



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday evening, May 31, 2016

Day 36

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 29th Legislature
Second Session

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Party standings:

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

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, May 31, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Government Motions

Medical Assistance in Dying

17. Ms Payne moved:

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 right of patients to access this service;
- (d) the practice of medical assistance in dying is closely monitored and measures regulating medical assistance in dying are reviewed within one year.

[Debate adjourned May 31]

The Speaker: Anyone else wishing to speak to Motion 17? The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I very much appreciate the opportunity to speak on this very important motion. I want to thank the government for the opportunity to debate. I hope that perhaps with the opportunity here to speak first this evening, I can set perhaps a little bit of a different tone than the tone we had earlier this afternoon. You know, unfortunately, I think it got a little political this afternoon. So I'm going to spend just a minute or two sharing my thoughts on whether or not I feel like we've been given enough time here to debate and discuss what is a matter of great importance and interest to Albertans.

I have to say that I have some sympathy for the perspective that perhaps this has been rushed and that perhaps it would have been nice to see these regulations sooner, but I have to say that this is an issue that is evolving on a not even daily basis but perhaps on an even more often than daily basis here as we get towards the deadline on Monday. The federal government has yet to pass their legislation. It made it through the House of Commons today but has yet to make it through the Senate. As a result my sense is that this government is working up its regulations as it goes, as it responds to the changing landscape, Bill C-14, that's coming from the federal government, and as a result it has had a challenging time getting much more information to us ahead of time.

This is the first time in my relatively young political career here in the Legislative Assembly that I've actually seen a regulation, an order in council, before it's passed. I think it's important that we recognize that the government, I believe, has the best of intentions in sharing this information with us ahead of time. I think that represents some new ground for a governing party, at least in recent memory, so I think they deserve some credit for doing that. The one suggestion perhaps, if we were to go back a few months in time –

I'm sure we all wish we could do that at times – would have been to spend some time a few months ago having this debate in a more general sense.

What I can say, though, is that when I found out from the Opposition House Leader that we would be having this debate this week, when I found that out last week, I went and started talking with stakeholders in my constituency. I started talking with stakeholders in the palliative care world, and I did my own research, and I did some thinking about this issue. I would hope that in that time, between about a week ago and now, other members would have done the same thing. We were given the draft motion on Friday, so that gave us a sense of the frame under which we would be talking about this issue today. You know, on balance, frankly, I think we have had enough time to review this.

It is an issue where we're up against the clock. Whether we like that fact or not, that's the situation we're in. This law will change on Monday of next week, so we have a need and a requirement to have these discussions.

Let's, then, talk about medical assistance in dying. That's the issue before us. As I said previously in my member's statement of March 17 of this year, we know medical assistance in dying will now be legal. I am philosophically supportive of the idea that people have control over their own medical decisions all the way through life, up to and including death. But now that it is legal, I believe we need to emphasize the fact that medical assistance in dying ought to be rare, exceedingly rare. When I hear people ask for medical assistance in dying, what I believe many of them are really saying is that they want to be comfortable. They want to know that they remain in control. They want to know that their families will not suffer or worry unduly. That is what palliative care offers to Albertans. That is the purpose of palliative care.

We, I think, should use this debate as an opportunity to have a discussion about how we maximize the availability of palliative care for Albertans everywhere in this province, that we talk about alternatives to medical assistance in dying, prevention, reduction, the request for medical assistance in dying. It will become legal on Monday, and my personal opinion is that it should be legal. The Supreme Court of Canada has told us that it will be.

It's important, then, to know that Alberta Health Services has developed a provincial palliative care and end-of-life framework. That framework exists and has been in place since I believe 2014, but that framework has not been properly and fully funded. What that framework talks about is improving access for patients and their families to palliative home care, and it talks about the need for early access to palliative care. The objective is to achieve a quality of living, to reduce the desperation that people feel that leads to that sense that the only way out, to relieve that suffering, would be medical assistance in dying. There are other alternatives where you can maintain control, where you can choose, where you can maintain quality of life to the end of life. I would encourage this government, please, to consider the importance of expanding palliative care throughout the province and ensuring that all Albertans have that choice.

As I look at the specific regulations, there are a few things, I think, that it covers that I am supportive of. I do have some questions around exactly how that mental capacity will be determined. It sounds like physicians and psychologists will be involved in that. I'm glad to see that mental illness is excluded.

The question that was raised earlier this afternoon is the question of the time delay. In talking with people in the palliative care world, who work in palliative medicine, they say that there are cases where someone may be in great distress on a given day and feel like it's time to end it all and want to make that choice but where, given 24 hours and some pain relief, they're sitting up, drinking a cup of tea,

talking with their family the very next day. I think we need to ensure – and I would encourage the Associate Minister of Health and the minister and all members of the House, anyone who may be involved in this process, to please consider working in some sort of even brief delay from the time the request is made to the time that medical assistance in dying actually happens.

I recognize that there is an opportunity all throughout the process for the patient to change their mind, right up until the very last minute, right up until the drugs are administered, and I appreciate that fact. But I would suggest that we perhaps look at building in some sort of formal delay mechanism. It doesn't need to be a matter of weeks but perhaps a matter of 48 or 72 hours. It doesn't need to be, necessarily, a long time, but I think it's important that a decision such as this, an irrevocable decision such as this, is taken with real caution.

7:40

The rules in place talk about the safeguards that would be in place. I just want to read some of those into the record to make sure it's understood what those safeguards will be. The College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta have included several safeguards: the patient must be made aware of all of their medical options beyond medical assistance in dying but including that as well; two separate doctors must meet the criteria as set out by the Supreme Court; any questions about mental state raised at any time must be referred to a psychologist or a psychiatrist; two people must witness the patient's request but may not be related to them, may not be their physician or the owner or operator or an employee of a health facility where the patient is receiving treatment, to ensure appropriate independence; and, as I've said before, the patient must be advised at each step that they may change their mind, including immediately before the procedure.

Now, we had a good discussion earlier this afternoon about the text of the proposed order in council, about that perhaps those same conditions would be included in provision (2.2) of the order in council, which allows for another person to sign and date the request should the person requesting medical assistance in dying not be physically able, not mentally incapable but not physically able, to sign. Someone over 18 years of age may sign on that patient's behalf, but I would suggest that perhaps with the safeguards that I have just discussed, we may want to consider putting those in place as well for anyone who may sign such an order on behalf of the patient.

I want to talk momentarily about the protection for vulnerable people. That is something that I think is, without question, vital to this discussion and one that I think we must not take lightly. It is something that in the regulations and in the standards of practice as put forward by the College of Physicians & Surgeons, I know, has been given a lot of consideration, and I think it will be covered, I would hope, by both the professional ethics of the physician and other medical professionals who would be involved in the process around medical assistance in dying. The specific service, the medical assistance in dying care co-ordination service, I know will consider that as an important part of what they do as well. But that is something that must absolutely not be taken lightly because there's always a concern that that risk could be raised.

The words that are often used are "conscientious objection." I actually take a bit of issue with the term "conscientious objection." It somehow implies or can, I suppose, in some interpretations imply that there's an objection to something that is broadly seen as a good thing, so that language I struggle with. That language doesn't appear everywhere, but I've seen it in a few different places. I prefer a discussion about adherence to moral commitments. I would say that all people on the medical side who

have anything to do with medical assistance in dying be a participant in the medical assistance in dying care co-ordination service that Alberta Health Services is putting together. A physician or other medical professional who chooses not to be a part of this: they're adhering to their moral commitments as they understand them. It is not up to us to judge that person or their motivations, but it's important we honour and enshrine their ability to act in a manner consistent with their moral commitments as they interpret them in their role.

Fortunately, the College of Physicians & Surgeons has considered exactly that in their standard of practice on moral or religious beliefs affecting medical care. They've laid that out, I think, very clearly and succinctly, and it is following, I think, an established practice that already exists within the medical profession for areas that extend beyond medical assistance in dying.

I'm going to take my last 90 seconds here, Mr. Speaker, to just talk one more time about the importance of having conversations with your family, with your loved ones, with your care providers all the way along the process and to have those conversations now, while you are fit and healthy, about what quality of life means to you. When decisions need to be made, perhaps you will be able to speak for yourself, but perhaps you will not be able to speak for yourself. I encourage you once again to visit the AHS website conversationsmatter.ca. These are very difficult discussions to have, but they're very important discussions so that, in particular, your family and your loved ones and your care providers know what quality of life means to you. There are a series of templates and documents and conversation guides that you can use on that website to help you work through these challenging but very important conversations. That advanced care plan is a very important gift that you can give to your family.

I'll end by saying that death is a natural part of life. Living a good life involves having a good death. Palliative care, advanced care planning can ensure that your choices and your loved ones' are respected. As I say, advanced care planning truly is a gift to your family.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any questions or comments to the Member for Calgary-Elbow under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none wishing to speak, the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to just take this opportunity to say thank you for having this discussion. It's a difficult and very complex subject, and I think it takes a tremendous amount of courage to even have the discussion. I wanted to thank other hon. members for their incredible and insightful discussions about this to help everybody understand. I truly believe that this is a situation – it's a thumbprint, and every single situation is going to be unique and different.

I know, for myself, I've had that privilege of being there at that time. I don't know why that happened. I don't know why I had the privilege of being there at those times when I've had friends and family pass away. We never know for sure when that's going to happen, but when you have that privilege of being there, it changes you forever. I think that maybe it will become more apparent how important this is to me personally, based on my personal experiences, but also to explain to the government about why we're a little dismayed by the speed at which this is happening.

If you were able to describe to your family and to the people that you love what you would foresee as your own death and how you would like to leave this world – none of us really have that choice.

To be able to have the decision at this point and to talk about what the opportunities are, to actually have a say, potentially, over how you die, is such an important discussion that really, really, really deserves the respect and the time necessary in order to describe and understand how that would happen for a person who has the choice to have that happen.

As for me and my personal experiences, recently, last year, I lost a very, very good friend to pancreatic cancer. We watched him for 18 months fight this unbelievable fight. Mr. Speaker, I have to tell you that even just watching him go through that with his young daughter and his young wife, that experience, and seeing his strength and the valuable time that he spent with his family – he was suffering in a way that I will never understand, at least not at this point. Like I said, none of us know how our lives are going to proceed or where we're going to end up. But I saw him. I saw what he went through. I saw how his life changed in front of our eyes. Obviously, his daughter and his wife were important to him before he was diagnosed, but after he was diagnosed and we knew what he was going through, you could see the alteration in this person and what he was able to contribute to his young daughter's life before we lost him, what he contributed to my life and the people around him.

Truly, with all my heart, the aspects have changed me forever, and this is just one of a couple of experiences. Like I said, I don't know how I got this privilege to be there when a person leaves this Earth. To actually physically be there and watch that happen is one of the most tremendous privileges I've ever been part of, let alone seeing babies come into the world. It has an equal effect on your person.

7:50

My point is that as we saw him go through this process, there were many, many times when he was in such extreme pain and extreme suffering. What his wife and his child went through was extreme, the amount of stress and duress. They had us, and they had their family and everyone around them to help them get through that process. The question of medically assisted dying never came up, obviously. I don't know if it ever crossed his mind. It was never a discussion that we ever had.

One thing I want to bring forward – and this is to the discussions of palliative care – is my understanding, like I said, my personal perspective of what palliative care means to me and my family personally. In this particular experience, we were in the palliative care centre at the top of the Tom Baker. The room was small. All the family was around him. The experience was so emotional. But I have to say that I think what resonates the most with me, what I remember the most, if I was to pick one particular idea from that night, is that the ER nurses and doctors and palliative doctors and care workers that were around him sat with him, right here, like this close to his face, when he was in his last breath and asked him what he wanted right then and there. They were right in his face. They said to him: you know, we can intubate you and keep you alive for a little bit longer if you want, but you won't be able to tell your wife you love her, and you will not be able to hold your child, but you'll be here on this Earth presently for a little while longer. Then they said: "Or what we can do is make you comfortable. You can tell your wife you love her. You can hold her hand. You can be together with your family in your room." That's what he decided at that time. It wasn't an easy decision.

I remember standing there watching this conversation. You know how sometimes you're in a conversation and you feel so privileged to be there because it's like a personal moment, and you almost feel uncomfortable for being there, but you know you're supposed to be there. I stood there watching this interaction happen between

husband and wife, making that final decision as to what he was going to do right then and there. It still makes my hair stand up to think about it.

