I think that the smell of war is one that no one ever forgets. It's something where, as I remember, the sound of airplanes overhead meant the real possibility that a bomb could drop on our house, and in several locations bombs did drop very close to our house. Unfortunately, one person that was living with us during the worst part of the war was killed, and unfortunately we could not take her body outside. It was not a very pleasant experience, needless to say.

I remember also leaving our home and getting to the border between Guatemala and Honduras, and I very clearly remember my

mother holding my hand, pointing to the river, and saying to me, "Grab your sister, and if they won't let us through, run across because we need to get to the other side in order for us to not be deported back to Nicaragua." All those things: they stay with you for many, many years.

3:20

I was very lucky when I came to Canada. I found the help of somebody who was keenly aware of the effects that those kinds of things had on me as a child, on the family. Dr. Christine Grabenstetter, our family doctor, often told me many years after how she agonized over the fact that at the age of 12 she had to put me on antidepressants because she did not think that it would be wise for me not to be on them. With her help and the care and support that she and many other people from the health professions provided me, I eventually stopped being afraid of the sound of cars coming behind me. I stopped being afraid of the sound of fireworks during the Stampede. The first few years were not pleasant ones for me because the sounds, you know, triggered memories that were not very pleasant. Now I can tell you that I do enjoy it, but it took a while for me to get over those. As I said, it was an extremely paralyzing fear of sounds, and sometimes those kinds of things prevent you from growing as a person, but as I mentioned, I was very lucky.

Not too long ago I had the chance to speak to a Syrian family that moved about two blocks away from where my constituency office is now. In speaking to this family – I spoke to the mother – and sharing my experience and my story with her, she showed me the scar on her son's neck, where a bullet had grazed him and nearly took his life. I remember having this conversation with her and telling her how important it is to get the support. It is only at that point, when you feel safe, that you have the opportunity to deal with all the emotions and all the things that come out as a result of being in such horrible experiences, especially as a child. I do believe that she understood what I was trying to say. I do have the opportunity to go back and see how I can be of assistance. I guess that by sharing that experience, I gave her an understanding of the resources that are available to her and her family to bring people out of the sheer horror that you have to share when you live through that experience.

Like I said, I'm very supportive of this bill. It's one that recognizes not just the shared experience that we have and the lived experience that we have, but it is a lifelong experience as well. Like I've mentioned, it's something that comes up every so often when we see things and we experience things.

In my previous life I was a union organizer, and I had the opportunity to organize several EMS units in Alberta. When I had the opportunity to talk to them and hear about their stories, I definitely heard familiar experiences, saw emotions on their faces that were very familiar to me, and I understood that we shared a common experience, that of trauma, and how you deal with it.

Again, these are the people that run to danger when most of us are very much in survival mode and needing to get out of the way. But I'd like to say that these people have often shown the best side of them, and I think it is up to us to ensure that when the danger is gone and the emotions come in, we provide the support and that we recognize how this is a lifelong issue and illness that you need to deal with, and it's something that takes a long time to process. It's not something that you're, I think, ever able to get over.

Having said all that, I thank the member once again for bringing this very important piece of legislation forward. I will be supporting it, and I would encourage all members to do so as well.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise today to speak about Bill 206, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act, and thank the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs for bringing this bill forward. You know, a lot of the conversation here has of course been around the first responders and those brave people that step up, as the previous speaker reflected on, and who run towards danger instead of running away from danger. There are members of the public, obviously, who have had to run from danger here recently, and we see that, whether it's floods and fires and other things like that, both natural disasters and man-made disasters but also, of course, vehicular crime and things like that.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to speak and just recount some of my own personal experiences, never really having addressed, maybe, some of the impact of some of those things that may affect all of us, but most certainly we see it most prominently in our military and our first responders. You know, when I was very young, in growing up, I spent five years in Lagos, Nigeria, during the Biafran war and was subjected to a lot of what was going on at that point in time. In October 1968, towards the end of the war, a last-ditch attempt was made by the Biafran air force to bomb Lagos harbour. That plane blew up over our house, essentially at very low altitude, and shattered all the roofs and all the windows and bent metal-frame French doors as if they were made out of plastic. We were lucky, but the occupants of the plane did not survive, and pieces of the plane, from the cockpit, which was four houses away from me between two houses, to pieces of the wing to the shrapnel rain, rained down upon us for what seemed like a matter of minutes. It was an experience, at the ripe age of nine years old, that I'll never forget.

Having lived through that, I think that at the time it seemed like it was a very curious thing and something that maybe a nine-year-old got a little bit excited about because there were pieces of airplane, which we then gathered up and which were seized by the Nigerian army later. It seemed just like an experience to have a bit of an impact. Maybe you don't realize, when you think through things like that, how unusual those might be, but you take it onboard and turn it into a great story, and you move on with it. But you don't know at the time that there are some of those things that the first responders and those other people address. You do what we do sometimes in our society, which is not a good thing, which is that you suck it up, and you turn it into a story and move on with it, not recognizing that there may be PTSD, post-traumatic stress, associated with that, as I think the previous member mentioned, that you don't even know is affecting you until that is brought forward.

Some may say that I might be a little bit accident or disaster prone, but in 1999 I happened to be on a cruise ship that caught fire and sank, and we had to abandon ship in the middle of the Strait of Malacca just as the sun was setting. We ended up in some rather dilapidated lifeboats bobbing around in the Strait of Malacca, which I later found out were shark-infested waters, for about nine hours and finally were rescued by a Russian freighter and made it to shore another seven hours later. Abandoning that ship was another interesting experience and, again, has given rise to comments by many of my friends that they don't really want to take holidays with me.

But all joking aside, four years after that, I also happened to have the interesting timing of being in Phuket, Thailand, on Boxing Day 2004. We were, luckily, not on the beach when the first wave hit in Phuket but were looking for two missing friends and travel mates at the time. When the second wave hit, which was about 12 feet higher than the first one, I managed to make it up a set of stairs with my three children, who were 11 and eight and five at the time, with my wife just behind me, about 30 seconds before the wave hit. We

all know what happened, a quarter million people lost, yet we came home, and we were safe.

A small group of us came back and saw the devastation. We were safe and, I think, took that mentality of: we were safe, and we were okay. In hindsight, there was a group of us, and we kind of brushed it off, and we probably should have gone for some counselling at the time to find out about post-traumatic stress. I've since found out, on the anniversary of that occasion, which we recognized every year as a family, really, just to say on Boxing Day of every year how lucky we were. It's interesting that these things tend to fade and disappear. It was the 10th anniversary, of course, two years ago of that particular event, which was one of the largest losses of life in recent history. Again, when I reflect on that, I can feel it physically. I can know that there is trauma there from having experienced those things.

3:30

I think this is an opportunity for us to not only recognize it but to raise awareness and to reduce the stigma, as was mentioned by the hon. member from the Alberta Liberal Party. We need to raise the awareness, and we need to remove the stigma so that people can address these issues, whatever they may be. It may be something that somebody doesn't think is a particularly pronounced trauma, or it may be something that is extremely traumatic. I think we need to do that.

I'm encouraged to see that there are things like EMDR, eye movement desensitization and reprocessing, going on. There are many unusual treatments that may not be what we would think of as traditional treatments, but I'm glad to see that that's happening. I think this day will give us an opportunity to increase the focus, increase the awareness, and perhaps increase the research and funding around such issues.

Mr. Speaker, because of that, I will be pleased to support this bill. Thank you.

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

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to Bill 206, establishing a posttraumatic stress disorder awareness day, put forward by the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs. I commend the member for bringing this forward. Posttraumatic stress disorder is an issue that should concern all of us. As conservatives we believe in the dignity and value of human life. That someone should have to deal with PTSD alone and with inadequate support is an affront to those values.

Ensuring adequate access to mental health supports is an issue that greatly concerns my colleagues and I in the Official Opposition caucus. Earlier this year our caucus released a report detailing 10 common-sense recommendations that the government should take into account as part of their mental health strategy. One of those recommendations was to improve mental health services available for front-line workers. The report reads:

The Workers' Compensation Amendment Act, 2012, was an important first step in removing the burden of proof from first responders afflicted with PTSD because of their job and streamlining the claims process for them. Reducing the stigma, and making debriefings standard practice following a critical call, is the next important step to take. Increasing awareness of available supports through an education campaign will ensure that no one feels that they are alone in their battle with PTSD.

Now, the establishment of an awareness day doesn't solve the availability-of-services issue that we identified. However, having an awareness day does at least provide an opportunity for us all to look at what issues still exist and ask if adequate services are being provided to those affected by PTSD.

For us here, the PTSD awareness day that this act seeks to establish should be an opportunity to look back on what progress has been made on this issue and whether or not Albertans are being provided with adequate supports for PTSD. This legislation should be an invitation for action, not passive showmanship. It would be profoundly disappointing if all this act did was to ensure that we have a new ribbon to wear on our lapels for this cause on a particular day without any actual examination of whether we are ensuring that services are there for those Albertans who need it the most.

As the Official Opposition critic for jobs and labour I am particularly concerned about PTSD that arises as a result of workplace trauma. Figures from WCB show that last year alone WCB accepted 79 claims for PTSD. Understandably, these claims came predominantly from front-line professionals. Paramedic occupations accounted for 31 claims, Mr. Speaker, followed by firefighters, and then followed by police officers. These are professions that are generally under the category of essential services because we recognize that these professions are integral as a safety net to our day-to-day existence.

About eight years ago, in 2008, researchers at McMaster University released the results of a national survey they had conducted. Their results appeared in academic journal *CNS Neuroscience & Therapeutics*. Their survey looked at responses from almost 3,000 Canadians, so the results can't be dismissed as results from an inadequate sample. Those results found that approximately 1 in 10 Canadians say that they have suffered PTSD at some point in their life.

The survey found that 76 per cent of Canadians agreed that one single traumatic event was sufficient to cause PTSD. This shouldn't be a surprise to anyone, though, if you consider the types of horrific events that can cause PTSD: the death of a loved one, witnessing serious injury, witnessing murder, sexual assault. The list goes on. It's no surprise that these sorts of events would seriously impact and affect someone. Developing PTSD comes from a variety of factors. How severe was the trauma? What social supports are available after the trauma? Did the trauma occur during childhood? Were there other traumatic events in the person's life? The availability of supports for those suffering from PTSD is something we should be mindful of, and when PTSD awareness day comes each year, we should be able to assess what progress has been made.

I support what the member is trying to achieve with this bill. It has long been our caucus's position that mental health services for front-line workers need to be improved. We recognize that PTSD has significant implications not only for those who have experienced trauma but for their communities as well. Establishing a particular day to raise awareness is an important step. It's certainly not a solution in and of itself, but it's an important opportunity to raise awareness about an important issue in our community.

I commend the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs for putting this legislation forward. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms Woollard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I applaud all the things that my colleagues on this side and the other side of the House have said about this bill. I think it's very timely and important.