My husband was at the end of the bed, and he was rubbing his feet. We were just talking to him. And then he piped up at the last minute – my friend forgets codes and everything a lot; she's a lot like me, actually – and all of a sudden spouted out the code for the computer and their security deposit box number. This is in the last throes of this beautiful man's life, you know, remembering all of these little bits and pieces that all of a sudden he thought she should know and where he had put the key for this. It was one of those crazy, surreal moments that I'll never forget as long as I live. Anyway, they were going through that, and then it was like he was given permission to finally let go. We were all there. We only had him for another four hours. We didn't know. We didn't know how long we'd have him. We thought we might have him for a day or a month. We certainly didn't know.

I can honestly say that those palliative nurses and doctors and care workers are heroes. To look at it from the point of view that – and again this is not in any way to say which way is right here. This isn't a decision of yes or no. I don't think any of us are supposed to make that decision.

I suppose where I'm going with this is that that option – when you're in that traumatic space, I don't know if any of us are anything less than vulnerable. I know how vulnerable I felt. He was my friend. It wasn't even my husband. If it was my husband or my child, I don't know what I'd do. Even thinking about it throws me into a space of absolute disbelief. Watching her go through this with the grace and compassion that she had at that moment, what she was able to bring to my life – and I know that sounds ridiculously selfish, but it's the honest truth: how much it altered me as a human being at that moment.

I don't ever, ever, ever want anybody in a House like this, where we have the opportunity to make these laws and rules and regulations and everything that comes along with it, to be the purveyor of a decision that somebody might regret one day. Can you imagine if we're a part of that and you have to sit in this chair one day knowing that a law and something that you brought here took somebody's life before they were ready? I don't think any of us could survive the mental impact that would have on any of us. That's what needs to be considered.

It's not a yes or no. It's not "I agree" or "I disagree." I truly believe that there are probably people out there that deserve the right to have that. If I was to look at myself in the mirror, I can honestly tell you that from day to day that could change. One moment I'd be, like: "Yes, I'm one of those Type A personalities. I'm going to plan it. I'm going to be ready to go." This is what my situation would be for me to have to make that decision. But if I had to make that decision with my great-grandchildren sitting around me, knowing that I could have one more day, I might flip-flop at that last minute. I think it's my prerogative and my right to do so.

But if there's pressure or undue stress from family or any other things that are going on or your desire as an elder person or a sick person to not put a burden on your family, those are the kinds of things we actually have to consider in this type of legislation. I know that for my friend who lost her husband last year, never once did the idea of burden ever come forward. Not once. We watched this woman. We watched everything she did. She tried everything. I mean, if she could have physically kept him alive herself, she would have. It was beautiful. It was beautiful to watch this happen. I know that's not everybody's experience, but that was mine.

On the flip side, when my own grandmother passed away, I was with her. I held her. If I hadn't been given that opportunity because

my grandmother decided at that moment that because she was so sick – I have to tell you that my grandmother always slept on her side and on one particular side of the bed. She was getting close. She'd asked to not be resuscitated. She was in her bed and all of those things had been done for her so that she could pass on her own, but she was really uncomfortable, and you could tell. I was in university at that time, and I said to the nurse that day: you need to turn her over onto her side because she always sleeps this way. Well, I swear to God, we flipped her over onto her side, and within hours of her being comfortable and in her space and in that comfortable zone, she quietly – I use the term loosely. If anybody has been there at end of life, every single person I've ever had the privilege of being with, they fight for that last breath every single time. She turned over, and she was in that space, and again it was like this permission to go was there.

I would never want to take that away from anybody because they were under stress or pain. As we go through this process, as hard as it is to go through that process, I hope that everybody will have the opportunity to be with somebody when they choose to leave this Earth, if it is your privilege to be there when somebody you love is in that situation, because it is a humongous privilege. I would not want to ever take away that journey from somebody. As difficult as it is, it gives you the empathy and the understanding with which to come forward and look at legislation and regulations like this with a very open mind and a sense of humility and lack of judgment, which I think is very important.

I really, really appreciate the opportunity to speak to this, and thank you so much to everybody for their stories in here. I've been very impacted by everybody's stories.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, are there any questions or observations under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View? Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Medically assisted dying, of course, is complex. It is a particularly difficult subject to discuss because of the sensitivities and emotions that are involved. The Supreme Court's decision to allow assisted dying in Canada has changed our society, and as Alberta prepares to make it permissible, these changes will filter down to our province. I certainly respect and appreciate the government for putting forward this motion, however. That is why the regulations that Alberta establishes to outline the processes for medically assisted dying are so important. That is why I am very appalled that this government is allowing just six hours to discuss these draft regulations. Then, on top of that, it seeks consent from us to approve the final form of these regulations behind closed doors.

8:00

Mr. Speaker, that this motion has come before the House so that members can make a few speeches is not the kind of consultation required for an issue of this magnitude. That the public consultation that has occurred simply involved an online survey, especially when a component of the population particularly affected by this process is seniors, is typical of this government's lack of ability to actually consult with the people of this province. That is what is greatly disappointing to me. Only 15,000 Albertans participated in the survey, and 15,000 out of 4 million represents .38 per cent of the provincial population.

Mr. Speaker, as Members of the Legislative Assembly we need to see the proposed regulations and take them to our constituents for feedback. That is part of our job. Instead, this government's plan is to talk in the House for six hours. But even if we debated for 60

hours, it's only the 87 of us talking to each other. The rest of Alberta is not part of this discussion. This is a profound, life-changing issue, and you're only asking 87 people in Alberta to talk about it.

This government did not even table the documents under discussion so that they could be handed out in the House for each one of us to read. You act like you're doing us a favour by inviting us to speak about them, and we only found out about them a few hours ago.

Mr. Speaker, by telling us that these regulations must be in place by Monday and that we have to provide cabinet with permission to do it behind closed doors, this government is hobbling us from doing our job as MLAs. It is making us neglectful of our constituents. What do I say to my constituents when they hear about the regulations – and I stress “the regulations” – and ask me why I did not communicate with them about this issue? I can only tell them that the government had a year to draft the regulations, which it could have made public to gain more feedback, but it instead chose to take this route. It preferred to wait until the last minute and then pressure the Members of the Legislative Assembly to allow cabinet to make the decision itself.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Alberta have not been served by this government because they have been blocked from playing a part in this process. For that reason alone – for that reason alone – I will not be supporting this motion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Any questions under 29(2)(a) for the Member for Calgary-West?

Seeing and hearing none, I would recognize the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate the opportunity to speak to this motion. In some ways it strikes me as being a bit of an earthquake motion. The social terra firma of western society, which has been stable for centuries, all of a sudden, well, on Thursday, without warning, gave a little bit of a rumble and today, without warning, split wide open.

Now, it is an issue that is hugely significant to the people of our province and to individuals and families. While I fully agree that changes in medical technology over the last decades have really changed the landscape and that there is room for some discussion here, people are suffering and are near death, and when they're in that state, they should be allowed to die a natural, non interfered with death.

Medical practice has become so advanced and so technological that it literally is possible to keep people alive with chemicals and machines and extraordinary means for long, long periods of time, that really is wrong and really does prolong the experience of death in, probably, negative ways. My concern is, though, that while I think there needs to be some adequate response to that reality, I think that you don't correct that problem by authorizing medics to become doctors of death.

So I have to speak to this from what I understand my constituents would feel about it, although I am deeply troubled that we've had no opportunity whatsoever to actually discuss it with them. People do want some control over their life. They want to be able to limit dragging out death in medically induced kinds of ways, but when it becomes an act of an aggressive killing, society will in fact grieve. People will grieve deeply.

What I would really like to speak to is the process by which we find ourselves here. I guess I truly have to ask the question as I think Albertans are going to ask the question: why the rush? We have known about this for quite a time, and one could say that it was accidentally left to the end. Some people are going to think it was deliberately left to the end. I don't know what the answer is there,

and I don't even care to speculate. I have no idea. I recognize that the government feels some sort of obligation to govern, but the reality is that measured and considered progress is most important in social conversations and especially with issues of conscience, that are deeply personal to individuals.

The truth is that we can really only speak to the actual motion itself. The other stuff was thrown out there late this afternoon, 30 minutes before we started to debate this. I still don't have a copy of it personally. The reality is that those aren't even up for debate. There is something that cabinet has shown us. I'm not sure why. We have no influence or say on it. Maybe that's their way of gaining social licence on this. I don't know. But the truth is that we don't even know yet what the federal legislation will look like in the end or if there will actually even be any yet because, quite frankly, the Senate may just reject it and send it back.

Then the difficulty is that the local provincial court decision may have impact on it. We may find the whole thing back in the courts again. So we have no idea where this is going, and I don't understand the rush to try and create guesstimate motions that authorize this cabinet to make decisions when we really don't even know what it is that we need to respond to. This is a motion that essentially takes the decision-making out of this House and empowers and validates an NDP cabinet to decide at their will, at their whim, whatever they want to do, and they want us on behalf of the people of Alberta to give them *carte blanche* so that they can do whatever they think seems right to them.

Now, I'm not sure that they're not necessarily going to try to do what seems right to them, but that may not be right to other people in Alberta. So for them to think that they can have complete authorization, empowerment, freedom from the people to just go behind closed doors, without public debate, and create what they think will be right: quite frankly, I'm not sure this caucus has yet earned the trust or the respect of the people of Alberta to give them that kind of huge trust and freedom on such an important motion as this, especially, for instance, when there are no safeguards listed in this motion. There is lip service to the idea of safeguards. There is a little bit of nice talk about the importance of safeguards. But what safeguards? There is no definition in the motion of anything to do with safeguards. So we are supposed to trust them to make it up, that it will be the safeguards that the people of Alberta want.

8:10

I don't understand the rush at all on this, because a doctor that I spoke to recently pointed out that from his point of view – and he's an Alberta doctor, in Calgary, who specializes in chronic pain management. He expressed the opinion that there is enough regulation with the medical association and others that we could take the time to get this right and the world would not end. Things would carry on. We'd be fine. So what is the rush towards suicide, whether it's assisted or not?

It puzzles me that on the one hand we grieve those who lose hope, who lose their way, who want to give up on life. We grieve the youth on reservations that commit suicide. We grieve youth in all of Alberta who get lost, who get caught in the trap of drugs and in that difficult state or who are struggling with mental health and want to commit suicide. Siblings grieve their brothers and sisters who go ahead and commit suicide, and now we want to encourage them to do it. Spouses feel abandoned by a spouse who commits suicide, and now we want to validate him or her to go ahead and do that. Parents grieve the loss of their children, children grieve the loss of their parents, yet we want to empower them to go ahead and commit suicide.

If you take this to where it goes, why should anyone who wants it not be helped? The reality is that if we're going to just let cabinet

decide, it becomes a completely subjective decision. Who's to say that my right to choose suicide is less than the rights of somebody else? A subjective decision. Who's to say that the rights of an older person are more important than the rights of a mother with children or the rights of a 16-year-old or whatever? What basis do we have to say that one person's suffering is more real – therefore, it's more justifiable – than another person's suffering? How in the world can you decide those kinds of things except for purely subjective feelings?

Many Albertans will view these things from different perspectives. I suspect many in this House will view them from different perspectives. There is absolutely no ground – there is no intellectual framework, there is no moral foundation, and there is no social licence at all granted here – by which people can decide whose suffering validates the right to suicide and whose doesn't. But the truth is that it's my right if we go this way, and everyone has the right.

How do you pick the age of 18 years old? On what grounds is it besides the subjective: well, that maybe is a nice number? I mean, what's wrong with 21 or 16 or 12 or, in fact, six? Why should a child of six years of age have fewer rights? If it boils down to my rights and my experience of my suffering and my experience of my pain, who can tell me that I don't have the right to that?

The whole thing becomes an utterly and totally subjective, groundless, unfounded piece of personal preference, and now we want Albertans to let a cabinet that they're not sure they trust express their personal preference for all of them. Do we now have a death wish, where we don't actually wish to help people through their struggles, through their mental illness issues, through all of the different things that disturb them? How is a parent to feel whose child in puberty – and many young people go through issues of self-identity and self-rejection and struggling. How are they to feel if that child decides that their pain and their suffering, because of what's happened to them at school or whatever, is great enough and strong enough that they should have a right to suicide if they choose to end their life? Because my suffering and my pain is too great, and nobody can say that my suffering is less than your suffering. It's utterly subjective.

I can't help but think also that if this is just entrusted to the decision of cabinet without any legislation, without any fulsome discussion, is it possible that another cabinet down the road would decide that a best practices situation would be that if a student from school speaks to a teacher about the wish to kill themselves, the teacher would have to refer them to a medical professional and would be forbidden to talk to the parent? The next thing you know, the child – it's their right; their suffering is undeniable; their pain is incontestable – would commit suicide without the parents ever knowing. There are no grounds, there is no foundation, there are no limits on any of this. It's entirely subjective.