There are just a few things that I have to add to the conversation. When I was very young – and I was born just after the end of World War II – I used to wonder. It seemed like a strange thing, but my father would have nightmares, and everybody in the house would be woken up. Our house was very small. We didn't think too much about it; we certainly didn't question it. It was just one of the things that happened, and I knew that there were other fathers who had the same experience. Of course, that went on for quite a long time

because nobody knew what it was, and nobody knew what should be done to help the person with it. Clearly, it was PTSD or shell shock, whatever you call it. I think back as an adult on what these people suffered. You know, these were our parents, and they were only young adults at the time, but they were going through this day after day, night after night while fulfilling the requirements for having a home and family.

If we can do anything to help people who have had similar experiences, witnessed or were part of a horrendous experience that caused them to have PTSD, the more we can do to help them get back to normal functioning, the sooner the better.

Just a couple of things that I've been reading about. One is that if the event is a human-intentioned event, a person is much more likely to get PTSD. Natural disasters, just for interest's sake, are less likely to cause it because you know that it's not a person wishing you harm. So bombs being dropped on your house are much more likely to cause PTSD than a flood. It may be horrendous, but that could be a helpful factor in helping people through the aftereffects of the Fort McMurray fire. This is, hopefully, not linked to human action, although there may be a link back there.

The other thing that is really important to be aware of, that we should know about, is that children show the effects of PTSD differently than adults. We know it with depression. I remember first learning about how children suffering from depression are more likely to display anger and irritability; they're not going to show signs of sadness so much. The same with PTSD. You get a child who's witnessing horrendous things – we may not even think that they're noticing, but if they're witnessing harsh actions of, you know, traumatic events, and we see this kind of irritability, touchiness, being very easily annoyed afterwards, it could very easily be a symptom of PTSD.

3:40

Even with adults one of the indicators and one of the symptoms can be that hyperawareness that people get when they're not very secure. That hyperarousal, being very worried about things, being anxious, having difficulty falling asleep, difficulty staying asleep, and being annoyed and irritable are all part of the PTSD disorder, and it kind of sometimes may help people to identify what it is. Instead of somebody, a family member or a friend, just being easily annoyed and touchy, they may really have something going on, and it would help to steer them toward some professional help.

On a better side, on a more positive side, the more we decrease the stigma and shame, the more we encourage people to speak out and to go and access some help for the disorder, the likelihood is, the prognosis, that with appropriate help – and it's usually psychotherapy and medication because there tends to be depression in an awful lot of the cases of PTSD – people have their symptoms reduced to the point where they're functioning pretty effectively within a couple of months. About half of the people who have PTSD and do get help are quite improved within a few months. That's the good news.

Sometimes one of the problems is that some people who do witness or are subjected to some brand of shock don't even show symptoms for months, so they don't relate the symptoms that they're displaying with the action that happened, but they could be just delayed in showing it. Basically, every individual who sees an event or is part of an event or is the subject of an attack, a victim of a crime, is likely going to show it differently. By keeping it out in the open and making people feel comfortable, being aware of it and being aware that people we know well may have it, we can be helpful and we can be supportive and we can help people get through this.

I think it's a tremendous act, and I will support it completely. I hope every one else will. Thank you.

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

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to offer my sincere thanks to the member for bringing forward this bill. I really want to thank all of the members who have shared their personal stories with the House and with Albertans here today. I think that that act alone helps end the stigma, helps deal with the stigma of posttraumatic stress and, I would hope, by extension, of mental health in general.

Without question, I support this bill, and I hope that not only does this end the stigma around posttraumatic stress but that it starts a catalyst for a conversation to increase the support for people suffering from not just posttraumatic stress disorder but from all mental health challenges. You know, when I think of posttraumatic stress, I think of many of the first responders who have to deal with the tremendous danger in their line of work, and in that first-responder group are all medical professionals, social workers, people who deal with traumatic child welfare cases. There is any number of front-line personnel who deal with very challenging situations as part of their profession and have to deal with the fallout from that, which in cases can be posttraumatic stress.

Many members of this House have shared their personal stories. I think of the first responders, the people who work in the Legislative Assembly Office, many of whom are former police officers, military personnel who have made tremendous contribution to our cities, our province, our country and perhaps come home to their homes with the scars from that. We as legislators on behalf of Albertans have an obligation to support the people who have stood up for us and to do so through their lifetimes over the long term. This bill, I would hope, is one of many steps that we can take to do exactly that, certainly not the only thing but one of the many things we can do.

I'm reminded of a conversation I had with the Member for Calgary-West about how the city of Calgary police handle traumatic situations and how that's changed over his career. Quite recently there was a very challenging situation where an officer had come back from a very difficult case and was told by the supervisor: "Now that we've gone through the details, how are you? Here's how you access psychological services." My questions to him were: "Is that common? Is that what happens in police forces?" He said no, that that was something that Chief Rick Hanson brought in, who was very strong in his leadership in changing the culture within the Calgary Police Service.

Those psychological services: perhaps there is still some stigma – I can't speak to the specifics of exactly how the culture works – but the stigma is in the process of being removed, and that is very encouraging. I think that's a model that I would hope can be followed in other police forces around the country, around the province, in Canada's military. The fact that we're standing here talking about it is a positive step. The fact that these things are starting to change also is a positive step.

What can we do, beyond that, as legislators? Well, in our everyday lives we can identify and learn to identify what posttraumatic stress looks like. We can ask ourselves: have we gone through a traumatic situation? Trauma is whatever we define it as. Trauma is whatever is traumatic to us. There is no limit to what trauma is. If it leaves you with feelings of depression, if it leaves you with a sense of reliving an event, whatever that happens to be, if it's flashbacks, if it's a difficulty forming long-term relationships, if it's insomnia, a sense of hopelessness or depression, lashing out at others, avoidance of a certain situation or of even a certain

memory, including avoidance through substance abuse, all of these things can be signs of posttraumatic stress. It's important that we're aware of our own mindset and things that we have all gone through and that we're also on the lookout for those sorts of signs in others and that we do our best to help them get support.

For people we know who have PTSD, be supportive of those people in your life, whether they're family members, whether they're friends, whether they're neighbours. Do what you can to be empathetic and supportive in making sure that they're getting the help that they need and that they're getting the help they need not necessarily always just from someone else but that you're offering that help to them as well. That's something that they will likely need through their entire lifetime. That will vary. Sometimes you may need more help than others. Sometimes there are good days, and sometimes there are bad.

I think, of course, about the people from Fort McMurray, who had to flee through the flames. You know, I think of parents who are there being strong for their kids, making sure that their kids are feeling safe, and that's absolutely what every parent, I think, will do as an instinct. I would encourage anyone who's gone through that to look out for yourself as well, to be on the lookout for how that trauma has impacted you, and to not be afraid of what that means.

I can tell you that it's now going on almost three years after the flood, and I'm still trying to unpack what all that means, you know, whether some of the feelings I have are, in fact, posttraumatic stress, whether they're just day-to-day things we deal with in our life. But I know that that's had a real impact on my neighbours, on family members, on my constituents, on the community as a whole, and that's not something that goes away quickly. I can tell you that every year about this time the stress level really ramps up. I've been trying to be self-reflective on what that means for us, trying to keep an eye on how our daughters are faring, and in our own case I think that it's mostly so far so good.

I think that's something that we need to be very aware of, especially for all of our friends in Fort McMurray. This is not something that is healed right away. This is a challenge that the folks who have gone through that traumatic experience are going to have to deal with not just starting Wednesday of this week, as people start to go home, but over the coming months and the coming years. I would sincerely hope that the resources are available for people who are experiencing that. What's encouraging is that I think that, by and large, they have been. Those resources have been available for folks in the short term.

I really hope that that continues to be the case going forward and that we use opportunities like this bill, which I enthusiastically support, to continue this conversation, that we're gentle with one another, that we're compassionate with one another, and that we're very aware of what the trauma that people have gone through means to those people and how it will manifest.

Again, thank you very much, hon. member, for bringing this forward. It really is, I think, a positive step forward, and I hope that this does mark true change.

Thank you very much.

3:50

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

Mr. Rodney: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to this bill. I would like to start by commending the hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs for spearheading what is truly a crucial bill. I do support it completely, and I do encourage unanimous support for this private member's

bill because – let's face it, colleagues – this is one of those issues that transcends any party line. Sadly, it also transcends all boundaries. PTSD can affect anyone anywhere at virtually any time, as the name, posttraumatic stress, indicates.

For the moment, though, I would like to concentrate on our military who are affected by PTSD. I'd like to quote a soldier that I have a great deal of respect for. He shared with me in the past that in many cases PTSD actually takes many, many years to manifest itself, and many soldiers don't even realize that they have it. It's tough for them to come to terms with, and there's still this ethos of soldiering: we can tough out anything. That, again, is why we need an awareness day like this.

He points out that the Canadian armed forces have made great progress in removing that stigma of PTSD and mental health in general, and many soldiers do benefit from peer support programs and other great initiatives that have been introduced in recent years, so here, again, a great initiative that I believe we should all support not just within this Chamber but beyond these walls to all corners of our province.

The last point he makes is that these are examples and models that other emergency professionals, including paramedics and police, could look to to inspire their own programs. I'm sure the hon. member would say that this goes to social workers and all sorts of other professionals and the people that they serve as well.

I also have a fine constituent by the name of Barry Ashton. I've talked about him before in the House, and I'll talk about him again. It was in reference to Reaching the Summit for Mental Health and Wellness, this Mount Buller climb that we're doing for PTSD for those affected in the military. For the moment I'll just concentrate on the fact that Barry e-mailed me a couple of articles earlier today that give full support to this sort of thing, at least indirectly.

The first one is from Michael Wilson, and I'm guessing that you've heard of him, a PC member of the federal cabinet and a Canadian diplomat. Again, this transcends all party lines. I've met with him on a number of occasions, including when he and I delivered speeches at the Canadian embassy in Washington, DC. If you noticed, in the *Globe and Mail*, Alberta edition, there was an article on Wednesday, February 24, of this year on public health. It was entitled Aid for Suicide Prevention Must Be Part of Federal Budget. Again, the hon. member has pointed to the fact that down south they recognize it nationally; it isn't being recognized nationally here at this point. But good on you for leadership here in Alberta.

Michael writes:

We can no longer ignore the alarming evidence: Every day, at least 10 Canadians die by suicide. Do we have the courage to face down stigma and get help into the hands of those who need it?

As a former finance minister, I understand the tough challenges Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Finance Minister Bill Morneau face in preparing the 2016 budget and allocating spending.

If you're wondering how this is related, the Mental Health Commission of Canada, MHCC – by the way, I reported to them when I was the chair of AADAC and was proud to do so – are asking the government to commit funds for a far-reaching national suicide prevention project, based on a plan that accounts for fiscal reality and maximizes the use of existing community resources to help those at risk of suicide.

As a father . . .

And it gets personal here, sir.

. . . the rate of suicide in Canada isn't just an alarming statistic, it's a deeply personal matter. We lost our son, Cameron, to suicide in 1995. I know the devastation it leaves in its wake.

The article goes on, Mr. Speaker, but it concludes this way:

Too often, suicide is the tragic end in the fight against . . . [PTSD]. More than half of military veterans and first responders who seek help for mental illness from a primary-care provider leave without effective solutions. That is why, alongside our partner Mood Disorders Society of Canada, we are asking for modest funds to give primary-care providers and gatekeepers the information they need to recognize PTSD and help people sooner.

Again, how does this relate? This day will draw people's awareness to this to make the services more widely available, Mr. Speaker, better funded, better accessed, with better treatment.

It goes on:

The Ontario government . . . recently announced a plan to help first responders – such as police officers, firefighters, and ambulance attendants – deal with PTSD as a result of employment. But before workplace claims are initiated, PTSD needs to be recognized and diagnosed.

High rates of mental illness and suicide are also found in indigenous communities . . . We will invite and partner with indigenous communities and work with them to develop a culturally safe and respectful approach to reduce suicide rates.

As advocate for indigenous relations for the PC caucus, obviously I support this as well.

The funding we seek pales in comparison with the \$50-billion that mental illness costs the Canadian economy each year in health care and lost productivity. As priorities are weighed for this year's budget, we can no longer ignore the alarming evidence that we need stronger [investigation and] investment in suicide prevention. And we need to use the critical resources already place to effectively diagnose and treat PTSD.

You may have noticed, Mr. Speaker, that the beginning of the article deals with the very personal side of things, the middle is about the professional aspect of it, and at the end, yes, there is the political or economic, but it's in that order for a reason. There is a number attached to this, but that is, by far, not the most important thing.

The last words:

We must knit together as communities so that when people are at risk, help is within their grasp. Addressing suicide is no small task. Each one of us can and must help because, truly, it takes a village.

Perhaps the member would actually agree that in this case it takes a province. Now, I do know that hon. Mr. Wilson would be fully supportive with respect to this private member's bill.

Now, Barry Ashton also sent me something from *Legion Magazine*, back in the March and April 2013 edition, entitled PTSD: We've Got to Do More, and this is from the editors themselves. They state:

The extent of the problem is overwhelming. It is estimated that over the next five years approximately 30,000 personnel will leave the Canadian Forces, and about one third of these men and women will have mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, addictions, and sleep disorders. Of those, nearly 3,000 will have . . . [PTSD]. Often these problems do not show themselves until many years after the incident or incidents which caused them.

While the Canadian Forces has – in the last decade – made great strides in improving the diagnosis and treatment of PTSD and [other] operational stress injuries (OSIs), it must continue to move forward and not lose any of the ground it has gained, for there is a real fear – that through budget slashing – crucial gains can be lost. National Defence and Canadian Forces Ombudsman Pierre Daigle points to this fear in his recent report on Canada's military health-care system, titled *Fortitude Under Fatigue*.

I really do encourage members to read the rest of this because they really bring it home in not just political or professional but very personal ways.

Speaking of that, we use the term, hopefully more than once a year – in fact, I wish we'd use it every day – “lest we forget.” That's the title of an article in which a number of our veterans are quoted – the subtitle is *The Shocking Crisis Facing Our Wounded [Soldiers]* – just to let you know, again, some of the personal sides of this. Andrew's last name has been withheld to protect his identity – remember, Mr. Speaker, that this was a few years ago, when there was still a great stigma attached to this – but still the content of this excerpt is entirely intact.

He writes:

I thought it was normal to be angry all the time, going through life basically holding it in to the point after so long where I would explode . . . I would have given my life for my country . . . and I would rather have done that than have experienced this.

That's how serious it was for him. He's lived half of his life with PTSD, starting with his first tour at the tender age of 19, when he was in Bosnia in 1993.

He and a buddy were injured by what they then called a booby trap and what we now today would refer to as an improvised explosive device (IED). The other soldier had serious shrapnel wounds and was airlifted to hospital, then back to Canada. Andrew was around the corner of a building, protected from shrapnel but not the blast wave, which knocked him unconscious. He awoke with a terrible concussion headache, ringing in his ears and blurry vision. They wanted to send Andrew home, too. “But being 19, I fought tooth and nail,” he said. He was a small-town boy with big dreams. [He was] proud of his uniform. After a few days his vision cleared, and the headache disappeared.

[A timer sounded] I'll quote more later.

4:00

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members who would like to speak to Bill 206, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act? Peace River.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just very briefly I wanted to add and reinforce that I'm glad that we're talking about this issue and looking at ways to encourage the dialogue and raise awareness. When I was working in mental health as a therapist up in High Level, I learned that with the First Nations communities up there PTSD is huge, and a lot of it is related to the high rates of sexual abuse that occur within the communities. A lot of people have come to equate PTSD with first responders and those kinds of trauma, but we're starting to really learn that any kind of trauma you experience, particularly when you experience it as a child, has a dramatic effect on you as you get older. I'm glad that this bill helps open up those dialogues so we can start to understand why people are behaving the way they're behaving. It's often because they're being triggered by some horrific event that happened to them when they were a child.

That's all I wanted to say. Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there any members who would like to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, I would call upon the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs to close debate.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just want to say thank you to all members for sharing their very valuable input and for sharing their personal stories. It really is important.

That's all. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 206 read a second time]

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, I rise to seek unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 8 in order to proceed immediately to Committee of the Whole for consideration of Bill 206, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

The Chair: I'd like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

Bill 206 Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act

The Chair: Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 206, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act. You know, it's always great to be in the Assembly on days when we can find common cause for the betterment of many, and today seems to be one of those days. I would like to just briefly thank the member for bringing this bill forward. The very fact that we're speaking to the bill is already doing some of what the bill is intended to do. It's unlikely that without this bill we would have been able to hear from the hon. Member for Calgary-Cross and the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek, I think, on so many of their personal stories.

It always amazes me how the Assembly is often a reflection of the province, and it should be a reflection of the province. While the government and I will disagree on whether some of their policies reflect what the people of Alberta want, my point is that the people inside the Chamber often are a reflection of the province, from so many diverse backgrounds. We had the pleasure of having the good doctor from Calgary-Mountain View preside this afternoon and speak specifically about some of the challenges around this issue. We just see these unique perspectives on both sides of the aisle, and all of the histories and the stories and the experiences that make up individual members of this place really reflect a strength.

While we disagree a lot of the time, sometimes I feel on days like today – I think it's the Road Runner cartoon. They punch the clock at the beginning of the day, and they chase each other around and fight and scrap and try to get the better of each other. Then at the end of the day we punch the clock and we walk down the stairs together and say: “Have a good day. We'll see you guys tomorrow.” On days like today we have this opportunity to reveal little bits of the story that has brought us here. Because I'm such a strong believer in the strength of democracy and the strength and the merits of the Assembly, it's great to be able to hear those things here in the Chamber, the things that have brought us here and the things that strengthen the Chamber.

This bill has shed a new light on those things. It's shedding a new light on the issues surrounding PTSD and the mental health issues that come along with that. There are so many things about the mental health system in our province and across this great land of ours that need both awareness and repair. I think of the impact that people like Clara Hughes and Rod Black have had in the form of the Bell Let's Talk Day. Who would have thought just a few years

ago – and I don't actually even know the dates – the impact the Bell Let's Talk Day would have in terms of discussion around mental health? It's this sort of thing, a bill like this, that has the potential of doing that same thing.

4:10

Of course, with a piece of legislation like this there's always the risk that we put a mark on the wall and say, "Oh, look. We've done so many wonderful things to bring awareness to PTSD," but it stops there. There's always this risk that we can go home at the end of the day and feel really good about ourselves because we've done something positive but not go the extra mile to make sure that those who are suffering, those who are in pain, those for whom every day can be a struggle because of the horrific events that have happened to them, be it internal, external, as a child, whatever those things are, not provide the supports that go the extra mile. Now, I know that's not the intention of this bill. The very fact that we are raising awareness is a critical step in the process, but we need to ensure that we look at root causes, that we look at the way the health system and the mental health system are engaging with those on a go-forward basis.

I'm pleased to support Bill 206. Most days I feel honoured to be here. Today is certainly one of those days where we can reach across, reach beside, and move things forward in a manner that ultimately, at the end of the day, will help Alberta and help individuals suffering and raise awareness of a very, very important cause.

Before I close, let me just say a very heartfelt thank you to our men and women who serve around the world, many of which experienced things that no one should have to, the service that they provide for our country, a true public service, a commitment that they make that often puts the needs of their nation ahead of their own personal safety. Many of them know that they may in fact get into situations that are likely to cause significant stresses and damages that will affect them for a lifetime. Certainly, on behalf of myself personally and the constituents of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills I just want to say a very special thank you to those men and women who serve our country and make it great.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Madam Chair. To start, I would like to actually draw off what the member opposite, the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, was just saying. The MLA who previously represented that constituency actually spoke in favour of including corrections officers with presumptive PTSD coverage about four years ago. Some of those reasons are why I want to speak about it today. I have a lot of corrections officers that work in Fort Saskatchewan. They are a group of people that get overlooked quite often. They work day in, day out. I've gotten to know a couple of them and am proud to call them my friends. I'm proud to actually look up to them.

I would just like to share something from a letter that one of them shared with me.

To start, I would like to thank you for taking the time to discuss this issue with myself and others that have been affected by this. I thank you for taking it forward and attempting to fix a situation that needed to be fixed with the old government.

I was a correctional peace officer for 13 years before I had to retire. I was 33 years old at this time. I enjoyed my employment at the Fort Saskatchewan Correctional Centre for the first couple of years until my life changed. In 2007 I attempted suicide by attempting to slit my throat. I was lucky and did not fully cut deep enough, and I woke up on my kitchen floor.

At this time I made a decision to seek help. I was wrongfully diagnosed at that time with bipolar and was treated as such. For three or four years I accepted this diagnosis and used the medication I was prescribed. They had little or no effect on me, and I still to this date suffer from side effects from them.

I have since been reassessed and have been diagnosed with PTSD due to the years I have worked as a correctional peace officer.

There are a few things in here that I would like to highlight from what he shared with me.

One of them is that often people go misdiagnosed. I think that it's a laudable thing in this bill being put forward by the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs to raise awareness of what the symptoms are. I know that often what we talk about is that we are our own best advocates for our health. Knowing what those indicators are so that we can identify them or a family can identify them or friends can identify them can help prevent people from getting lost in a health system, where ultimately they end up falling through the cracks.

Something that I take from this also is humility. He goes on to talk about how what he did in the normal course of a day was no different than another correctional peace officer that he worked with. These are not things that we normally see as human beings. They are murder, suicide, brutal self-harm, hostage-takings, people being shot at, people seeing physical and sexual abuse of one another, riots. These correctional peace officers put themselves in harm's way to enforce the laws that we put in place, ultimately, that put people behind bars. When I think of us as a society and I think about being a legislator, I know that I am responsible for the laws that I help create and that I vote on, and if it means that I'm asking someone to help enforce those on the other end, then I need to ensure that I am giving them the proper tools, the proper resources necessary to address those mental health issues that they unfortunately end up incurring.