Has our society – and I just ask this as a question; I realize it's not just here, but I think we have to ask ourselves this – become so confused, so nihilistic that now we want to die in a twisted psychosis of self-cutting and harm and the sleep of death? We rush headlong towards suicide. Why? In this bill there is no motion, no money to address chronic pain, to provide better mental health care. There's no motion, there's no money for better health care. There's no motion, there's no money for palliative care. Do we actually care about people, or do we want to just let them go? It's their wish. It's their will. That's what they feel today. It's their right. You cannot challenge their suffering. Who says that their suffering is worse or less than others'? Are we in such a rush to a society of nihilism and a culture of death and necropolitics that this is where we end up? I think these are questions that many people in Alberta are going to ask.

Cabinet wants the power to decide or maybe to tell all without consulting or wanting to even hear. They want to do it themselves. This is a terrible, terrible process. This is not democratic participation. For those reasons, I absolutely cannot stand before my constituents if I vote for this motion, and I will not.

The Speaker: Are there any questions under 29(2)(a) for the Member for Lacombe-Ponoka?

Hearing none, the Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Mr. Taylor: It's not under 29(2)(a).

The Speaker: Yes. Proceed.

Mr. Taylor: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to voice my opinion on Government Motion 17, Medical Assistance in Dying. You know, this is such an important topic. I can't express how important this is, and I can't do it in just a few words about the opinions that I've heard over the past week or 10 days.

I've really been trying to determine what people think about this. You know, frankly, the response has been varied from the people that I've talked to. Some people have been in support of this and the idea of assisted dying in this province. Many told me that they're opposed to assisted dying in any way, shape, or form.

You know, there's a third camp. They sit on the fence. They're not sure what decision to make. They're waiting to see what comes out of the discussion. They want to hear more. They want to hear something from us, from their doctors, from people that actually know what's going on.

The conversation is now just beginning. It would be a shame if we only spent six hours talking about this and these voices that people have, these opinions that people have are, frankly, muted. Like I said, this is way too important a subject.

You know, personally, I struggle with this one myself. I've listened to both sides of this argument, and it's not clear in my head which way I'd go necessarily. I am still rolling this around. I myself still want to be able to have more discussion. I've heard great arguments from different members in this House. Again, I would love to be able to hear more arguments and more discussion and more opinion from, frankly, more people right across this province, whether it be on one side or the other side.

8:20

I've talked to friends, doctors, associates, and they've all had mixed feelings on this. You know what? They've told me, Mr. Speaker, that in the end we need to take time. That's what I've heard, that we need to take time to make sure that we get this right. I can't agree more, that we need to take that time.

Each member, as it stands, has got 15 minutes to be able to speak on this, plus whatever time if there's a 29(2)(a) on it, but really is that enough time when you're talking about something of this magnitude? I don't believe it is. You know, if you exercise your right to speak honestly and consider all the questions that arise out of this, this is, frankly, not enough time.

You know, I only saw these amendments – I was looking at the clock, and it was about 4:45 – at a quarter to 5, something like that, when I saw these regulations come over here. That's not enough time to read them and digest them and to understand what's in there and what the implications are. Then we have three hours tomorrow. That's, frankly, just not enough time. This is truly life and death that we're addressing. We've got to take it that seriously. It's life and death.

You know, on the whole, the language that was put into this motion seemed fairly cautious, so I was very optimistic about that. But I have some concerns, and I want to spell them out for you. The motion speaks of ways "to implement measures to regulate medical

assistance in dying." To regulate, Mr. Speaker: that means this important document will be taken out of the hands of legislators and Albertans and not be given to a panel to represent the views of all Albertans, right across all sections. It needs to be. That concerns me greatly. This topic of assisted dying needs to be brought back here, into this House, and to have a debate, an opportunity to talk to stakeholders, your fellow Albertans, your fellow constituents, who can represent their views, not just giving six hours to review and discuss it.

At the very least, Mr. Speaker, if we go the route of regulation, it should not be until we have federal legislation that's actually on this matter. Then we can actually see exactly what that says. It's not being settled until June 6. Why are we rushing ahead of this? At that time we'd know exactly what we're up against with the federal legislation. Then we could make more of an informed decision.

I have a concern that I've heard from doctors, so I want to speak on behalf of the doctors that I've talked to. It has to do with conscience rights. You know, you take a look at this material we were provided, an order in council to amend the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta standard of practice, medical assistance in dying. I go to section (4) here:

A regulated member who receives an oral or written request from a patient for medical assistance in dying and who declines for reasons of conscience or religion to provide or aid in providing medical assistance in dying must ensure that reasonable access to the Alberta Health Services care coordination service is provided to the patient without delay.

For the doctors I've talked to, that would be raising red flags. I obviously haven't had a chance to talk to them specifically about that one. I know from the conversations I've had that that would bring them up, so I want to express some of their feelings.

Their conscience tells them they cannot assist in ending someone's life in any way, shape, or form. That's what they told me. Even though they might not act or assist the patient to, you know, end their life, they must ensure the rights of the patients, so it would be referring them to a doctor who will. They have to refer them to a doctor that will provide them with this.

Passing this responsibility to a doctor who they know will consent, from what I've heard, is the same as assisting them themselves because they know what the outcome will be. In listening to what they have to say, they want the ability for doctors – they need to have the right to say no, period. They don't want to have to refer that person on because that, to them, is part of their conscience rights. They don't want to have any part of that. They don't want to be terminating that life. That's not what they got into medical practice for.

That leaves us with the situation where only doctors who feel okay with this are the ones who sign off or give consent to this. If all we're left with are doctors that are doing this, are we now in a position where we'll hear these doctors say yes in most cases instead of having a pragmatic approach, a balanced approach? That's a direct concern for me.

There are many conflicting views that truly need to be discussed more thoroughly with all Albertans to ensure the rights of patients and physicians are truly respected and that the patient's view does not supersede that of their doctor's conscience. Doctors are in much of a patient's life. In the case of my family doctor – well, I guess I know pretty much every doctor in our town – he's brought my children into the world, and now my oldest is 26. They've helped them control pain when they've had injuries, and they've looked after injuries for all these patients right across. Doctors get this way, very personal with their patients, and they see them through difficult times. They never became a doctor to terminate life, and now, as a consequence, this is just what they're being asked to do.

This brings me to another point: “The practice of medical assistance in dying is closely monitored and measures regulating medical assistance in dying are reviewed within one year.” In one year it’s going to be reviewed, this medical assistance. That’s point (d) on the original motion that we had. If we look at it after one year’s time, who’s going to look at it in one year’s time? What will it look like in one year’s time? Will they be able to make all these changes, so it doesn’t look like it’s nice and tight, and be considerate, for the most part, of both parties and not weigh heavily to one side? Again, I ask that we as legislators have the opportunity to look at this, and we should be looking at this as legislation rather than just regulation. Instead of just giving it these six hours, we need to give it a fulsome discussion so that people can actually have a chance to review it and talk about it.

You know, I only heard about this motion yesterday and saw the regulation three or four hours ago, I guess, and frankly I don’t believe that this is enough time. The federal government has had more time. They, frankly, have had 18 months to look at this and have discussions about it and ruminate and talk about it and decide what’s going on. There’s been a lot of heated debate on this subject, and now we’ve got these two three-hour portions on these two days to be able to talk about that. It’s just not enough time when you consider the enormity of this topic.

This topic is so important for everyone here, for everyone in my constituency, for all Albertans. We have this moment in time – this moment in time – and we need to get it right. As it stands, I can’t support this motion. There are simply too many questions and concerns and just not enough time to consider the implications of this motion.

Finally, I’ll say in conclusion: will you please give all Albertans more time to look at this and engage all Albertans in this process? Thank you.

8:30

The Speaker: Are there any questions under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Battle River-Wainwright?

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

Mr. Nixon: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a tough motion to rise to speak to. I think for any member in the House this is a tough topic. Just part of being human is death, and it’s something that, I think, most of us sometimes would like to forget, that all of us will face that one day.

I think that, for myself, my experience on this has primarily been around watching and going through journeys with loved ones who have had to face terminal illnesses, going on that journey with them through their treatments and through their time as they leave the earth, as I know many members on all sides of the House will have experienced with loved ones, and watching them go through pain, the fear, and those things that are associated with death and sharing that pain with them. That’s a hard thing to watch.

By no means am I an expert on what legislation you would need, what regulations you would need, what safeguards need to be put in place, what types of things we need to do something like this. I can recognize the need or the concerns and why there would be discussions on why there may have to be bills like this. But at the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, MLAs are not supposed to be experts at everything. We’re supposed to be advocates. We’re supposed to advocate for our constituents. We’re supposed to try to bring their views to this place and advocate for them as best we can. That’s not an easy thing when you have as many constituents as most of us do back there, but that is our job.

Now, inside this Assembly we have many experts in many things. I see that inside this Assembly we have doctors, who may

understand some of this stuff a lot better than some of the other members in this House. I know that my experience in life has been primarily around working with homeless people, as people know, as well as some time as a CFO. So while I could talk to you about accounting or how to work with a methamphetamine addict, I don’t, you know, have a lot of information about this, and it would take time for me to understand.

Again, Mr. Speaker, it’s our job to go to our constituents and to the people that can help us understand this and then be able to come back and advocate for what’s best. By bringing forward a motion, as some of my colleagues have already brought forward, and then limiting the debate before MLAs can speak to the people that they represent that know about this, can figure out what the views of their constituents are to be able to come and articulate it right, to help get it right – this is serious stuff. This is serious stuff. We are talking about something that is very serious and certainly has the potential for abuse if we do not get it right. I think every member on every side of the House will want to make sure that we can protect anybody vulnerable from being abused in a situation such as legislation or regulations like this – it’s serious.

Now, one of the things that I find appalling – and I don’t think most of the public knows it, Mr. Speaker, unless they’ve had the experience of being an MLA or working around this place – is how fast we move legislation, particularly in Alberta. Not all jurisdictions are at that speed. But particularly in Alberta, how fast we move stuff like this through the Assembly – and I recognize that this is a motion – is staggeringly fast.

If you talk to the average person back in our constituency, they would be shocked that the people that represent them received a document at 3 o’clock or so today and are standing up in the Assembly attempting to figure out what’s best for their constituents and for the province of Alberta in that timeline, without having an opportunity to return to the constituents they represent, to speak to the doctors that they work with, the medical associations, and many of the experts that we have in this province that are available to us, that would certainly be able to provide us appropriate feedback for us to do our job.

Now, it’s one of the reasons why the opposition, as you know, Mr. Speaker, has risen many times to speak of concerns, not just on this motion but on several bills in the past, about the way we do things in the Alberta Legislature. We had hoped and we still do hope that with the new minister of democratic reform we will see some of those reforms so that we can do legislation differently, and we can get it right.

While this is an important subject – and I certainly think that the government’s heart is in the right spot by bringing it forward and trying to attempt to deal with the situation that they have to face and get this right – bringing it forward in a rushed way doesn’t do any of our constituents any good. I think that’s important. I think that’s something that we have to recognize.

You know, we have a short time on this, and I don’t want to take the floor for too much time and prevent other members from being able to speak to it.

But, again, we see it time and time again, particularly since this government has taken power, Mr. Speaker. We are bringing forward pieces of legislation that have significant impacts on our society, on the people that we represent, the people that have sent us here to do a job, and not providing opportunities for the other side of the House, the opposition, to be able to communicate with the people they represent, to get the feedback and the knowledge and the information so that you can make sure that you get things right – this is serious. For what possible reason would we want to limit it to six hours of debate? Can the government truly, with a straight face stand up and justify to Albertans and an Assembly of

87 people: we're going to limit this to six hours of debate, and we're only going to give you the information several minutes before you start to debate it. I think most of the constituents in Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre would be appalled by that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you know that I spent a significant time working in the nonprofit field. In the nonprofit field we have, of course, a board of directors. That's important for governance. I recognize that. I worked with many great boards over the years. But sometimes when you work with a board of governors all the time, you feel like you're working with people for whom it is their hobby, and it's your life. You have to interact with the board. You're trying to do that. This is something you do all day, and then they just come in, often on a volunteer basis in that world, and it's kind of their hobby. It's important. I'm not knocking the governance side of it. But that's sometimes how you feel when you're the executive director working with a board.

In some ways we are a massive board of directors for this province. The experts that have to execute this, the experts that are going to have to face the realities associated with the decisions that are made because of this and other pieces of legislation that we move through this fast, must be looking and going: "What? Is this a hobby for you guys? This is my life. This is important. I am the doctor who's going to have to stand in the room and get this right." "I'm the nurse that's going to have to deal with the realities of this, and you took so little care in it that you slammed it through the Legislature with only six hours of debate and never gave the MLAs the opportunity to speak to the people that it affects, to speak to the people that it'll impact."