Deanna Lennox, who is a former RCMP officer, is someone who has been tireless in advocating for front-line workers to be able to have good access, access they know where to find. She helped start a group called Help through the Front Door. You know, often what we struggle with in society is the stigma. It doesn't matter how many resources you put in front of a person until you start as a community, as a whole to address those issues that create the stigma, that prevents people from going through that front door and asking for help. That's what we really, really need to address.

The members from the Official Opposition spoke, you know, very eloquently, very passionately along with the current Premier of Alberta and the Minister of Education. They both spoke about how correctional peace officers are in a closed environment with people that can seek to do them harm all of the time. It really strains a person's mental well-being, and we need to make sure that we are finding ways – and this is a fantastic first step. I know that there are members in the House that would like to perhaps do a redo of Bill 1, which extended presumptive coverage for PTSD to people, including correctional peace officers, would like social workers to be included along with our firefighters, our police officers, our sheriffs, and our . . .

Mr. Shepherd: Paramedics.

Mrs. Littlewood: Paramedics. Thank you.

We have people that are constantly in harm's way that we need to make sure that we're taking care of, because there are people that put themselves in harm's way all of the time, and then they don't feel supported at the end of the day when they go to access help. One of the phrases that I hear over and over again when I talk to corrections officers is that they feel like they are thrown away like garbage. They do it because they feel that they are called to do it,

and we need to make sure that these people are still able to provide for their families, that they don't have to retire early from careers that they have chosen because they have a passion for doing that job.

That is why I'm happy and proud to stand in support of this bill. I think it's an important first step, but I do hope, along with the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills, that we work forward on putting more supports in place that make sure that these individuals can have easier access to the supports that they need so that they can ultimately get the help that they are seeking for jobs that we ask them to go to. It's my pleasure to stand in support of this bill, and I encourage all members to do the same.

Thank you.

4:20

The Chair: Any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to the bill? The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. It's an honour to rise here today and speak to this very important bill. I'd like to thank my colleague from Edmonton-Castle Downs for putting forward this very important bill.

Many of my colleagues here today know that my background is as a registered nurse. You know, I just wanted to share some of my experiences as well. I found it very moving to hear all of the different stories that have already been shared here today by my colleagues, and it just goes to show how prevalent posttraumatic stress disorder or those types of experiences can be. Just in a small room here with only 87 or so people we have a lot of members who have gone through these types of experiences.

I wanted to talk about the experience I had in nursing. Within the first year of becoming a nurse, I had a patient who passed away. I was working – it's called a neuro step-down unit – at the Toronto western hospital. It's kind of like an ICU but with not quite as critical patients there.

Of course, things can change very quickly. It was late at night. You know, working on the night shift is always kind of an interesting dynamic. You're up in the middle of the night, when most of the rest of the city is sleeping, and you're there safeguarding these patients. One of the routine tasks that we would do at night was to give patients their baths. It was a good way to sort of settle them down for the night and make them feel a little more comfortable. This particular patient had been there for quite some time. In the step-down unit the patients wear monitors all the time, so we've got the ECG heart monitors, the blood pressure monitors, and those kinds of things. When those things stay on a patient for a long time, they feel really yucky. They get sicker, and goo is all over them, so I wanted to give this patient a really good bath that night.

Just as I was finishing the bath – I had been chatting with him and settling him down for the night – I was about to put the ECG stickers back on. Sometimes neurosurgical patients can be confused, and he started saying, "Oh, my chest, my chest." And I said, "Oh, what's the matter?" and he just said, "My chest, my chest." So I, you know, put the stickers right back on him and called for help. We had to call a code blue just like that. It happened immediately. It turned out that the patient actually suffered from a thoracic aortic aneurysm. One of the major blood vessels in the chest just basically tore apart instantly, and he died right in front of our eyes.

You know, being a fairly new nurse and having this experience, it stayed with me all the time. I don't think about it constantly, but it's something I'll never forget. I always wonder: should I have taken those ECG leads off the patient? I was trying to give him

some comfort and make him feel a little better. Knowing what I know about the condition that he passed away from, I know that having those ECG leads on wouldn't have made a difference in that case, but it's still something that stays with me. Maybe I should have left them on.

Another thing that I wanted to share was that when I was a student nurse, one of my first experiences was on a plastic surgery unit. This was probably the first patient I'd ever seen in a hospital. I walked into a room, and a woman had had plastic surgery on her face. I think it was for some kind of mandibular cancer. She had been fixed up, but of course plastic surgery isn't perfect, and the woman was quite disfigured. She had, you know, large scars on her face. Being the first time I'd ever seen a real patient – and there she was with a disfigured face – I had an immediate body language reaction. I knew that was wrong because I knew that the patient was watching me. The patients watch what their care providers are doing because they want to see: "What's it going to be like when I get out of the hospital? If the nurses react like that, how are regular people going to react?"

I felt horrible about that, but it also really made me conscious of the fact that as a health care provider I had to take care of my emotions and have full control of my emotions at all times. It's a very difficult thing to consider because of the range of situations that we find ourselves in, but patients and families look to us to be the ones that are solid as a rock. When things are going badly, the health care providers can't say: "No. I can't deal with this right now. I'm going home."

Our job is to take care of that patient no matter what the circumstances are, and I know that that's the case in all different sorts of occupations. You know, in one instance we can be discharging a patient. He or she has had a long course in the hospital, and they've gotten better. They've made progress, and they're about to go home. Having a multiple patient assignment, you might then go to the next room, and that patient is about to die. You've got to go and change your emotions all of a sudden, from one patient having a great news story – they're going home; they've gotten better: "Good for you, Mr. Jones" – and then a minute later having to shift your emotions to match the mood in the room of the next patient. Controlling a person's emotions like that can take a toll on a person.

I'd also like to talk a little bit about how, you know, we often think of front-line workers as suffering from this the most – and it certainly is the most common – but there are other health care providers that aren't necessarily thought of as front-line workers that also can suffer from posttraumatic stress disorder. After having worked in the operating room, I think of a lot of the housekeepers. In the operating room we start with a nice, clean, sterile room, and at the end of a surgery, depending on what it is, there can be blood everywhere: blood on the ceilings, blood on the floor, blood all over the bed, like, you name it. Some surgeons will joke: if you don't get blood on the ceiling, you're not doing it right. It's kind of morbid, but sometimes that's how we have to deal with those scenarios. The people that have to mop the blood off the ceiling can also suffer from these types of disorders, so I want to acknowledge those people.

The people that do the laundry get laundry soaked in blood, and they have to think about the story that may have resulted in that situation occurring. I think there are a lot of unsung heroes that we have in our public services that are put at risk of these kind of emotional experiences that we also need to make sure that we acknowledge.

I just want to use the last few minutes of my time here to talk about, as the Member for Calgary-Elbow had mentioned earlier, the impact of the 2013 flood on constituents. Certainly, the

constituency of Banff-Cochrane was widely hit by the 2013 floods. Bragg Creek, Lac des Arcs, Exshaw, Harvie Heights, Canmore, Benchlands: almost all of the communities in Banff-Cochrane were affected to some degree. Still to this day when it starts to rain at this time of year, people get nervous. I know I was at the post office the other day saying: isn't it good that it's rained in order to sort of combat the risk of forest fires? That was something that was top of my mind. The person behind the desk at the post office, of course, reminded me that, you know, rain also makes people nervous, so there's a balance between events, and people perceive them in very different ways.

4:30

I know that people are getting to the point where it's close to three years after the fact, but some people have just finished fixing their homes, and now they're at the stage where they say: I've fixed my home, but now I've got to deal with the emotional stress of what I've just been through. They've been so busy fixing up their homes or repairing their businesses and dealing with those kinds of things that they're just now realizing what they've been through. You know, the effects on people that have been through the flood are so far ranging, and we need to acknowledge and support the experiences that people have been through and ensure that supports are available for them on an ongoing basis.

Just in closing, again I'd like to thank the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs for bringing this very important bill forward. I'd also like to thank all members of this Assembly for granting unanimous consent to allow this bill to move forward in such an expeditious manner.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Dr. Turner: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I rise to speak in favour of this bill. I really want to echo the comments made by the Member for Banff-Cochrane. I truly appreciate the spirit of co-operation that exists in the House today. I know that all of us have the same goal in mind, and that is to basically change the world's view of this very important illness.

Like the Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek, I was born shortly after the Second World War. My father was a veteran, and he came back from the war without any symptoms of what at that time was called shell shock. But I do remember that there was a stigma that he unwittingly associated with his comrades who did suffer from what was called shell shock. I actually feel very badly for my father. I'm sure he didn't mean to do this, but it was a societal thing at the time that this was seen to be a form of weakness.

In fact, it was only in 1915 that the term "shell shock" was first used, apparently. In the First World War the British Expeditionary Force executed several dozen soldiers for running away from battle or for failure to follow orders or for basically becoming withdrawn. There was, obviously, little understanding at that time. They thought that it was due to some effect of shells exploding. In fact, if a person exhibited the symptoms – and they called it neurasthenia – after a shell explosion, the British Expeditionary Force actually awarded the equivalent of a Purple Heart, what's called a wound stripe. But if the soldier hadn't been exposed to an explosion, it was considered to be some failure of his resolve. They actually took the pension away from those individuals, and they probably discharged them dishonourably.

I can say that in 1950, which is about as far back as I can remember, that sort of attitude still persisted. I think what the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs is doing today and all of us

in supporting it are doing is trying to change that historical stigma that has come about. It is not weakness. It is not shirking of duty. It is not cowardice. This is a mental health issue, and it's time that we recognize that it is something that needs to be known about. We need to publicize what the symptoms of this condition are. We need to increase awareness, which is, I think, the prime purpose of this bill. We need to basically advertise this. We need to join with our American colleagues in having a day that recognizes or increases awareness of posttraumatic stress disorder.

I want to actually turn to my own personal situation. I can say that I'm actually, in an ironic way, envious of many of the people that have spoken today. I don't have any of these kinds of great stories to tell about surviving some horrific disaster. I've led a charmed life. I'll cross my fingers that nothing comes down the road any time soon. I really do admire the pluck and the courage and the resolve that my MLA colleagues have shown in their lives.

I am a physician, and I do have stories like the MLA for Banff-Cochrane has just relayed, and I want to tell a few stories of that. Like the MLA for Banff-Cochrane, I am actually more concerned about my support colleagues: the nurses and the cleaners and the lab techs and the psychologists and all of the people that support us physicians in the work that we do. We get the glory for treating patients, and these other people are left dealing with the aftermaths very often.

One of my clearest memories on this, that I still think about, is that back in my first year in medical school I was on a surgical rotation, and there was an amputation. Somebody had diabetes and needed to have their leg amputated above the knee. It's a fairly straightforward surgery. It maybe took half an hour for the surgery to be done, and I was enjoying myself because I was getting to watch this very good surgeon in action. It wasn't until after the surgery that I realized that the operating room nurse was desperately wanting me to help her basically unwrap this devitalized leg so that the specimen could be sent to the lab. This operating nurse, who was a superb individual, always in control, always very professional in her actions, was obviously devastated by having to deal with this rather unsightly and smelly specimen. To this day I feel badly that I didn't have the sense to step in and do it because it wasn't bothering me; it really was easy. But that's the sort of thing that goes on.

Now, in our health care professions, whether it's nursing, I think one of the things that we have to realize is that posttraumatic stress disorder must be a lot more prevalent than is recognized. It is a fact – and the Member for Calgary-Mountain View can back me up on this – that suicide is much more prevalent among physicians. It's also prevalent among nurses and EMS folks, other folks like this. It isn't just suicide that's more prevalent; it's marriage breakdown, use of illicit drugs, a whole series of things that belie chronic depression and probably some aspects of posttraumatic stress disorder.

Now, I'm making some loose connections here that haven't been proven scientifically, but it is certainly my impression that health care delivery in particular is very prone to posttraumatic stress disorder. I think that having a special event that basically validates the experience of some of these individuals, allows them to seek the appropriate help – and, hopefully, we can also bring in some measures that will help the mental health of these folks in general, you know. I think this is of real benefit for this disorder.

4:40

I also want to turn back to the history a little bit. I mentioned that I've been in medicine for 40 years, and I can tell you that 40 years ago it was still called shell shock or, you know, that basically it was considered to be a form of a reaction. "Conversion disorder" was

one of the terms that it was called. The patients were marked by things like not being able to speak, mutism, or they were bothered by loud noises, or they had ringing in their ears all the time, or they basically withdrew from social interactions. There was very little we could do for those patients. In medical school the treatment that was most often given – I went to McGill University. The psychiatry department there favoured the use of electroconvulsive therapies and . . . [Dr. Turner's speaking time expired] I'll end it there.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Human Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise today to speak in support of Bill 206, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act. First of all, I would like to congratulate my colleague the MLA for Edmonton-Castle Downs for bringing forward this important bill. Also, I would like to acknowledge and congratulate all of my colleagues from all sides of the House who participated in this debate.

While I was sitting listening, I think it was an opportunity for me to reflect on my past, on my present, and on what I'm dealing with today. If I speak to my past, I was raised in Kashmir, which is a disputed, divided territory between India and Pakistan. From a very young age we heard that it's a flashpoint for nuclear war, which hasn't happened yet, fortunately. That was the constant fear we had to live with. Every once in a while troops would mobilize close to borders. While I didn't live very far from the border, 20 to 25 kilometres, you could hear the emanations, those rounds of shots, and planes moving here and there. All I want to say is that was the constant fear we had to live with.

To this day, even living in Calgary, whenever those fighter jets pass through Calgary, that will still give me flashbacks, remembering those planes passing over the airspace in my area. As the Member for Calgary-Elbow said, that is something that I am still unwinding, trying to understand what my life would have been like had I not been through that stress, had I not lived under that constant fear of war, that someday there was going to be a war between Pakistan and India on this Kashmir issue. That's one thing that's still, I guess, left with me to date. I'm pretty sure there is some stress that's attached to my upbringing, living with that fear of war.

The second thing is that my area is also prone to natural disasters. In 2005 there was a huge earthquake. Many people died. Many people suffered through that, and my family suffered as well. My sister was injured in that earthquake. After that, I visited Kashmir a couple of times. My home is such that where I live, that side usually stays closed by a main gate, especially towards where my room was. Just remembering the devastation of that earthquake and not knowing about my sister for three or four days during that earthquake never, I guess, went away. When I went there, I was not able to sleep in my home, having that door closed. What if there is an earthquake? There are studies out there that they are on an active fault line and that there is a bigger earthquake that's expected to happen.

All I want to say is that those are the things, I guess, that need to be dealt with, that need to be talked about, and there need to be better supports and treatments available. That bill certainly puts those issues at the forefront of the discussion, and that certainly will lead to better supports and the discussion of better supports.

The second thing is that as the Minister of Human Services for the most part my ministry deals with vulnerable Albertans. All those files are very important ones, but I want to mention just one file, and that is the child intervention file. As the minister I do receive alerts of serious injuries, deaths, and I think that's something that has an impact on myself as well, that I have to deal

with on a daily basis. When I think of that, I do think of my front-line staff who are on the ground to deal with that. I think it's important for them to know that these events can have traumatic impacts, and this bill will help us bring those discussions to the forefront and make supports available to them.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Madam Chair, I rise to seek unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 8 in order that such debate on Bill 206 continue past 5 o'clock and furthermore to seek unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 8 in order to proceed – no. I'll do that one later.

Thank you.

The Chair: Hon. member, to seek unanimous consent on that kind of a motion, we have to be in Assembly. We can't do it in Committee of the Whole. So we have the option that the committee can rise and report progress.

Mr. Mason: Well, we've got a few minutes. Let's see how we do.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to move an amendment this afternoon. I do have the requisite copies, and I have the original for you.

The Chair: This will be amendment A1.

Go ahead.

Ms Goehring: Thank you. Do you want me to just read it?

I move that Bill 206, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act, be amended in section 1 by striking out "2017" and substituting "2016".

When the original bill was presented, we weren't anticipating that we would have unanimous consent and be able to move so quickly through this. Due to the importance of this day, we're requesting that we celebrate this day and acknowledge it this year, in 2016. I would ask for unanimous consent for this amendment.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any others wishing to speak to this amendment?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

The Chair: We're back on Bill 206. Are there any further speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Member. The reason I'm getting up and speaking in committee is because it's in reference to a motion that I will ask the member if she'd be open to. But I promised that I would finish the story of Andrew and just two other excerpts from soldiers. Again, I have full support, so there is no question about this. I am still seeking unanimous support for the passing of this bill not only in committee but in third today, to get this done. It's that important.

4:50

I ended last in second reading with the fact that they wanted to send Andrew home, too – and this is a continuation of the quotation – but being 19, he fought tooth and nail.

He was a small-town boy with big dreams, proud of his uniform.

After a few days his vision cleared and the headache disappeared.

Then the nightmares started.

It's a long story, but I'll just end with this part about Andrew.

Little was known then about the damage a blast wave can do to the human brain, or that it increases [the] risk of PTSD. The nightmares accumulated, got progressively worse. Andrew was serving in the Medak Pocket during the bloodiest period of the civil war in Bosnia.

The second excerpt that I wanted to read:

A veteran in Calgary said it doesn't matter where he is or what he's doing, he spends part of every day back in Afghanistan. It's as if they're PTSD prisoners of war, denied the luxury of ever coming home completely. It's not just that they've been changed by the experience; some describe it as losing a piece of themselves. The public is used to seeing military amputees with prosthetic legs and arms – but who can fashion a prosthetic for a missing piece of self?

The last example, again concentrating at this point on the military:

Second World War veteran Stewart MacDonald has soldiered on alone with PTSD for more than six decades.

Many details I'll skip past but add this:

As for most combat soldiers, death was ever close. Machine-gun fire stitched through the backpack worn snugly against his spine, a soldier walking near him stepped on a landmine, a shell pulverized men in the next room of a sheltering house. He was given the job of searching through basements, to roust out enemy troops. He found none, but he did find . . .

And it gets graphic, but this is what we're talking about.

. . . bodies of mothers, their arms in futile protective embraces around their dead children. He saw more dead mothers and children along roadsides, in fields. He saw Germans, young men his own age, shot as they tried to surrender. All this before he turned 20.

MacDonald returned to Canada and peacetime, but the war never left him. "I had bad dreams for years and years and years," he said. "The nightmares were horrible. Bombings. Shootings . . . I'd be fighting with myself. I was afraid to stay in boarding houses or hotels. It went on even after I was married. My wife, she had to put up with a lot." A teetotaler all during the war, he climbed into the bottle when he got home. "I don't want to talk about them days. They were my worst, worst, worst days ever." He didn't know where to go for help, so like thousands of others, he went to the beer parlours and Royal Canadian Legion halls to share his stories and ask buddies what they were doing about the nightmares. He was advised [simply] to put a bible under his pillow.

That was a long time ago, Madam Chair. We've come a long way, and this is a great initiative to take us further down that road.

Now, earlier today I spoke with the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs about a friendly amendment. I had concerns about the dates. At the very end of June, of course, students are either gone from or leaving school. A lot of folks that work aren't at work. They might be thinking more about vacation. So a weekend day, a Saturday, might be a lot better in terms of actually getting people to attend events. I thought we had an agreement to move it to the last Saturday.

There's always the argument – and it's fair – that it could be next to Canada Day, but that's once every seven years. I would argue that that actually makes this a lot stronger, that coupling with Canada Day to raise the awareness. The fact of the matter is that there are all sorts of great activities already going on. I'll refer to one.

I'll just ask the member, and you can give me a nod if you want. I was going to move that the PTSD awareness day act be amended in section 1 – very, very short – moving it from "the 27th day of June" each year and substituting "the last Saturday of June." So I'll ask the member: is this something that you'd be open to? No?

That's unfortunate. Again, how about the 3rd or the 2nd? Just not moving it at all? Okay. Well, that was in the spirit of all-party co-operation. That's a little unfortunate because, again, we just want as many people participating in this as possible.

You know, folks, I'm looking at the clock. I want this to pass . . .

The Chair: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 8(6) the committee will now rise and report progress.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 206. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

Mr. Mason: Madam Speaker, I rise to seek unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 8 such that debate on Bill 206 continues past 5 o'clock.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Public Bills and Orders Other than Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

Bill 206 Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act (continued)

The Chair: Are there any other further speakers, comments, questions, amendments with respect to the bill?

Seeing none, I gather you're ready for the question, then.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 206 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.

Mr. Mason: Madam Chair, I move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 206.

The Deputy Speaker: Having heard the report, does the Assembly concur? Say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? Say no. So ordered.
The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Madam Speaker, I would rise to seek unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 8 in order to proceed immediately to third reading of Bill 206, the Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act.

[Unanimous consent granted]

5:00 **Public Bills and Orders Other than
Government Bills and Orders
Third Reading
Bill 206
Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
Awareness Day Act**

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to thank all of my colleagues in this Assembly for their valuable contributions in this discussion and for their unanimous support of this bill. It's encouraging to see co-operation and agreement from all members that raising awareness around posttraumatic stress disorder in our province is critically important. By recognizing June 27 as posttraumatic stress disorder, PTSD, awareness day in Alberta, this bill will raise awareness and help educate the public about PTSD, its causes, symptoms, and where to find support.

Bill 206 is important to me on a personal level. I spoke previously of my background in front-line social work and, through it, my exposure to trauma and its profound effects on families. My current role as liaison to the Canadian Forces and MLA in a constituency with a high concentration of military families has heightened my awareness of the effects of PTSD on our veterans, their families, and their communities.

Consultation on this bill drove home that PTSD affects all segments of society. Posttraumatic stress disorder awareness day will recognize the lived experience of those suffering from PTSD, including refugees, survivors of residential schools, victims of crime, veterans, front-line workers, emergency personnel, first responders, and corrections officers.

Madam Speaker, this bill supports Albertans suffering from PTSD to access the support and treatments that they need. That is why I'm proud to move Bill 206 and receive the unanimous support of this Assembly.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other speakers to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed, followed by Calgary-Bow.