That's very disappointing, Mr. Speaker. The government can't even say that with a straight face. There's no justifiable reason for that to happen, and it keeps happening in this Assembly. I for one am very disappointed about that, and I know the people of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre are very disappointed about that.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will yield the floor to the next speaker. But I certainly hope that this government starts to consider working to bring forward good legislation, working with the people of Alberta to get it right the first time and helping the people that the rules and the legislation and the processes that we make here actually impact rather than trying to rush things through in the middle of the night, with very little notice and very little time for debate.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Are there any questions of the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre under 29(2)(a)?

Hearing none, hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway, did you wish to speak to the motion?

Mr. Gill: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As we all know, this is an extremely important debate. The government has decided to speak to it tomorrow as well, so I look forward to delivering my speech tomorrow and, you know, hearing other members' speeches as well.

Therefore, I move that we adjourn the debate on Motion 17 until tomorrow.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 20 Climate Leadership Implementation Act

[Adjourned debate May 31: Mr. Shepherd]

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

Mr. Nixon: Well, thanks. It's great to be back up so quick with you. I'm sure you're excited to see me back up. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Well, I have the privilege, of course, of rising today to speak to Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act. Now, this bill – let's be clear on this – is going to make Alberta families worse off, and it's going to lighten their wallets. It's a bill, Mr. Speaker, that takes money out of Albertans' pockets at a time when they need it most.

8:40

If this government right across from me would open their eyes and take a look at the state of the economy in our province right now, they would see that Albertans are hurting. If they would take the time, Mr. Speaker, to travel with me back to Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre and walk the streets of Rocky Mountain House or come to Rimbey and visit with the mayor or go to Sundre at the A&W – one of my favourite places to get political advice is the Sundre A&W; if you ever read any columns with me, I often refer to what they say – you would hear that people are hurting. You would hear that they're losing jobs and that they are suffering in my communities and communities right across this province.

Now, Mr. Speaker, last year our province lost close to 100,000 jobs. You have to think about that: 100,000 jobs.

Mr. Rodney: How much?

Mr. Nixon: A hundred thousand jobs last year.

That is a staggering number, Mr. Speaker. That is a staggering number of kids right now who are in homes where at least one parent and sometimes both have lost jobs. That is a staggering, staggering number.

Those who still have work right now are facing a reduction in wages or hours. Now, I hear that often as I travel around my constituency right now. People are having to take less hours or less money to be able to keep working, and that has another staggering impact on families all across this province. It's making it harder for thousands of Alberta families to pay their bills and keep food on the table. That's making the problem worse because the next people you start talking to, Mr. Speaker, are small-business owners and people in our communities who can't get the bills paid because these families are suffering, and then that causes small-business owners' families to start to have trouble, and it spirals out of control.

Again, 100,000 jobs, Mr. Speaker. Adding to this downturn is the hardship that – what now? What is this government's response to that hardship, that I just said? What is this government's response to 100,000 people out of jobs? What is their response? What is their solution to get Alberta's families a leg up? What is their solution to get the families in Rocky Mountain House or Sundre or Rimbey a leg up? They're out of work. What's their solution? They decided to add an extra tax – an extra tax – to those families. Think about that: 100,000 people out of work, and this government comes here and adds an extra tax to those families who are trying to make ends meet.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I'm genuinely curious: what are these people supposed to do? What are they supposed to do? How are they supposed to mitigate the costs that are going to be put onto their families? Albertans are smart people, and they are already trying to reduce costs in their households by every means possible. We hear it every day when I'm talking to constituents. How is this tax going to help make Alberta families incentivized to leave less of a carbon footprint? How is it?

In 2008 Stephen Harper's Conservative government mandated that all newly installed furnaces, whether it be in a new home or a

retrofit installation, be a high-efficiency furnace with an efficiency rating of no less than 90 per cent – 90 per cent efficiency, Mr. Speaker. Ninety per cent efficient furnaces that have direct-current fan blowers use less natural gas and less electricity than any other furnaces that have ever been created. Due to the average lifespan of most of those furnaces this means that in less than 10 years – less than 10 years – almost every single furnace in this province will be high efficiency. Consumers will already be burning the least amount of energy possible to heat their homes and businesses. So despite what these government members are saying about increasing efficiencies to decrease the carbon footprint, almost all Albertans will already be burning the least amount of natural gas possible.

Albertans have also had their backs up against the wall for some time when it comes to the price of gasoline. [interjections] Now, I know, Mr. Speaker, as you can tell from the hon. member, that they find it quite interesting that constituents in my riding are going to have to pay so much more for fuel, but I don't, and I can tell you that they don't. Now, although the price of oil dipped down to its lowest state in late 2014, gasoline was well above the \$1.10 a litre mark for most of the time since 2012 and even shot up beyond \$1.20 several times. Being the fiscally prudent people that Albertans are, people have also taken measures to reduce their fuel inputs as much as possible.

What this government may not understand is that a lot of people in this province must drive vehicles that consume more fuel than the average family-sized sedan. The average family-sized sedan, the average small car that we might see in Edmonton and Calgary, won't get down my driveway. That's the reality of where I live, and that's the reality of where many of the people in our province live. Heavy industry in this province relies on pickup trucks and heavy equipment. The people that work in my constituency rely on pickup trucks. They have to. They rely on heavy equipment to get done jobs that we depend on them to get done.

As much as companies and consumers would like to only have to pay for a Smart car's worth of fuel every month, the reality is that to move tools, to move equipment and personnel from remote work site to work site often means that they need a vehicle that can handle a heavy load. That's the reality of the jobs. What are those people supposed to do, just bite the bullet and pay the extra price at the pump?

Mr. Speaker, last night I returned home to Sundre to speak at a 4-H sale. The show had been earlier in the day, when I was with you guys, but I managed to arrive in town to be able open up the auction. It's something that I enjoy doing. I often like to go to 4-H sales. As I looked at the families all across there – and I was in Sundre, which is my home in the constituency – and I looked at all the children coming to something that is extremely important to our communities, the entire parking lot was trucks and trailers. How does this government think that the people in my communities get cows to auction sales? How do they think we get horses to the things we do?

An Hon. Member: In a Smart car.

Mr. Nixon: We use trucks. We don't drive Smart cars where I come from. I know that the member across the way who is getting very upset about that doesn't realize that they don't drive a lot of Smart cars in Sundre because it doesn't work where they live. That's the reality.

What are these people supposed to do? What are they supposed to do? Are they just supposed to bite the bullet, or are you saying that those people can no longer take their kids to 4-H, that they're going to have to cut costs? Moms can't take them to hockey. Maybe

my kids can't go to the rodeo anymore; we shouldn't drive to that. That's the reality. You have to at least accept that there are those constituencies.

Now, Mr. Speaker, that is certainly the message that this minister and this government is sending to the hard-working people of this province that actually make the income that the NDP is taxing. The people that actually pay the bills around here are not us. They are the people of Alberta, and it's something that this government seems to often forget.

When a parent has to take their kid to hockey or soccer practice, this tax will not impede their decision or make them think twice about taking the best care of their child. That's actually just the reality. The reality is that my community is not going to stop going to 4-H because this government raised its taxes. We're not going to stop living the lifestyle that we live here. We're not going to be able stop going to work. And I certainly ain't going to be able get a Smart car down my mile-long driveway in the snow. That's the reality.

Parents will keep taking their kids to sports, dance recitals, and other activities because they love their kids, Mr. Speaker. That's the reality. You know that. I've seen you with your grandkids. You love your kids. You're not going to stop because of a tax. All that this bill will do is to penalize these parents for encouraging their kids to live healthy lifestyles, to participate in extracurricular activities.

Mr. Speaker, I'm asking these questions because I believe that they genuinely require answering and my constituents say that they genuinely require answering. We haven't seen anything substantial from this government that tells Albertans how much this will cost their families and how these changes are going to affect the Alberta economy. Back to that 100,000 jobs that we've already lost, 100,000 families where at least one person with a job has lost their job.

Mr. Speaker, this is just another policy that is driven by an ideological view rather than empirical evidence. Why hasn't this government conducted an economic assessment of how this carbon tax is going to directly impact every family and business in this province? Why haven't they? That seems like something that you would do when you're bringing forward this big a piece of legislation, that is going to cost Albertans billions of dollars.

I met with a constituent this past week in a restaurant in a hotel in Rimbey. Now, this hotel's manager wrote me a letter a couple of weeks ago about how worried they were about what the NDP's minimum wage policy would mean for the staff at his restaurant, that are already getting paid close to the \$15 per hour mark.

This time he came over and gave me an earful about what the carbon tax would mean for his business. This is an owner operating a hotel, and like most small businesses, they are running a pretty small margin to begin with, Mr. Speaker. That's a fact. He asked me questions similar to the questions I just proposed to the government members of this House. Throughout this conversation I was asked what businesses like the hotel are supposed to do when they are already using high-efficiency boilers, high-efficiency hot water tanks, high-efficiency LED light bulbs, and even economizer cooling units, that use fractional amounts of electricity by using outdoor air to cool occupied spaces. What are they supposed to do when they're already doing all of that?

Like most Albertans in their homes, this business operator was also doing everything that he could do to use the least amount of energy. Already doing it, Mr. Speaker. This government has already made it hard enough on small operators like this independent restaurant and hotel in my riding by increasing sin taxes, increasing the minimum wage, and now increasing an enormous part of small-business overhead by increasing energy prices. That's what this bill does.

8:50

When the government moves forward with nontangible data on how their ideological economic policies will actually affect the economy, small-business owners like the hotel operator in my town often get forgotten. It is truly surprising that this government believes that it can march forward with what will be a massive tax increase without providing justification for how the economy will really be impacted, for how the small businesses in my riding will really be impacted, for how the families in my riding will really be impacted.

The NDP's rebate scheme was only designed to cover increased natural gas and fuel costs but ignores the fact that the carbon tax will hike the price of electricity. That's pretty important. Has this government given any thought to what this will do for grocery stores, that consume a large amount of electricity to keep their refrigeration equipment running, or the cold storage facilities that store every single frozen food that enters our major cities? Guess what, Mr. Speaker? These cold storage facilities consume the least amount of energy possible because like the hotel operators and everyday moms and dads, they already use energy-efficient equipment.

What will the increase in electricity prices lead to? What will it lead to? It's not going to stop them; they're already using it. It will directly lead to an increase in prices in every single grocery store that requires refrigeration, and that's all of them. I'm sure that even this government can understand how many grocery stores require refrigeration. How many do you think? All of them, right? That's right.

Mr. Speaker, let's do a quick recap as to what this carbon tax will really mean for Albertans. One, it's going to be more expensive to heat your homes, and since we live in the north in Canada, this just might be a significant cost to families that are already struggling. I would think that would be fair to say. Two, small-business owners that are already trying to optimize their energy efficiency will be getting slapped with increasing energy prices, and there isn't one thing they can do about it. This government has provided nothing that they can do about it at a time when we've already lost 100,000 jobs. Three, basic goods like milk, eggs, beef, and yogourt will all be more expensive.

This government, Mr. Speaker – let's be clear – is going to institute a tax that will have sweeping effects on all aspects of the economy but is asking us to trust them despite there being no economic assessment on how this tax will really be carried out. Albertans can't trust this government to take in massive amounts of tax to sit in a slush fund somewhere with nothing more than a promise to redistribute it later. The people of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre won't stand for it, and I won't stand for it.

Mr. Speaker, this bill is incomplete and needs further study, and I look forward to voting against it. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. MacIntyre: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the magnificent riding of Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. That was riveting. I enjoyed every moment of it. I do have a question for the hon. member, though, because I got a really clear visual of this friendly giant trying to cram himself into a Smart car in the middle of winter in order to save money.

Now, hon. member, correct me if I am wrong, but I believe there are some 49,000 farmers in this province. I believe that energy costs are already a significant input in agriculture and that, as any

businessperson would, they try to minimize and save on those costs. In your mind, is there any way you can think of where an electric vehicle or even some of these hybrid cars could possibly be utilized to haul cattle, feed, salt, and other things for our poor farmers, who have been told, "Well, just go buy another car"?

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Nixon: Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker, and thanks to the hon. member for the question. It's a good question. If you have not spent a lot of time in communities like the hon. member's and mine – particularly mine as I live in the Rocky Mountains. To answer his question about the vehicles he is talking about: never mind hauling cattle or horses or trailers or equipment or tools or men and women to work, but the cars you're talking about can't get up some of the hills we drive down. They would struggle on my driveway at certain times of the year. We struggle on the road, once I leave pavement, to get to my home. I live in a really nice spot. I hope you get to come one day and join me in Bergen, just outside of Sundre. We have a lot of very, very steep hills. It's great to live there, and that's why we like it.