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and again thank you to the member. Just for the knowledge of the House, I was actually happy to pull the amendment that I wanted to make in the spirit of all-party co-operation – this bill is too important to stand on any kind of political pulpit – even though I really believe that a Saturday would make for better attendance at events. I don't think we need to piggyback on what America is doing – no offence to them – and there's nothing particular about the date June 27. It happens to be

my birthday, so I'd have a different reason to celebrate, to be honest with you. It is a celebration of how far we've come.

I know that in a couple of my prior careers, sadly, I've had the situation of dealing with picking up dead bodies and what's left of bodies as well. I will restrain from sharing part of that – it's very personal – but this issue has touched me very deeply personally and professionally, let alone politically. Thankfully, I guess I've been in the right place to be a Sherpa for my Sherpa friends and carried them on my shoulders to rescue them, and I know that they would have saved my life if that was required as well.

But, again, this is never about me; it's about the people that we represent. That's why I was bringing forward the recommendations of others that really wanted to celebrate this day in the biggest way possible. For the sake of time, I thought: let's pull this. It was right before 5 o'clock. We're not going to talk to an amendment; we're not going to bicker about a date. We could make arguments all the time, colleagues and friends, about how there's always a good reason to say no to something. I mean, we talked about this, hon. member, you and I, that there is always going to be a conflict. We're living in an age when we recognize all sorts of causes. There's the day of this, the week of that, and the month of these things. It happens all of the time.

I've always thought that there's never a bad time for a good idea. Whether it's June 27, one of the Saturdays in June, or any other day, the idea is to bring awareness and action to PTSD no matter what the root cause is because we're not talking about money and staying at home because of mental illness or wellness; we're talking about people's lives, their very existence. I want to thank all the hon. members for sharing personal stories and stories from their own profession as well.

I will take what time is left for me, Madam Speaker, just to make a point of one of the activities that's already going on. We know that there are a lot of great initiatives going on for awareness already. I've mentioned this, and I'll just read a couple of paragraphs. Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, or, as many of us know it, the PPCLI, the foundation, and Calgary Health Trust are pleased to collaborate on Reaching the Summit for Mental Health and Wellness. It's an initiative aimed at heightening awareness and raising funds for veterans and their families suffering from the devastating consequences of depression, PTSD, and other forms of mental illness.

As you know, 2016 marks the 100th anniversary of the death of Lieutenant Colonel Herbert Cecil Buller, DSO, who was killed in action leading the PPCLI at the Battle of Mount Sorrel in Flanders, Belgium, on the 2nd of June 1916, so in just a few days. In 1922 Mount Buller and several other nearby features were named to honour the memory of Lieutenant Colonel Buller. To honour the memory of Colonel Buller and commemorate the 100th anniversary of his death, 25 climbers, including a small team of military climbers, will climb to the summit – a return journey, by the way, of 12 kilometres, let alone the vertical up and down – and 50 hikers will reach the summit of Buller Pass, and that's a journey of almost 16, a little bit less, vertical kilometres. Two of the climbing teams will be led by a dear friend, Laurie Skreslet, the first Canadian to climb Mount Everest. It's my great honour to lead the other team of military climbers, although climbing up and down the Leg. steps isn't much exercise for climbing a mountain. It's been a little while, and I'm afraid that the soldiers might have to short rope me to the top. I don't think I'll be leading them in this circumstance, but we are in this together.

I do want to make this point – and this is what it's leading up to – that all the proceeds will be used to support mental health and wellness for military veterans and their families. For further information or if people want to join as a climber or a hiker or

perhaps contribute to the cause, if you just go to calgaryhealthtrust.ca and follow the links, you can get there. Hopefully, we'll see some of you on this day. They are hoping to make it an annual event, and that's part of the reason why I think they were also suggesting that perhaps we could move it to a Saturday in June. But that's water under the bridge. Again, any day is a good day for a good idea.

I think we can leave it at that, from my perspective, Madam Speaker. I really appreciate the foresight of the hon. member and government members. I do believe we're heading towards unanimous support, and I think we all want to get this done before this House rises, whenever that will be. I would not necessarily ask for the question, but let's find out if any other members have anything to add. Let's get this voted on, and let's congratulate this private member on the passing of her first bill. Cheers.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Bow.

Ms Drever: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 206, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act. I would like to thank the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs for bringing this bill forward in the House.

Many members have already touched on various facts about PTSD, but I would like to expand on some of them. Posttraumatic stress disorder is caused by a traumatic event such as witnessing a violent death, being a victim of torture, sexual assault, domestic violence, anything that falls outside the range, the normal realm of human experience. The extent of PTSD varies from person to person. It can last for a short time, or it can remain for years. With PTSD, it's very different for each individual. Some of the symptoms with it are flashbacks, dreams, nightmares, sleep disturbances, numbness and emotional blunting, detachment from other people, unresponsiveness to surroundings, emotional numbing, acute bursts of fear or panic, depression, anxiety, or suicidal thoughts. These are only a few. Having said that, some people may not experience some of these. Like I said, everyone reacts differently.

Looking back to when I was doing my private member's bill, Bill 204, I did a lot of consultation with individuals who experienced domestic violence. Many of them shared with me their stories. I remember them talking to me about some of the symptoms that I mentioned earlier.

5:10

I just want to take this opportunity to share some of the research that was done on PTSD and domestic violence. As some of the members have talked about already, it's about getting rid of the stigma around PTSD. It's about spreading the discourse and reaching out to individuals who possibly need help. This is why we're standing here today and talking about these things.

Having said that, I want to talk about domestic violence right now. According to the report *Women, Domestic Violence, and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)* by Margaret J. Hughes and Loring Jones the severity of the violence, the duration of exposure, early-age onset, and the victim's cognitive assessment of the violence intensify the symptoms. This report also found that women who resort to taking refuge in shelters as a result of domestic violence are at higher risk for PTSD than other victimized women. In any given shelter they found that 40 to 84 per cent of the residents are victims of domestic violence or survivors of domestic violence.

Domestic abuse is more prevalent than injuries sustained in accidents. Domestic violence tends to be repetitive and endurance based. The physical effects of this type of trauma on its victims are often obvious and acute – lacerations, bruises, broken bones, head

injuries, internal bleeding, chronic pelvic pain, abdominal pain, frequent vaginal and urinary tract infections, sexually transmitted infections, and HIV – but it also can manifest through long-term and chronic physical problems like arthritis, hypertension, and heart issues. Existing medical conditions can simply be aggravated by sustained physical abuse, and often it's the emotional component of domestic violence that leads to a chronic state of PTSD. Depression is, by far, the most common symptom of domestic violence, and it's also one of the chronic effects of PTSD caused by abuse. The feeling of helplessness and hopelessness that many victims – sorry; I don't mean to say "victims;" I want to say "survivors" – fall prey to has a profoundly undermining effect on their mental and emotional well-being.

It is often extremely challenging for survivors of domestic violence to escape the cycle of abuse. Even those who have managed to move on from crippling, abusive relationships can suffer the aftershocks of abuse.

Having said all that, Madam Speaker, this bill will create a bigger picture in constructing awareness and support mechanisms. Now is the time to legislate this important piece of legislation. I support it, and from what I can see, I think everyone else in this House supports it, too.

Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) comes into effect. [interjection] Oh, sorry. It's private members' day. My apologies.

Go ahead, hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise in this House and speak about Bill 206, the Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Awareness Day Act, as put forward by the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs. As the discussions here today have already shown, there is agreement among us here in this place that PTSD is an issue in our communities, in Alberta, and in Canada.

From the fact that PTSD is an issue that we need to raise awareness of and that the support needs to be made better available to those who face PTSD, my caucus colleagues and I are pleased to support this bill, but if we do pass this bill, we owe it to Albertans that it's not merely the designation of a day. PTSD changes lives, not only those who suffer from it but their loved ones as well. It would be hypocritical and an inadequate statement if the day created by the act passed without any genuine action to increase the availability of support.

As I noted earlier, my caucus colleagues put forward mental health recommendations to this government. I do want to commend my colleague from Cypress-Medicine Hat, in particular, for his work on that report. One of the recommendations was to increase the availability of support for front-line workers suffering from PTSD. As I noted earlier, it's front-line workers like paramedics, firefighters, police officers who make up the vast majority of PTSD claims to the WCB. I'm hopeful that before this debate is over, someone in this government can update us on the steps that have been taken by this government on PTSD.

The reality is that health care costs in this province have been soaring, but the quality of services available remains questionable. When it's not concern about the faltering economy, my constituency office hears from those concerned about health care, concerned about long waits, concerned about availability of services. It would be helpful to know if and how access to PTSD has improved under this government. Further, it would be helpful to know, in particular, what vision the member responsible for this bill had for PTSD awareness day and whether there were any discussions with the government on what that could look like.

The issue of those affected by PTSD, of course, is not a partisan matter. There have been many good steps taken on this matter. The U.S. Senate designated June 27 as PTSD awareness day. This legislation would recognize the same here in Alberta. Thankfully, Alberta is one of the few jurisdictions where PTSD was diagnosed by physicians and psychologists and is presumed to be a workplace injury for emergency front-line workers like firefighters, police, and EMTs. The previous government here deserves praise for their action. Removing the burden of proof for those afflicted with the aftermath of a major trauma is just good, common sense. Of course, it's extremely difficult to track down many Albertans who are actually affected by PTSD. There are numerous issues in tracking given that some of those facing trauma are often hesitant to speak about what happened to them.

I do want to read out something I came across recently in a Statistics Canada report on anxiety disorders. This is a long quote. Bear with me. I will have to say that it may not be as long as Calgary-Lougheed's. But I did enjoy his articles that he read to us. It's a very good job there.

Lifetime prevalence of PTSD . . . is approximately 8% in the population, 12-month prevalence in the U.S. is 3.5%. Women are more likely to develop the disorder than men. PTSD . . . can occur at any age, and can be a chronic condition. Immediately following the traumatic event, the individual becomes estranged or oddly unaffected because they are generally in shock. Soon thereafter, the individual experiences recurrent images or thoughts of the traumatic event through nightmares or flashbacks. These may be triggered by a simple ordinary occurrence such as a car backfiring (resembling the sound of gunfire), and tend to be so realistic that the individual believes they are reliving in the situation. Symptoms typically begin within three months of the traumatic event, and last at least one month.

This is to say that those affected by PTSD are affected greatly. This is not a short-term affliction.

Establishing PTSD awareness day, as the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs seeks to establish, is an opportunity to educate Albertans on this matter, but it also is an opportunity to evaluate what steps the government is taking to ensure that the adequate supports are being taken for those who are afflicted.

In conclusion, as we have established today again, adequate support for those afflicted with PTSD is an integral matter. Establishing a PTSD awareness day isn't a be-all and end-all solution, but it's an important opportunity to raise awareness and look at whether adequate supports are in place. My caucus colleagues and I support this legislation. Again I commend the member for putting it forward.

Thank you.

5:20

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other speakers to this bill? The hon. Member for Lethbridge-East.

Ms Fitzpatrick: I wasn't going to stand and speak to this because I knew lots of people were, but I spent an hour on the phone this morning with a woman who is a victim of domestic violence, and 18 years later she's still in hiding. I looked at some stats. There were 7,600 complaints of domestic violence last year. Only 2,600 were prosecuted. I'm going to speak to this because it's one thing for us to support a day that acknowledges PTSD – and I think that's fantastic, and I thank the Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs for putting it forward – but I think with that we also have to look at our actions abiding by that.

I say that because after I gave my statement in November, a day after, I was at a meeting. I was sitting in that meeting, and

something happened and triggered my own PTSD. I was sick, had nightmares that night, and the following day I confronted the person who made that PTSD come to the surface. When I was told that they were sorry for my feelings, I felt that, obviously, that person did not have any real understanding of what PTSD was or what domestic violence was. I just want to say that along with this bill our actions need to show that we also support what's going on.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the bill in third reading?

Seeing none, I will call on Edmonton-Castle Downs to close debate.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to close debate on Bill 206.

[Motion carried; Bill 206 read a third time]

[Standing ovation]

Motions Other than Government Motions

Cyberbullying Awareness

507. Mr. Dang moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to take steps to increase awareness in Alberta's schools of the effects of cyberbullying.

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

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my honour today to bring this important motion to the floor for debate because bullying has real and serious impacts not just for our students but for many Albertans across the province. Bullying can lead to anxiety and depression. Studies have shown again and again that bullying negatively affects student achievement in schools. We've seen that over the last few years the nature of bullying has changed and is ever evolving. Cyberbullying is now becoming more common every day with today's technology.

In preparing for this motion I consulted extensively with students, teachers, principals, and schools in my constituency. They shared over and over again with me that everyone needs more tools and that we absolutely need to be having a larger conversation about the effects of cyberbullying in our schools.

According to a 2009 Statistics Canada survey, approximately 40 per cent of adults and 50 per cent of youth have experienced cyberbullying. The most common form of cyberbullying against children is receiving threatening or aggressive e-mail or instant messages, at a staggering 74 per cent, followed by hate comments, at 72 per cent, and 16 per cent of the youths surveyed reported that they had experienced someone using a child's identity to send threatening messages.

Madam Speaker, most children are bullied by someone they know, usually a classmate, a friend, or an acquaintance, and among cases of child luring as many as 60 per cent are by a stranger. One of the most important statistics of this entire conversation that stood out to me was that only 14 per cent of all child cyberbullying or child luring cases known to adults were reported to police. This chronic underreporting is why we need to be working to increase awareness about the prevalence and to increase the awareness of the effects of cyberbullying.

Madam Speaker, promoting relationships and eliminating violence network, or PREVNet, Canada's leading researchers on

preventing bullying behaviors, reports that 1 in 5 youth have experienced cyberbullying and 1 in 3 have seen it taking place. Nearly half of Canadian youth in distress report involvement in traditional bullying or cyberbullying, and half of Canadian students believe that bullying is a problem in their high schools.

Madam Speaker, bullying can now follow a student wherever they go, whether they're at home, in class, or hiding in a washroom. Whatever it is, it is now as easy to pull out your cellphone as it is to bully somebody and make fun of them in their privacy.

This constant bullying can have serious consequences for our young people, Madam Speaker. We have all seen the stories, the news of students or young people taking their own lives as a result of cyberbullying. This needs to change. We have a responsibility to promote healthy relationships and prevent bullying in our schools, our workplaces, our homes, and communities. Promoting inclusion and ensuring welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe environments are priorities for Alberta, and they should be for this government.

As part of this goal we need to ensure that we are working on preventative measures that will change the conversation we're currently having around bullying in schools. As part of this conversation we need to ensure that programming is developed to target specific students at all grade levels, and we must remember that what we say to a student at grade 1 is different than what we say at grade 3, is different than what we say at grade 6, is different than what we say in high school. All these students have different access and relationships with technology.

We must work on creating positive relationships between our students and the technology that they use if we want to curb the prevalence of cyberbullying in our communities. In my consultations, Madam Speaker, I heard again and again that good digital citizenship is an ongoing relationship and conversation between students, teachers, parents, and administrators. We need to ensure that we're using positive messaging on how to be a good digital citizen rather than the negative or prohibition-style antibullying messaging that we've resorted to in the past.

Madam Speaker, it's because of this that I'm happy to note that the previously amended School Act does include a greater emphasis on bullying in general and bullying prevention with the inclusion of a bullying prevention week, and it includes requirements for students, parents, and school boards to create welcoming, caring, respectful, and safe learning spaces, where diversity is respected and a sense of belonging and a positive sense of self is nurtured. There are also some specific protections for our students that are being bullied that are currently in place in legislation as well. The School Act also requires that school boards address bullying when it occurs within the school building or during the school day. This, however, only works if the bullying is reported to the school, which is one of the reasons that we need to be increasing awareness of cyberbullying and the supports that are available to our young people.

The government is committed to promoting welcoming, caring, respectful spaces that respect diversity and nurture a positive self-image, Madam Speaker. That's why the government has taken a multipronged approach to combating bullying in Alberta. Through Human Services, Education, Indigenous Relations, Health, Culture and Tourism, Labour, Advanced Education, Justice and Sol Gen, Seniors and Housing, and corporate human resources the government has been working to prevent bullying and promote healthy relationships in Alberta's schools, communities, and workplaces. Through the ministries the government is working to raise awareness regarding cyberbullying and do things like increase mental health supports for individuals affected by bullying.

Madam Speaker, for this to work, I'm also happy to see that Budget 2016 included \$1.9 million in bullying prevention in schools and in our communities. I hope that this motion will support this work and be an extra tool for the government to continue to create healthy, supportive, and inclusive environments for our youth. The government provides specific supports for those dealing with bullying such as the 24-hour bullying helpline, which is available in over 170 languages. There is a chat line available, which is available from noon until 8 p.m., and the government of Alberta's website provides online resources available for children, youth, parents, and other caregivers. I'd like to say to anyone who's listening at home today or is reading this in the future and is ever in need of assistance or is feeling overwhelmed due to bullying that the helpline can be accessed by calling 1.888.456.2323 or by visiting alberta.ca/bullying.

5:30

Madam Speaker, I've heard from students and young people in my office and people who've reached out to me directly with stories of their experiences of cyberbullying. Some of these stories are harrowing, which is why I've brought forward this motion today. We must do everything that we possibly can do to increase the awareness of the effects of cyberbullying, and we need to ensure that Alberta students know that their government supports them and that we will continue to work every day to ensure that their schools are welcoming, supportive, and inclusive spaces.

There are examples of schools in my riding which are taking a leadership role in this fight against cyberbullying. Monsignor Fee Otterson, for example, has had great success in providing educational programming for parents around cyberbullying.

I've heard from students and parents who've told me that often parents simply don't know or don't understand what cyberbullying is or that it is going on at all. Many of them are completely unaware of what technologies are being used and how these technologies can be used in a negative manner, Madam Speaker. That is why it is essential that we do our work here in the Legislature to ensure that there is an increased awareness among all parents, among all educators, whether that's teachers that we're teaching today or teachers that have been teaching for many years, and that these cyberbullying incidents are caught and handled. We need to equip our educators and our parents with the tools that they need so that they can help to foster safe learning environments for our students.

Madam Speaker, I personally am committed to preventing and ending bullying across this province. I believe that I can speak for all members of this House when I say that this Assembly should be committed to ending bullying as well. I look forward to the conversation on this motion this afternoon because I know that every person understands that we must have the best possible learning environment for our students and that cyberbullying can end with us.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Ms Jansen: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to Motion 507 and thank the member for bringing it forward. I think it's an important motion. It builds on a lot of the work that I was doing as associate minister of family and community safety and the first minister that had bullying and cyberbullying in a portfolio. Certainly, I learned a lot from the work we did in that area about bullying and cyberbullying. We felt that it was an important issue in our government and an issue that we wanted to devote time and resources to.

I was very happy in our ministry to be the first minister tasked with that responsibility to not only tackle bullying and cyberbullying but violence against women and sexual exploitation. In that role, I introduced the first homophobic and transphobic bullying fact sheets as well as tips for students who wanted to start GSAs. We know that GSAs have an enormous impact in cutting down on incidents of bullying in schools, and that's why we think they are so important. When I was associate minister, we launched three bullying prevention websites, including the 24-hour helpline that the member talked about, as he said, available in 170 languages. We invested \$72 million in the area of prevention of family violence and bullying.

Now, I would add to that as well that I am the parent of a 16-year-old, and what I see in terms of social media from her is a teenager that like most of her friends, if not all, is glued to their phone almost 24 hours a day. They'd probably look at it in their sleep if they had the ability to. One of the concerning things – I found this when I did the ministry work, and I see this now, watching her – is that these sites where bullying can occur crop up so frequently and some of them are so new that just as soon as you get a handle on one of them, another one comes up.

For instance, I just found out a couple of months ago that a lot of the high schools in Calgary – there is a site called Whisper, where the kids from the school can go and they get a nonstop array of rumours put out by other kids, which the kids can pile onto one individual. When I heard about this, I was shocked. Some of the things they put. They can put absolutely anything on there. They can be rumours about perceived sexual activity. They can be rumours about people's behaviour, about how they're perceived by other people, I mean, incredibly damaging, harmful things to kids, and they're being floated out on a website like this.

Whisper is only one of a number of opportunities that kids have to go online anonymously and talk about other kids and God knows what else. It's the Internet. We don't even know that these are all kids. We have no idea who's on these websites. So when I see this happening and I see these teenagers trying to negotiate their teen years and then having to do that with the added spectre of having absolutely anything floated out about them, whether it's a scurrilous rumour or anything else, and having absolutely no power over it, it's alarming to see and incredibly discouraging.

You know, one of the things that we found when we talked to people about legislation – and we looked at legislation crossjurisdictionally. We looked at all sorts of different places where people have brought in antibullying legislation. And it just doesn't work because you're not trying to get rid of the bully; you're trying to get rid of the bullying behaviour. The only way to do that properly is to take a look at the people who are doing this and to try and find them help so that they don't do it anymore. When the member who brought this forward talks about education, I think that is the most important part to me. It's having that conversation. It's getting to the root of the problem.

You know, we had a statistic that we talked about when we went out to talk to different schools about this. When you step in and stop bullying when it first happens, the incident can be over in as little as 10 seconds, and kids move on. They move on to something else, and it's forgotten. If you don't step in, that bullying can take years and years, can erode a child's confidence over the course of a lifetime. That's what happens when someone steps in. So in the area of education we have to empower bystanders to get involved because when they do step in, they create enormous differences both in the life of the child who's being bullied and in the school or the environment in which they all exist, and that's an important thing, too.

I think that when we have this conversation ongoing – and I hope we do because for all of us with teenagers who are on social media, I think we know that every day that our kids are exposed to damaging things like this is a day too many. You know, when we talk about building partnerships with schools, I think that's a hugely important thing.