We need bigger vehicles just to get through our daily lives there. Just to get kids to school, we need bigger vehicles. Certainly, when we're hauling equipment, when we're hauling kids' calves to 4-H stuff and we're hauling kids' horses to rodeo things, when farmers are hauling stock, they need bigger vehicles. We also drive very, very big areas. Just for me in my constituency alone, from the top of my riding, just north of Rimbey, in Bluffton to where I live in Bergen, just south of Sundre, is two and a half hours one way.

We can't drive the vehicles that this government has suggested these farmers should just replace their trucks with. It is such a ludicrous assertion to the people of my community, and it shows that whoever has been writing this and this government when they speak about it, Mr. Speaker, have no idea about the reality of the communities that I represent. They have no idea about it.

I strongly encourage the government members, and I often invite them – I have the privilege of representing some of the finest people in this province but also some of the finest landscapes in the entire province of Alberta – to come west of Rocky Mountain House or Sundre. It's a pretty nice place. I hope you come to Ya Ha Tinda, one of my favourite places, one day. You are not getting to Ya Ha Tinda in a Smart car. You're not. That is the reality. You are not getting to Ya Ha Tinda in a Smart car. Those are the roads that my neighbours in my community and my family have to drive every day. That's the reality.

The government stands up and says: well, just buy a different car. That's what the Premier said, Mr. Speaker: just buy a different car. Is she suggesting that I should go back to Rimbey on the weekend here and meet with some farmers and say: "Oh, don't worry. I talked to the Premier. She said to just buy a different car to haul all of your stock."

You know, it's going to raise the cost of everything on vehicles. Vets, who often do calls inside my constituency, are going to have to burn extra fuel driving everywhere, and I'm telling you that they're not going to be in a Smart car.

So it is actually an insulting thing to say, and it really shows – it really shows – that this government often appears to not be leaving Edmonton and coming out and seeing what is the reality of driving in constituencies like Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. As always, I keep a standing invite to the Premier and all of her cabinet. Any time that they would like to come to Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre to see the realities of the roads we drive, I'd be happy to take them on a tour and show them what's

going on and show them the realities there and maybe take them to the A&W. I'd like to see them explain to the farmers at the A&W having their coffee every afternoon that they should just buy a new car and that that's going to help them with all their problems on their farm.

Mr. Speaker, you know that's a ludicrous thing to say. I know that you wouldn't say that to the farmers anywhere near your constituency. Of course not. You're not going to say that. The Smart car is not even going to get into the field to go check the cows. It's not.

This government just shows how little they have thought about the impact on all Albertans, and that's just one issue, just driving. The reality is that this bill is going to stop some kids from going to hockey. Think about that.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member. I wondered, hon. member: if maybe you made the offer to the Minister of Advanced Education, he could come out and give some accordion lessons to people there.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I rise to speak about Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act. I would like to begin by acknowledging the challenge the world is facing to reduce global emissions. There is no doubt that it's a challenge that must be met with the ingenuity and entrepreneurship that have marked the people of this province for generations. As my party said in the last election, climate change needs action and solutions. The members opposite can try and waste their time arguing this point instead of the point Albertans want us to be talking about, the impact this bill will have on their daily lives.

I would like to get the following on the record, Mr. Speaker. I would like to get this on the record so that the members opposite cannot say otherwise. Before the members opposite attempt to get themselves into hot water with a point of order, I would like to say that I believe in climate change. I believe in climate change. It is real, it is happening, and it is affecting the entire world. I want to put it on record.

I can assume that we can all agree on that point. I can assume that there is no point in arguing over a point we all agree on. That would be a waste of everybody's time. I will also be calling a point of order every single time that anyone accuses me or my caucus of believing otherwise. If the members opposite would like to get this bill through in a reasonable time, I would suggest they not cause us to debate a point of order and increase debate time.

9:00

The fact is that Alberta is a petroleum producer, and we have nothing to be ashamed of. We sit on the world's third-largest oil reserves. The world needs our environmentally produced oil. We also produce natural gas and other fuels the world relies on. If we are to keep Alberta a friendly place to invest in, we have to make sure we remain competitive with the world and that we do not send investment outside of our province.

Mr. Speaker, I really want to put on record that I believe in climate change. I will not debate the merits of climate change for the remainder of this debate. It does exist, and we can move on from that point.

What I will debate is the following. I will debate that a punitive tax will not change people's way of life other than to reduce the amount of money they have to spend. I will debate that this tax will hurt people more than the rebate will help. I will debate that this government did not run on a province-wide tax, that this is not what Albertans want. I will argue that this tax is not revenue neutral when compared to B.C.'s neutral carbon tax.

Now, let's begin, Mr. Speaker. How am I supposed to sell this tax to the residents of Calgary-Foothills? I am my constituents' representative, and I have to represent their interests in this House. Additionally, if there is something worthy that this government deems necessary for the people, my job is to bring that issue back to people in my riding for their input. Not only am I asking for their input, but I am asking them whether or not I should back this bill. If this bill is worthy enough for me to attempt to convince my residents that it is in their interest, I need to convince them to back me in voting for this bill. To do that, I need to have a solid argument to convince them that this is a good idea.

Except there is one very major difference with this bill and the reason I was elected. I ran on zero increases in taxes. This bill increases taxes. Asking my constituents to back a decision to vote yes on a bill that increases taxes will never fly with my constituents because I didn't campaign on that. Asking people in Calgary-Foothills to allow me to back a bill that raises taxes would be the equivalent of an MLA promising one thing and delivering the complete opposite. Members opposite have been accused of doing things they never ran on, such as with this very bill, but I'll not do that.

I will not vote for something that I did not run on. I would not trick my constituents into increasing taxes just because I was not fiscally responsible with their taxes. I would not create a province-wide policy that was not in my platform. As long as there is a punitive tax in this bill, I will not vote for it. I will not vote for something I'm explicitly against, which my constituents do not want me to vote for.

The NDP keep quoting a poll that shows the majority of Albertans support a carbon tax. If that was the case in my riding, I would support it as well since it is my job to represent them. What the NDP refuse to admit is that the poll, that came after they announced what their carbon tax would actually include, shows that Albertans are against this tax. People are happy to help the environment. People want to stop climate change. People want to make the world a better place, but Albertans do not think that this carbon tax is a good idea. A Mainstreet Research poll showed that 66 per cent of Albertans were against the incoming tax. That is well past a majority. That is Alberta speaking loud and clear, Mr. Speaker, that they are against this tax.

It is amazing how people will vote when people have all the facts. If I told Albertans that I will come out with a climate change plan that will solve the world's problems, I would imagine that every Albertan would be in favour of it, which is exactly how this climate change plan was advertised. The thing is that Albertans are not stupid, Mr. Speaker. Once the details of the plan were announced, that same Mainstreet poll showed that 68 per cent of Albertans opposed the plan altogether. Yes, once the details of the plan were announced, people opposed the plan.

It seems that this government is again falling prey to the same mistakes over and over and over. They refuse to consult Albertans and find out what they actually want. The NDP seem to think that they know best. They seem to think that they know how to best implement policies, without consulting Albertans. They don't even have their offices staffed with Albertans to even have the resemblance of Albertan thinking within their policies. It's not acceptable.

The poll continued on to show that Albertans are smart. Albertans know, first of all, for example, that the NEB, the board that approves pipelines, does not care what this government does. The NEB will approve or not approve a pipeline based on the economic and environmental impacts of the pipeline itself. The NEB will not approve a pipeline if a province taxes their people to death under the guise of being nice to the environment. The

poll by Mainstreet Research showed that 62 per cent of Albertans believe that this climate plan will not help with future pipeline approvals, and they're right. The NEB approved a pipeline, and this plan has not yet come to pass, complete and utter proof that this plan has no effect on pipelines being approved or not approved.

Let's continue on now to the economic impact of this bill, Mr. Speaker. I would point to the details of the economic impact of this plan if I had them. I would point to the economic impact study that was done for this bill if the government actually did one. I do not understand why this government refuses to complete or to table their economic impact study of this carbon tax on Albertans. Alberta is having a difficult time right now. Our economy is far different than it has been. Over a hundred thousand people have lost their jobs. Many people in Calgary-Foothills have lost their jobs, and they want to get back to work. Oil field companies are going out of business, and people are leaving the province in droves, yet this government refuses to evaluate our current economic situation and how this bill will affect Alberta's situation.

Is this government hiding something that they do not want Albertans to know? I'm sure that this government was afraid of giving Albertans more information, knowing that they would oppose this tax even further if they had more details. Maybe this government knows that the economic impact of this tax will be so detrimental to the people they advertise it will help that the government will do anything it can do to suppress that information. If that is a false statement, then prove me wrong. Release the information. Release an economic impact study done in Alberta on this tax.

The number of questions that I have over the fact that this government refuses to release this information would last us until the cows come home, but I have other questions that I would like addressed as well, questions surrounding the cap on emissions. I want to know how the quota for the 30 megatonnes is divided up. When this emissions cap was decided, was the intention of increasing this cap to pick winners and losers?

9:10

Let me expound before members opposite become too upset. When the NDP was sitting on this side, on the opposition benches, they accused the previous government of picking winners and losers. They accused the previous government of awarding contracts based on who donated the most money, but this government is appointing people who have donated lots of money to their party. This government is starting to look a lot like the previous government. That's why I question whether this cap is to pick winners and losers. Who will get to use the rest of this emissions cap? We're already consuming 70 megatonnes, and the cap is at 100 megatonnes, Mr. Speaker. There are only 30 megatonnes left, so who will be allocated that? Nobody knows. This bill doesn't speak about that.

Mr. Orr: I bet you they already gave permits to the big four that bought out . . .

Mr. Panda: Well, that could be the reason. That's right. They're supported.

Will this government pick who gets to use the rest of the allotted emissions? Will this government pick winners and losers like the last government did? Will there be an independent body that will determine who gets to use the allotted emissions cap? What's being done to ensure that this government divvies up the allotted emissions to whoever would be the best for Alberta instead of a friend of the NDP? These are the questions that the residents of

Calgary-Foothills want me to get answers to. I hope that the minister can answer these questions during this debate.

Also, Mr. Speaker, we are rushing through all these bills. Bill 20 is a 95-page bill, you know, in contrast to Bill 1, which is supposed to be the flagship bill of this government, that gathered dust for three months. We didn't rush that through. Now we are at the end of the session, and we have to debate day and night on Bill 20, which is 95 pages. We didn't have enough time. People are questioning . . .

Mr. MacIntyre: Integrity.

Mr. Panda: Yeah.

. . . the thinking process and the integrity that goes into this thinking that we can just rush the bills through this House without quality debate. People want quality debate. We're not getting enough time.

It's the same thing when we were talking about the other motion just now, that the previous speakers were mentioning. We're bringing in bills and motions just 72 hours before the House is going to adjourn for summer. Albertans are wondering: what are the motives of this government? When they sat on this side of the House, they criticized the previous government for rushing through bills like that, but now it seems that it's acceptable to them.

This carbon tax, Mr. Speaker, like Bill 6, has really unsettled people in my riding because the premise is . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Questions to the Member for Calgary-Foothills under 29(2)(a)?
The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was intrigued by what the Member for Calgary-Foothills had started to say about consultation and the importance of consultation within the legislative process. He brought up the fact that the job-creation bill, Bill 1, was introduced – what? – the first week of session, something like that, and I'm guessing that during the time that it had been sitting on the Order Paper, the government must have been doing a ton of consultation to work out exactly what that's minister's responsibilities were to create jobs for ridings like Bonnyville-Cold Lake, the one I'm from, and Calgary-Foothills, like my honoured colleague here is from. Now, this is an interesting thought, that we give a one-page bill three months, and we give a 95-page bill a week, maybe a week and a half, that is a lifestyle change for Albertans. It's going to impact everyone across Alberta whereas Bill 1 really only impacted the one specific ministry.

I would like to hear from the member on how he feels the consultation process for Bill 1 versus Bill 20 went, the differences between the two, and how he feels that this could have been handled better had we been given more time to look through this bill, to be able to go stakeholders and discuss this bill instead of rushing something through that probably will have massive unintended consequences because of the fact that we haven't taken the time to go through it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to my colleague from Bonnyville-Cold Lake. If his question is about the consultation process adopted by this government, I didn't see any consultation for Bill 1. They claim to have consulted industry leaders for Bill 20, but, like my colleagues here, I was wondering if that consultation was with only very few of the industry representatives. And if they broke ranks with their other industry colleagues and just supported this bill, were there any promises made to them in terms of allocating that remaining 30 megatonnes?

I don't know. Those are the questions. If the government can throw light on that and educate us in the next few hours and few days of debate, I'll be grateful.