We also have to talk about building partnerships with law enforcement, who have fantastic programs. I was talking with a law enforcement official about one particular program where they went into a school where they had a child who was in grade 3. He had been bullying for three years, just on an incredibly massive scale, and at a certain point he was incredibly difficult to manage in the school. His younger brother started kindergarten and was starting to model the same kind of behaviours. The police went into the home with a social worker, and they discovered that the children had a mom who was raising them on her own, who suffered from severe depression, who couldn't get out of bed – there was no food in the house; the kids were existing on Ensure diet drinks – and these kids were in a terrible place.

So the police got involved within the program they were running as did the social worker. They got involved with the family. Within six months this grade 3 boy had not only stopped the bullying behaviours, but he was getting straight As in school, and his younger brother was modelling the same behaviours. They got them hockey equipment, and the kids were involved in sports. All of a sudden you had not only erased the behaviour; you had given these kids – these kids had been flagged. They had been helped. They moved on to actually start enjoying the process of school. But it wasn't just them. It was every child down the road that they would have bullied if no one had stepped in to help. That is an incredibly powerful thing.

5:40

There are so many great programs that we could look at supporting out there in the communities, not just in the schools but in conjunction with the schools, that I think we have to make sure that we keep them top of mind. The folks who are doing this good work: we want to make sure that they can continue to do this work.

I also want to mention Kids Help Phone because I think they're absolutely fantastic. I wish – and I'll give them a plug – that they could get more funding. One of the things that I hear from a lot of LGBTQ youth is that the first time they ever come out, oftentimes they will come out to someone on a help phone because sometimes that is the only way they can find someone they can actually feel comfortable enough having that conversation with, especially in Alberta, you know, that has so many rural areas. Oftentimes kids in small communities have nothing in the way of resources in their schools that they can rely on, so the help phone concept is a hugely important concept.

I know that Kids Help Phone has LGBTQ-trained counsellors. I couldn't believe how many people I spoke to out in the community who actually talked to me about Kids Help Phone and said that 10 years ago or so they actually came out on Kids Help Phone with a counsellor and were able, then, to move forward with a little bit of perspective on what they were going through and some help and some people who were there to listen to them. You know, I can't say enough about Kids Help Phone and the kinds of things they've done.

I want to finish by saying that, you know, I think that when we look at these issues and we look at the fact that the cyberworld is changing every day, our ability to stay on top of some of these websites like some of the ones that we've seen – I've had many conversations with someone who is a dear friend of mine, Carol Todd, whose daughter was Amanda Todd. Unfortunately, I think

everybody knows the Amanda Todd story now. Carol and I became friends when I was working on these issues. We spent many nights talking about what she had gone through with Amanda, and . . . [Ms Jansen's speaking time expired] Okay. Sorry.

Thank you.

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

Mr. Piquette: Okay. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm very happy to be able to rise on this critical issue. I would like to thank our member for proposing this motion. I'm very impressed with the comments that the member across the floor has stated. I think that's excellent information. She was talking about, you know, that she hoped this conversation would continue. Well, I mean, we're having that conversation right now, and I think that was the intent of the motion, to get this going. I think that it's already working. I mean, this is something that, I think, can't be stressed often enough, so I would like to speak strongly in favour of the motion.

Now, studies have shown that bullying in general affects student achievement in school. That's been shown to also apply to cyberbullying. We are talking about real and serious impacts. As other members have mentioned, this can include anxiety and depression, but unfortunately sometimes these types of impacts can be things that you can't recover from. I mean, we have had suicides as a consequence of this. It's an incredible tragedy when a young person has their entire life ahead of them and reaches that type of a state where they think it's not worth going ahead with. Sadly, I mean, this is a situation that occurred in my own riding not very long ago. We had a young lady who, unfortunately, took her own life, and cyberbullying was a factor in it. Unfortunately, this is something that seems to be becoming more common and easy with today's technology.

You know, there's a bit of a sad irony in how school administrators and educators kind of approached this originally. Until about 2011 I actually used to teach ethics and law for beginning students in Education at the University of Alberta. We did do a section on social media, but at that time – and that's not very long ago at all – the main concern that we had was actually the teacher's reputation. The concern was that, well, what if the teacher put something on social media that's not appropriate, and what type of harm can that do to the teacher's reputation? We didn't really imagine that, although this is an issue, this was, you know, really the main issue at all. That issue was really what, you know, youth would do to each other through these new means. Obviously, that understanding is something that does need to change.

Now, however, of course, it's not as if bullying at school, in and of itself, is a new issue. It certainly is not. Schools have long been actually legally liable if they fail to take reasonable steps to prevent bullying and to deal with it when it does occur, so some of these things had already been in step.

What makes cyberbullying any different from conventional bullying? This is something as well that both the mover of the motion and, you know, the member across the floor has pointed out. The biggest issue, I think, with it is that it follows young people wherever they go, and there really is no safe space.

Now, even speaking from my own long-distance experience as a precocious child – I was the shortest in my class and had all kinds of odd manners when I was young – this is something that I had to experience. However, I could leave school, and I could get home, and then I had a supportive family. I had friends. I had a, you know, different place to escape to. I just can't imagine what these young people must go through when the place that they would normally

escape to is also poisoned – right? – and that there are some places that they can't escape.

I also like that the member from Calgary there brought up the particular issue with rural children. I mean, this is something for rural kids who might have difficulty fitting in, where something like social media could be a place for them to be able to express themselves freely. It's really, you know, kind of tragic that they find themselves in situations where what should be an ally for them is something that is the absolute opposite. This is something that intrudes everywhere, so how can they escape?

Now, the School Act does require the school boards to address bullying, whether it occurs within the school building during the school day or whether it occurs by electronic means. However, this is something that schools certainly cannot do on their own. I mean, we all have responsibility to promote healthy relationships and to prevent bullying, whether the traditional type or cyberbullying in our schools, workplaces, homes, and communities.

I think another kind of a side issue here is that, unfortunately, in the adult world cyberbullying is something that is accepted or people look the other way far too often. I think that this is something, you know – if we want our young people not to be engaging in this type of behaviour, I think that we need to help set the example. I'm afraid that, unfortunately, I don't think that we've necessarily been the best example. I'm speaking specifically of us in our role as political leaders in this province. I mean, we all have a part to play in making sure that people understand that this is not something that is acceptable. Promoting inclusion and ensuring that welcoming, caring, and respectful environments are available for our schoolchildren, should be, for all of us, our priorities for Albertans and especially for our government.

I really thank the member for bringing this up. I think this is, you know, a valuable thing to keep talking about and to take the broad view of what it means to educate people. I also agree with the member across the floor in the sense that I don't think that the punitive measures are necessarily always the best. Sometimes we need to start with what is happening in the young person's life where they feel they need to bully another child, whether through cyber means or through traditional ones.

I'd like to speak in favour of supporting this motion and thank the member for bringing it to the House's attention. Thank you.

5:50

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

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Over my years as a teacher I've had my share of students in crisis, so I am very pleased to rise and speak in favour of Motion 507. Often the students that I taught who found themselves in this kind of a position didn't always come with nice, clean lives and situations. Often there was chaos, and their lives could get a little messy. As a teacher I always did my best to try and help them find in my classroom or on my basketball team a place of safety and of security. In many cases I was successful, but in some I was unable to break through the chaos and the pain in these kids' lives. For one or two of these students the consequences were quite serious in the extreme. They left myself and the school and my colleagues and their friends and their loved ones looking for answers as to how we could have reached across the gap of their pain to try to bring hope and to try to answer their questions.

Perhaps one of the most heartbreaking and, if it's appropriate to say so, crushing situations that some of my students faced were when they were bullied. I think over an extended career any teacher would be able to remember a student or two or three that faced

extreme hardships as a result of that bullying. I can remember one student who was subjected to physical violence when he was beaten up by three students, who then denied that they were involved until suitable camera evidence was forthcoming.

Bullying has, to some degree, changed over the course of my tenure as a teacher. Bullying has always, though, entailed intimidation, whether it was physical or verbal or emotional. Cyberbullying was not even a consideration when I started teaching, but it was definitely a part of the educational equation by the end of my teaching career. Cyberbullying, I believe, has become a serious problem for some students within our school system. By the end of my career so many of the students – indeed, I would argue that the vast majority of the students that I taught in my classes all had cellphones, and there's absolutely no doubt in my mind that the readily available access to this kind of technology has helped to create this problem of cyberbullying.

It was because of this that I know that educators and my staff and I'm sure staff in educational institutions across the province met. We talked. We discussed. We looked at the evidence and the suggestions for how to deal with cyberbullying, and then we would take that to our kids. We would take them to our classrooms. We would take it in to the students just to remind them that an inappropriate use of this technology could hurt, it could hurt the kids that are in their school, that it wasn't just playing around, it wasn't just joking, that the pictures that they took and posted from the party on the weekend or the student that vented about the character of another student wasn't just joking around, that it could have very serious consequences. We would have to remind them that not only would it have serious ramifications in the life of the student, but it could also have legal consequences for the person that was involved in the cyberbullying.

Now, I've been witness to the often traumatic events that have accompanied an act of cyberbullying. Relationships between friends become strained or even break out into open hostility. Students begin to take sides. Classroom environments, which should be safe and caring, can quickly become places of stress and strain. As a teacher you're caught in the middle of all of this, trying to figure out how you can repair relationships, how you can keep students safe, how you can teach and encourage learning and engage your students when this is occurring.

Students become wounded. Some will lash out in anger, and others – well, they'll retreat into a world of loneliness, and they'll try to find some place in the school where they can just hide.

Parents, upon finding out that their children are bullied or cyberbullied, in trying to protect their child, will often, in turn, become the focus of attention as they confront the bullies. The circle gets wider, and the school and the students and the community become enmeshed in an ugly situation where the power to get your way is often more important than the lives of the students that are involved.

Alberta Education and organizations like the society for safe and caring schools have a wide variety of resources that can be used to address bullying, but often these resources may not focus on cyberbullying. You've got events like Pink Shirt Day, a national antibullying campaign. Last year, I believe, we saw 6.4 million Canadians take part in a bully-free lifestyle, and if you log on to the antibullying website online, you can find resources on cyberbullying.

Madam Speaker, it's been my experience, in the time that as a teacher I've had to be a part of these kinds of events and these situations, that the best prevention against bullying is relationships. Positive, loving connections that build trust are the best way of ensuring that bullying doesn't take place. As a teacher, an educator, I always believed that it was one of my jobs to try to create those kinds of relationships not only between myself and the students but between the students themselves.

This motion raises awareness regarding cyberbullying, that will set a positive example for parents and for schools to continue developing targeted and preventative measures against cyberbullying. There is much to support in this motion, and I would thank the member across for bringing it forward.

As I've said, while you can have all sorts of programs, I really think the best thing that we can do is to encourage within our education system and within our communities the willingness to make positive relationships and to look beyond the individual student.

You know, I can think of one individual in our school who could have been bullied, a prime candidate. He had a disability that, in many cases, could have kept him from establishing positive relationships. Yet we invited this individual onto our basketball team. Over a three-year period of time that individual became a part of our team and became a part of the lives of the kids on my basketball team. That's the best way to stop bullying.

The Deputy Speaker: Hon. members, it's now 6 p.m. The House stands adjourned until 7:30 this evening.

[The Assembly adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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