Mr. Speaker, the premise of this bill is to decarbonize the economy and, you know, to improve the environment, and for that, what they're trying to do is to put a price on carbon. All those industrialists who supported the bill: in their regular business they do a cost-benefit analysis for every decision they make. In this very case there are costs, but there is no benefit. The benefit is supposed to be gaining social licence for pipelines, and we haven't seen that yet. The NEB doesn't care about the social side of that; they just look at the environmental and economic impacts of the pipeline and also the benefits of that. Based on that, they make their recommendations.

I expect and Albertans expect this government to do the same thing, that they will do a thorough economic impact study of this major environmental policy they're announcing. They haven't done that. This was supposed to be revenue neutral, and that's not the case. Mr. Speaker, at the end you really wonder why this government is rushing this bill.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Anyone wishing to speak to Bill 20? The Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my honour to rise and speak in support of Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act. The title is the core of this NDP government and this NDP caucus. It recognizes the responsibility we have to the environment, Albertans, Canadians, and the world, and it acknowledges the impact that climate has on it. It asks that we do what Alberta does best – that is, to be leaders – and it commits to implementation, which was sorely lacking from the previous government.

You can't just talk about how great it would be if you could do something about the environment. Every day is precious time that we are losing. The world evolves and adapts with time, periods of time that we cannot contemplate, billions of years, not thousands of years, as some in opposition would plug their ears and try to believe. What we have done since the Industrial Revolution is to attempt to force this planet to expedite this process in a way that it simply cannot bear. This problem is not going to be addressed in any sort of meaningful way without strong leadership, leadership under a minister that has shown resolute strength and integrity.

This government asked Dr. Andrew Leach to undertake extensive consultation and to engage communities and to lead a panel of experts. All of this work culminated in the Climate Leadership report. The report states that climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing us today and directly affects the health, environment, and economy of our province.

9:20

The consequences of a changing climate are already being experienced around the world and right here at home. There are few jurisdictions that experience this as acutely as rural Alberta: wildfires, severe drought, heavy flooding. This past spring was extremely dry. What some here may not know is that when you go to the outlying areas of Alberta where we have farms, people obtain licences to burn different materials on their property. One of the challenges is that these fires don't always go out under the soil. In fact, these fires can burn underground all winter and spark in the spring. Counties have service people that use a heat-seeking radar to find hot spots in an attempt to head off forest fires at the

beginning, but the spots they miss will take a larger life in the spring when conditions start to dry.

This spring I had the opportunity to visit a constituent's cow-calf farm, which under normal circumstances would have been a lot of fun. The tragedy is that I was visiting their farm because there was a forest fire, a fire exacerbated due to very dry conditions, a dry winter followed by a March and April almost free of rain. This fire took 75 per cent of their fence, all of their buildings save for their house, the husband's entire tool shop, and all of their feed for their cattle. They were devastated. They had three generations at home with them, including two very small children, one just a baby girl. They had invested everything they had into their farm. I sat at their kitchen table and watched the treeline, that was 50 feet away, still billowing smoke. One of the buildings they lost was sitting in melted pieces right beside their house. As I sat there, I asked myself: when is this going to happen next? How are we going to support these families, that are a vital part of the identity of Alberta? How am I going to help them up?

Mr. Speaker, this province's economy was built on agriculture. The New Democrats know that. Our party roots lie in farming communities. When we are faced with challenge, we innovate and we adapt. That's why we are acting today. This is why the government has made a crucial decision to exempt marked gas and diesel from the carbon levy. Agriculture will play an integral role as we work on economic diversification in this province.

Farming has been the most sustainable part of our economy for over a century. In 2014 it made up 1.3 per cent of our GDP. By focusing on how we can support our farms as we grow both local and international markets, we can work to grow that part of our economy. By exempting fuel used on farms, we recognize that modern farming is a challenge. Struggling with increasingly variable weather, our agricultural community contemplates whether they will keep fighting the good fight, that ultimately puts food on our table.

Farmers are always looking at how to innovate and lower their costs. They regularly consult with experts to make their operations more efficient. Farms are already putting solar on their buildings. They don't want to be subject to the fluctuating costs of energy when they know they can make themselves self-sufficient. The government announced this past February a new solar program for agricultural producers, on-farm solar management, providing \$500,000 in provincial and federal funding towards solar energy systems on Alberta farms. This is just one of the first programs that will assist farm operations in generating their own electricity.

Programs such as these can be administered through the second part of this act, that will introduce a lean agency named Energy Efficiency Alberta. We are the last province to establish this sort of agency, that has a mandate to promote, design, and deliver programs that carry out other activities related to energy efficiency, energy conservation, and the development of microgeneration and small-scale energy systems in Alberta.

This mirrors the values that Alberta farmers have, and it is long overdue, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

The Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Mr. MacIntyre: May I, Mr. Speaker? Regarding farming, I'm just wondering if the hon. member can illuminate the House here with any data that her government has done on the actual costs to farming of this carbon tax, something in the order of an economic assessment study, the real thing.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the question from the hon. member. The cost is that person's farm. The cost is the feed that that person needs to now replace, the tens of thousands of dollars that it will cost to get that farm back up and running: all of the feed, the buildings, that person's tools, that they had just bought, to have a business that would supplement their farm income.

It is very difficult in today's world to make a good living at farming. That's why we have so many people that have off-farm jobs in oil and gas. That's one of the reasons why we have this climate change implementation act. We need to find market access because while we need to grow farming in Alberta, we are still dependent on oil and gas. Most of the farmers that I meet either work off-farm in oil and gas or their family does. So those are the costs.

The cost of doing nothing is to continue to sell our resources at a discount by shipping it by rail. The real cost is the emotional burden on these families that put everything, their entire lives, into their farming operations, and when they lose it, it is very difficult to get their feet back underneath them. That's the cost.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Under 29(2)(a). I don't think the hon. member actually even came close to answering the question. I think the question was about the cost of the carbon tax on the particular farm she talked about. Now, she went on to also address other costs, but she didn't talk about the carbon tax, the cost to farmers, and whether there was any economic assessment done on that.

She did also mention something about the title, that the core of this bill is in the title, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act. When I look through this Bill 20 here, I see three things: the Climate Leadership Act, the Energy Efficiency Alberta Act, and then other acts under schedule 3. Now, let's just look at schedule 3. In that is the Alberta Corporate Tax Act, the Alberta Personal Income Tax Act, and the Climate Change and Emissions Management Act.

Now, if we look at the energy efficiency section of the bill, when I look at the table of contents, what I see – and this is a question to the member – is that we talk about the board. We talk about the duties and functions of the board. We talk about the chief executive officer. We talk about bylaws, business plans, reports, directives, regulations, the coming into force. I see all sorts of things about organization and structure, but I don't see a plan here. I don't see anything here that actually talks about climate. All we see is plans here.

Now let's go to the Climate Leadership Act. What I want to ask the member is this. When we start in here, we see the carbon levy on certain fuels. I guess my question is really: where is this climate leadership? To me this looks like it's a tax bill, purely a tax bill. If we go down, we're talking about the carbon levy in items 4 through 10. Then we talk about the mixture of fuels, rebranded fuel. We talk about carbon levy exemption certificates. We talk about prohibited sale, prohibited use. We talk about assessment of carbon levy to be remitted. We talk about overpayment of carbon levy, assessment of penalties, interest, payment by a third party, liability of directors for failure to remit. We talk about irregularities. We talk about warrants. We talk about offences and penalties.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Anyone else wishing to speak to Bill 20? The Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

9:30

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to speak to Bill 20, Climate Leadership Implementation Act. This truly is a shift in government policy. I think many of us welcomed the need for serious action on climate change. It proposes to create two new statutes: the Climate Leadership Act and the Energy Efficiency Alberta Act. The Climate Leadership Act will give government the authority to establish the carbon levy and consumer rebates. The Energy Efficiency Alberta Act establishes Energy Efficiency Alberta, a new agency that will provide programs and information to help people reduce their energy consumption, which would have it operating January 2017.

The bill also proposes to amend the Alberta Corporate Tax Act to reduce the small-business tax rate, which will help some small businesses adjust to the price of carbon. Effective January 1, 2017, that rate will be lowered from 3 per cent to 2 per cent. The bill also proposes to amend the Personal Income Tax Act and the Climate Change and Emissions Management Act. All of this points to a recognition that a carbon tax is a recognized international approach to reducing people's use and burning of carbon, by many counts the fairest, the simplest, the most equitable approach to producers and consumers of carbon-based fuels in shifting the priorities for fuel use to lower carbon and zero carbon emissions.

Clearly, this is an important step and one that, in principle, I fully support. The question, I guess, for many of us is: that, along with some of the other changes that have been made, will have exactly what impact on carbon and what impact on people's residential, commercial, industrial costs? Given the decision to phase out coal, the decision to target, at least, 30 per cent of renewables as part of the energy mix replacing coal by 2030 – and it's not clear whether that is 30 per cent of generation capacity or 30 per cent of generation. Those two are very different in terms of what they would require. Obviously, a lot more renewable energy would be required to provide the generation as opposed to having the capacity, because with just the capacity we'd have to have a lot of backup. We'd have to have a lot of, presumably, natural gas backup.

One could argue that this is an optimal time for making this transition: low prices in natural gas, the importance to the economy that we maintain some of our operations and some of our commitments to the fossil fuel industry, which has produced such surpluses of gas now and also, in the past, surpluses of our financial resources to build the schools, the hospitals, the roads, all that we have come to appreciate in this province.

Having said that, I think part of the challenge in this bill is the related policy decisions around the coal phase-out and the timing of the coal phase-out, the options, then, for a renewable with a backup fossil fuel secure base of electricity. Given that we are producing already 4,000 megawatts over what is actually required in Alberta today, there doesn't seem to be a lot of incentive to build new technology in this province, so the business case, the investment case, unfortunately, isn't here today. This is an unfortunate, I guess, convergence of a lot of different issues that now challenge... [An electronic device sounded] Who was that?

An Hon. Member: You.

Dr. Swann: Thank you. If I could continue, Mr. Speaker.

An Hon. Member: That's okay. It's your first day.

Dr. Swann: Yeah. I haven't been here for very long. The first time that's happened to me, actually.

The question of the balance between renewable energy, which is clearly needed and is clearly the future, and the backup, the balance

between those two and how that either creates the business case for investment or discourages investment I think is a critically important one. That's why in the House I've been asking questions about what the cost benefit is of investing in the next 15 years, in what proportion of renewables and what proportion of gas-fired electrical energy, what impact that would have on the carbon levels that we're trying to achieve, how that would impact the cost of electricity in Alberta, and indeed what jobs would be created by that.

Where is the sweet spot there in terms of the balance between renewables, natural gas fired electricity, and the results that we all want to see: lower carbon, more jobs, and an alternate economy here? It doesn't look like the government has yet done that work, which makes it difficult. I mean, obviously, every bill has some incompleteness to it, but I would have thought that the climate change panel would have some of those numbers. It's not clear to me, throwing into the mix some of the changes that have occurred, that we know enough about what the appropriate mix is.

Having said that, one of the most fundamental things that we could ask of the government is that they put in place performance targets in this bill. How will we measure over the next year to three years whether this climate change bill is achieving its purpose in terms of carbon reduction, the cost of electricity, the jobs created? I will be suggesting an amendment in due course, not today, to that effect. Recognizing that all the pieces are not necessarily in place, we have here a bill that is taking us a good deal of the way towards less dependence on fossil fuels, a stronger connection to the climate and our commitment to future generations, and a recognition of the science that has been ignored in this House for the 12 years that I've been here and much longer by some measures.

We could learn from the B.C. example, where they brought in a carbon tax eight years ago. They have monitored that, and they have got, I would argue, the economic benefits from that, the job benefits from that, and the carbon reductions that may or may not be totally associated with that carbon tax but that have been associated with the balancing of the other elements of appropriate public policy around electrical generation and job creation. Hopefully, we can learn something from the B.C. example.

Again, this is part of a national approach to climate. I'm delighted to see the federal Liberal government taking leadership there. This province is taking leadership together with the other provinces. Hopefully, we can find some common ground and start making some real impact on the carbon emissions coming out of Canada and showing some leadership.

Obviously, Canada isn't the big producer of carbon emissions on the planet. China and India are the big ones with the U.S., but Alberta on a per capita basis puts out more carbon than any other country in the world. I think we have to acknowledge that. On a per capita basis we produce far more carbon than almost anywhere else in the world.

Leadership is what the world is looking for. If not Alberta, who is going to start to show some real leadership on this critically important issue that relates to health effects, water issues, extreme weather events, new infectious diseases? It may not be entirely due to human activity, but surely the indications are that a very substantial part of the warming going on on the planet is related to human activity and carbon-based fuels.

Methane is another big source. Of course, methane is something like 25 times more potent as a greenhouse gas, and we have lots of leaking wells, as far as I'm aware. I don't think we're taking that as seriously as we should and could. I hope that the Alberta Energy Regulator and Alberta Environment are looking at that as a very serious part of a climate change plan that will actually have an

impact, and I'll be pushing very much for that, especially in northeastern Alberta.

My understanding is that with the soft soils, the tundra, there is a very significant amount of methane leaking, and testing hasn't been assiduous. Accountability hasn't been strict. The cost of remediating small leaks is significant relative to some returns on some wells, and that makes it much more difficult for both the industry and government to get serious about some of the leaking that's going on across the province but particularly in the northeast.

9:40

Those are some of my comments. I appreciate the leadership, but I think we need to know much more than we do. I think the government has some of this information. I would ask that they put it out there. Let's have more discussion around: what is the appropriate balance to get the optimal results in terms of the economy, new jobs, carbon reductions, and electricity costs?

Thank you.

The Speaker: Any questions for the Member for Calgary-Mountain View under 29(2)(a)?

Anyone else that wishes to speak to Bill 20? The Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. MacIntyre: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, this bill that we're looking at right now, Bill 20, as my hon. colleague pointed out, really is nothing more than a tax bill. There is really nothing in there that one could call climate plan leadership whatsoever. There's no plan. It's all about taxing: how they're going to collect the tax and how they're going to punish anyone who doesn't pay the tax. This carbon tax is really nothing more than a tax on everything. It is implemented in the midst of one of the deepest economic recessions this province has experienced since the Dirty Thirties.

This NDP government has not bothered to conduct an Alberta study of the massive implications this tax will have on indirect costs or even direct costs. I have asked repeatedly in this House for economic impact assessments. I don't know if the hon. members on the other side are just playing silly or if they really don't understand what an economic assessment looks like, but I have yet to get a straight answer. I will take the evasive answers as meaning, no, they have not conducted any economic impact assessment on any sector of our economy, and that is intellectual laziness.

The estimates place the direct and indirect costs of this tax conservatively at \$1,000. That's not our estimate. Those are numbers based on the people who understand these things far better than I do. Now, for the typical Alberta family, resultantly, the necessary cost corrections for this regressive, inequitable tax are entirely insufficient. This tax is regressive because low-income and fixed-income Albertans pay a higher proportion of the money that they earn satisfying their family's needs. As a percentage of their overall earnings, Alberta's most economically vulnerable will be paying more towards this tax increase than a family of higher means. This government is imposing punitive taxation measures on Alberta's poorest in this horrifyingly regressive redistribution of wealth. That's really all this tax is about.

Mr. Speaker, this government should be ashamed of themselves for implementing this tax that will increase the cost of everything. There really is only one taxpayer in this province. That's the people of Alberta. In my speech right now I'm going to detail for the assembled members just a few examples of the uncalculated, indirect cost increases, just a few examples of the uncalculated indirect social and economic cost increases for Albertan businesses and families that this government has refused to calculate. I've been reaching out to stakeholders in my community, in the magnificent

riding of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. You must come to the lake, by the way. I have a couple of school districts in my riding. One is Chinooks Edge, and the other one is Red Deer Catholic regional schools. They sent letters to the hon. Minister of Education outlining their concerns with this carbon tax, and they quantified. They did something the government did not do. They actually ran the numbers. Specifically, because the riding is large and we have a large rural population, busing students is a major expense for school boards.

With their projections, Chinook's Edge said in their letter to the hon. Minister of Education:

Our early projections show that there will be an impact to our Transportation and Facilities 2016/2017 budgets for the six month period of approximately \$70,000 which will increase to \$105,000 the following year. Although difficult to predict, there will also be significant increases to operating costs across the Division as our suppliers pass on the levy [that they experience to us]. We fear that with already tight budgets, this will have a direct impact to student learning in the classroom as staffing reductions may be necessary.

We have heard repeatedly from this government how they are the only people on the planet protecting front-line services. Well, news flash. According to Chinook's Edge school division, this carbon tax "will have a direct impact to student learning in the classroom." They have to bus the students. That is not an option. Buses take fuel. Children in the wintertime, in the very cold weather, need to be bused in. Their parents pay for that busing. Chinook's Edge is saying that it's going to cost them another \$70,000 just in the six-month period of that budget year on account of the carbon tax, and that's just them.

This does not even cover the cost of heating in the schools, which is another major expense. The cost of natural gas is going to go up, and school divisions, as we know, are already squeezed when it comes to budgets.

Well, another letter, this one from Red Deer Catholic regional schools, again sent to the hon. David Eggen, Minister of Education.

Some Hon. Members: Names.

Mr. MacIntyre: Sorry. My apologies.

Sent on May 19, here they say that for the calendar year our projections show that there will be a significant impact to our Transportation and Facilities operational 2016-2017 budget . . . [of] \$78,000 in carbon tax and \$122,000 in 2018. The direct impact to our budget will grow even more in future years as we open several new schools.

And what else do they say?

We are very proud of the efficient way that we operate our Division and work very hard to balance our budget every year. It will be exceptionally difficult to absorb the cost of the carbon tax and hear this again,

without negatively impacting the student learning environment in the classroom as staffing reductions may be necessary.

Furthermore, they go on to say:

Placing this additional financial pressure on school boards by taxing back funds that they have been provided with to operate is not responsible.

School boards in this province operate on tax dollars, and they're questioning the sanity of the government taxing back tax dollars. It's ridiculous.

It is going to impact classrooms directly, and this is from the experts. This government failed to take the time to do a proper economic assessment to see just what this tax was going to do to every sector of our economy, to our way of life. This bill is so invasive that there isn't a portion of our economy, of our population

that isn't going to be adversely affected by this thing. That's just schools and school busing.

9:50

Now, how about hospitals? You know, years ago, when I was involved in consulting, I did some energy efficiency consulting for some hospitals. They are what's known as energy intense. To give you an idea of how energy intense hospitals can be – I'm going to get technical on you; hang on – an operating room is required to ventilate the air coming into and out of the room. A typical operating room has about 2,500 cubic feet of air per minute. So picture five feet by five feet by 100 feet long every 60 seconds going through that OR. It has to do with biological security within the OR. All of the air that goes out must have air coming in. When it's minus 30 outside, that air coming in at that rate must be elevated to a temperature of at least 18 degrees Celsius. So you have a 48-degree temperature rise that you have to accomplish in 60 seconds for a volume of air of 2,500 cubic feet. That takes an enormous amount of energy. Your solar panel isn't going to get to do that.

Mr. Orr: Just lower the temperature.

Mr. MacIntyre: Right. Let's have our OR staff working in parkas. Then we can solve that.

Mr. Taylor: Or the patient.

Mr. MacIntyre: Or the patient. Right. They live longer when they're frozen.

However, Mr. Speaker, that takes an enormous amount of energy. The carbon tax is a behavioural modification mechanism. Please, tell me how we can modify the behaviour of a ventilation system in a hospital like that when by law they're required to move that much air that fast and warm it up that quickly? It's simply not going to be the case.

Hospitals and hotels are energy-intensive environments. They require a fuel to burn. Solar panels will not do this. Wind turbines will not do this. They will have to use natural gas to do this. It's not an option. They have to use it, and they are going to be penalized. Our hospitals are going to be penalized. Again, our hospitals are operating on tax dollars. So now the government is taxing it back. It's ludicrous. It makes no sense whatsoever. None whatsoever.

I could go on, and I know you want me to. I do. I know you really want me to. I could keep going, but there's always tomorrow. So, Mr. Speaker, I have an amendment that I would like to introduce.

Shall I wait?

The Speaker: Do you have copies? Please, pass them around. Just give us a minute until it gets distributed.

Please proceed, hon. member. We will refer to it as amendment RA1.

Mr. MacIntyre: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll read the amendment. Notice of amendment to Bill 20, Climate Leadership Implementation Act. I move that the motion for second reading of Bill 20, Climate Leadership Implementation Act, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 20, Climate Leadership Implementation Act, be not now read a second time because this Assembly has not received satisfactory evidence or assurances that a full economic impact analysis has been completed detailing any potential negative impact on the economic well-being of Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, as I have mentioned before in this House I don't know how many times now, an economic impact assessment is an extremely important instrument. It tells us what the impact of something is going to be upon us. In a democracy it just seems to

me that we have a responsibility to act compassionately whenever we are introducing anything that will impact our people. I like to think sometimes that if I was on the government side and I was introducing law, it just seems to me that I would want to enact legislation always with the thought in my mind as to how this is going to impact my wife and children, my mom and dad, my grandchildren, you know, my sons and cousins and uncles, the people that I know, my neighbours down the street. How is a particular law going to impact the people I care about?

In a democracy the people are the government. It's government of the people, by the people, for the people. Everything that we do impacts the ones we love, the ones we care about. So everything that we vote on should, in my opinion, always be done with this thought in mind: is this what I want to do to the people I care about the most?

An Hon. Member: It's not an ideology?

Mr. MacIntyre: No, it's not an ideology.

Is this what I want the people I care about to experience going forward now, not just for a year, maybe a whole generation. The things that we do in this House sometimes impact future generations for a very, very, very long time, multiple generations. Long after you and I are gone, the stuff that we do in here – and it's closer for some of us than others, I know – is going to impact for a very, very long time.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any questions of the hon. member under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Yes. I would like to ask the member to expand a little bit more on this amendment that he's bringing forward. He talks a lot about doing a proper economic assessment. Of course, the government didn't do any economic assessment on this. If they did, then at least they never provided it to us or anybody in Alberta, the House or Albertans anywhere. I think this amendment makes sense, and I'm just hoping that the hon. member could just take a little bit more time and express just a few more opinions and concerns that he has, why he thinks it's a good idea to have this amendment.

You know, we look at this bill, and of course it's called the Climate Leadership Implementation Act. I think we've established fairly well, though we can go into it further down the road here, that it's really just a tax bill. The Climate Leadership Implementation Act is really a misnomer because I don't see anything in here where it talks about the climate. All I see is about taxes and collecting taxes and penalties for taxes and offences and interest.

I would like to hear the hon. member just continue on a little bit, talking about this amendment. Hopefully, he can provide just a little bit more information to us because I'd definitely be interested in hearing more from him.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. MacIntyre: Thank you to the hon. member and great bear hunter. Regarding this amendment and an economic assessment, when we were drafting the curriculum for NAIT's alternative energy program, we took a look at, I think, a total of nine different technologies. In the process of looking at those technologies, we realized that one of the really important things we were going to have to impart to students was that it's all well and good to, you know, feel warm and fuzzy about a particular technology, but at the

end of the day that technology has to be technically feasible and economically viable, those two things. If it failed on either one of those, then it fails. It doesn't even have to fail on both. But if it failed either technically or economically, then that technology failed in that particular site.

10:00

We devised some courses to teach students assessment of various kinds. One was site assessment because some technologies work here but not over there. Some technologies work well in that industrial environment but not in that one. Some of it is geographic. There are all kinds. Some of it is regulatory issues. Some work in this regulatory environment, and some don't work in that regulatory environment. Assessment, from a technical point of view, was really important to teach them. As I said, we were teaching them some nine different technologies, so there was a lot of course material about how to make an appropriate technical assessment.

Then we came to the economic assessment, the economics of renewable, alternative technologies. Now, as a result, we actually developed an economics course that was built specifically for economic assessment of alternative or renewable technologies. There wasn't one out there, so myself and another instructor built it. It was a great economics course.

We also did a life cycle analysis course, again determining at the end of the day whether this thing was financially feasible to do, regardless of which technology we're looking at. We were looking at fuel cells, microhydro, microgeneration, combined heat and power, ground source heat pump technology, solar and wind, both utility scale and small scale. I can't even remember them all anymore.

Economic assessment was vitally important. Without doing an economic assessment, you don't know what something is going to cost, nor do you know what its economic benefit is going to be to you, to the industry, to the region, wherever you're putting this thing. So we taught them how to do these assessments and not just here in Alberta because we recognized that the students would end up going all over the world. In fact, in the very first cohort of students that we had through the program, only a third were from Alberta.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there other members that wish to speak to amendment RA1 to Bill 20? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on this occasion to support my colleague from Innisfail-Sylvan Lake's reasoned motion on Bill 20, the Climate Leadership Implementation Act. The hon. member's amendment is entirely reasonable considering the government has once again pushed forward with ideology trumping due diligence. Asking for an economic impact assessment on this bill is in the best interests of all Albertans. After all, it's a tax bill. It only makes sense that you'd have an economic impact assessment on it.

As we have seen numerous times in this House, this government has a disturbing habit of not engaging in a robust consultation before implementing a significant piece of legislation. We saw it in the Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act and again with Bill 18, An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring. In both instances the government chose to ignore any reasonable motions brought forth by the opposition and instead relied on what could be considered a one-sided argument that supported their own position.

We simply cannot afford to allow a piece of legislation with such huge implications for all facets of Albertans' lives to simply be pushed through without proper economic review. To do so, as my colleague from Drumheller-Stettler is fond of saying, could have unintended consequences. In fact, up until it was mentioned by this side of the House, it appears that the government hadn't even considered the notion that there may be some trickle-down effects from this burdensome tax.

As we have mentioned before, had a proper economic impact assessment been completed, perhaps Albertans could have more faith in the government's numbers. Well, Mr. Speaker, they didn't, and the public doesn't. While the government maintains that lower income Albertans use less energy and with the rebate they could actually come out ahead by about \$22, that's really hard to be certain of as this government chose not to do their homework. Rebate amounts were based on direct costs of heat and fuel, not any additional costs, not to mention that different people use energy differently. Some travel more, burn more gas, therefore would have a larger impact on their wallet, on their pocketbook. The idea was only designed to cover increases in natural gas and fuel costs. By some estimates even families that get the maximum rebate will still be looking at \$400 a year in additional carbon tax costs, a number far above what the NDP came out with after the fact.

Now, I'm sure what members opposite will clamour is that Committee of the Whole provides the chance for more robust discussion. While it may indeed provide for discussion, the process favours the government as no independent verification or economic studies have been brought forth. Committee, of course, allows a much greater in-depth discussion because we can bring in witnesses, experts on one side of the issue or on the other side of the issue, both, so that we can get a well-rounded debate. We're here to make informed decisions. In order to make an informed decision, we have to have information. Instead, all we get are platitudes and ideological arguments from the ministers and NDP backbenchers.

Accepting and voting for this amendment would give Albertans time to get a much better understanding of the financial and economic consequences of the legislation.

I just want to remind everybody here that – I think it was just last week – we were debating Bill 1 and Bill 20 on the same day. Doesn't that seem a little odd, that we'd be debating the first bill and Bill 20 on the same day? Obviously, Bill 20 was thrown in at the last; ram it through as fast as possible and get away for the summer break.

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

Committee of the Whole deals primarily with the proposal of amendments to bills under consideration. During Committee of the Whole consideration most often only general comments are made on bills. This bill has too many nuances and far-reaching implications to simply jam it through the House simply because the government has a majority. To do so would solidify the public perception of an ideological-based approach by this government rather than show the ability to listen and consult before legislation.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke at length last week on why this bill is a bad idea. It's based on ideology and is in no way revenue neutral, but that's what it was sold to us as when it was first announced: revenue neutral. Those people that stood on the same stage as the Premier and environment minister sat there and listened as the people in the audience heard the minister and the Premier tell us that it was revenue neutral. Well, it clearly wasn't, so I'm not sure how they

feel about their support for this bill, standing on the same stage and realizing afterwards that it wasn't what it was said to be.

There seems to be very little regard for any unforeseen consequences. This bill will harm everybody: charities, nonprofits, the agriculture industry, the manufacturing industry, and food processing, just to name a few. If this government honestly believes that there will be no passing on costs to the end user, we the taxpayer, then they clearly have chosen not to understand.

It's hard to trust a government that can't or won't be upfront with Albertans. We saw it with the flawed rollout and implementation around last year's Bill 6, and we are seeing it again with this carbon tax.

10:10

While the government claims that it will diversify the economy through green efficiency programs, which is scant comfort to those unemployed Albertans whose employment insurance will be running out all too soon, we look at this bill, and we don't see anything of a plan for the communities that are going to be affected by this. It's just about taxes. It's a tax bill. It's collecting taxes, penalties, punishments. Taxes. There's nothing in here that's going to help Albertans. There's nothing at all.

This is the second or third promise of jobs being created by this government. The first, much-hyped job-creation plan was an absolute failure, and the government is already distancing itself from it. It didn't create any jobs except, of course, the minister's. It was something that we told the government over and over again: this isn't going to work. Industry told us: this isn't going to work. Everybody said that it wasn't going to work. The government doubled down, tripled down, and said: yes, it's going to work; trust us. But it didn't.

They also promised jobs to compensate for the acceleration of no coal-fired generation and the numerous employment losses from that. These plans have yet to be shared with an already worried province. Now the promise of green jobs to replace those lost on this ideological journey, but when are these green jobs coming? Where? Who will they hire? There are lots of questions, but there are no answers. The problem is that how many Albertans will actually be employed still remains a mystery. I'm sure we will need to hire people to pick up the dead bats and birds off the windmill farms and sweep the snow off the solar panels so that they can work, but I doubt there will be enough employment to compensate everyone who has lost a job as a result of this government's misguided economic policies.

Quite simply, Albertans don't trust this government to get it right. Trust is everything in government, and right now trust for this bunch on the opposite side is on the low end of the scale. I believe that it was an Insights West poll that saw that nearly 63 per cent of Albertans polled thought that the current government was doing a bad job on employment and the economy. I don't think that this carbon tax will help those numbers, Mr. Speaker. In fact, it's hurting those numbers.

Again, I can't possibly stress this point enough. This carbon tax will be harmful to all Albertans regardless of their economic situation. In fact, based on analysis from the *Canadian Tax Journal*, it is realistic to estimate that a typical family will find itself out at least a thousand dollars every year once this punitive tax is up and running. Hundreds of thousands of Albertans are unemployed. Costs are increasing while economic growth decreases. This tax will hurt Albertans at a time when they can least afford it. Albertans have already been put upon by increases to business and personal taxes. Now this carbon tax is going to hit them with increases to the price of gasoline, diesel, and the everyday costs of living. This government's carbon tax will

punish everyday families and businesses. It will make life in Alberta significantly more expensive.

[The Speaker in the chair]

It is more important now than ever not to rush this bill through, Mr. Speaker. Let's take the time to get this right and make sure that what gets passed doesn't hurt the very Albertans that will ultimately pay for this tax. I urge the members to take every effort to consider what is at stake here and vote for common sense over ideology. Let's give our support to the hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake and vote for this reasoned amendment.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the members talk about the report that was done that they based Bill 20 on, but I'm not quite sure. There doesn't seem to be a lot of things they've taken from the climate leadership report other than taxes. When I look through this, on the very first page of the executive summary, in the very first paragraph, second sentence, it says:

The implications of climate policies – be they provincial, national or international – are significant. They will impact employment, future economic growth and stability, the government's ability to pay for social services, and Albertans' prosperity, opportunities and health.

So here in the very first paragraph of this report this group has its first warning for the government. It says: "They will impact employment, future economic growth and stability, the government's ability to pay for social services." Social services: those are set up so that we can help the vulnerable, the people that can't help themselves. That's one of our basic duties in society, and that's in the first paragraph. We're just going to ram this through. We're going to put it right to the end. We're going to ram it through.

Now, we could go on to paragraph 5, still on the first page.

We have taken great care to ensure this is a progressive policy that offsets impacts on most Alberta households and small businesses, [most] while protecting our core industries and supporting the transition needs of affected workers and communities.

It talks here in paragraph 5 about how they're going to protect our core industries and support the transition needs of affected workers and communities, but if you look at Bill 20, there's no plan here for our core industries. There's no plan here for supporting transition needs of affected workers and communities. There isn't. It's taxes. That's all it is.

I'll carry on. Still on the first page of the executive summary here it says that "Alberta is an export-oriented economy and changes to greenhouse gas policies will inevitably have an impact."

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Any questions under 29(2)(a) for the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky? The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now, the hon. member, who is a colleague and a friend, has brought some very good examples of why we need to reconsider this bill. We need to be supporting this amendment because of the fact that it is important to show exactly where we're going with Alberta.

Now, the member brought some really good points forward, really showing that there are parts of this act – he's pointed them out very specifically, and I commend the member for being so thorough in going through this 95-page document. It is remarkable that we have such a short time frame to be going through this document, yet to his credit he has taken the time to go specifically section by section and look to identify some of the concerns that he has, and he's bringing those concerns forward. My question to that hon. member is: do you have any more concerns with specific sections in this bill? Especially revolving around the fact that Alberta is going through an economic downturn, is it appropriate

that we are taking more taxes out of my riding, Bonnyville-Cold Lake, and yours in northwestern Alberta?

Thank you, hon. member.

10:20

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you to the hon. member for the question. Obviously, the worst time to tax people more is when they have the least amount of money. We have unemployment skyrocketing. This government, of course, wants to blame everything on somebody or something else. They want to blame the previous government for everything. They want to blame the price of oil for everything that's happening when they're in charge. We know that that's not the whole problem. The price of oil is a problem, but that's not the whole problem.

We've spent a lot of time talking about the downgrades that the bond-rating companies have done on Alberta, losing our triple-A rating. We've had five downgrades, and since January 15 the price of oil has been going up, but we're continuing to be downgraded. That doesn't make sense, Mr. Speaker. That doesn't hold water.

Now, I just want to carry on with this climate leadership report that the government says has inspired Bill 20, the tax bill. I was talking about the first page of the executive summary, paragraph 2. I mean, we talked about paragraph 1 already and paragraph 5. We'll go back to paragraph 2. Again, it says that "Alberta is an export-oriented economy and changes to greenhouse gas policies will inevitably have an impact." In just about every paragraph in this report they're warning us, they're warning Albertans about what could happen with this.

Now, they go on to say here – and this is very important, too – that "Alberta has arguably paid a steep price for the perception that our economy, resources and investment climate are not compatible with action on climate change." Now, the most important word here, Mr. Speaker, is "perception" because we know it's not reality. We know we have the cleanest and best environment. We have a great environmental record compared to all of our competitors. Can we do better? Of course we can. We want to always do better. There's nobody more concerned about the environment than the members on this side of the House, bar none.

But it says right in this report, like I said, in paragraph 2 that Alberta has "paid a steep price for the perception that our economy, resources and investment climate are not compatible with action on climate change." Here's an admission that it's just a perception. Now this government is going to charge Albertans \$3 billion in taxes for that perception.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Anyone wishing to speak to amendment RA1? The member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Thanks for the wake-up call. It has been a long night.

Thank you for the opportunity to rise and speak on this reasonable reasoned amendment. The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake has put forward an amendment asking for "assurances that a full economic impact analysis has been completed detailing any potential negative impact on the economic well-being of Albertans." How anybody could find that an unreasonable statement is, you know, kind of beyond me.

This is about restoring confidence in Alberta with our investors, the people that come in and spend their money. A lot of the big unions represented on the other side are also big investors in our economy. The minister may claim that investment dollars are pouring in, but we're hearing a totally different story. We know that

companies are planning on moving because of this crippling carbon tax. This carbon tax puts Alberta companies that rely on natural gas for processing at a severe disadvantage to their competitive neighbours. They are also not confident that this carbon tax will be the end but probably just the beginning. This does not instill confidence in investors.

We're hearing that this government's policies and ideologies are causing very real concern in the investment community: an undefined debt ceiling with its accompanying downgrades, increased corporate tax, and now a new carbon tax. It is not just the carbon tax on their business interest; it involves the lifestyle of their employees. When you are planning a big project or planning on moving your head office, you want to attract the best people that are going to help your business survive. They want to live in an economy, a province, that has all of the advantages, the lowest tax regime, all that stuff. Attracting good companies to an area that is unstable and expensive means that they have to offer a premium over neighbouring jurisdictions just to get them to come up there. Now, we see that up in northern Alberta all of the time. In order to get people to work north of Fort McMurray, which is miles and miles if you're driving – it's a five-hour drive from Edmonton – we have to fly people from all over the country, pay for their flights, just so we can man those projects. So something that businesses look at is where the projects are going to be and how much it's going to cost them to get quality employees there.

One of the things that gave us the Alberta advantage was a good, stable, predictable government – I guess I shouldn't say all of those words together – predictable taxation, and one of the lowest tax regimes in the country. People could count on the fact that they were paying a flat rate of 10 per cent tax in Alberta. They knew how much was going to come out of their pocket. This made it easy to attract investment. This made it easy for companies to attract top employees. That's no longer the case. We had a call today and some discussion about companies that are actually planning on leaving the province just because of the carbon tax on natural gas on their processes. For some of the companies this tax alone will increase their costs by a million dollars a year. One tax, just the natural gas tax.

All we have seen in this past year is unpredictability, tax increases, bills being dropped in at the end of session and rammed through this House. We've seen downturns in the past. I've been through more than my share in my lifetime. The main difference this time is that there is zero confidence in this government to help the situation. Quite the contrary, as a matter of fact.

There are many concerns and issues that could very easily arise resulting from these taxes, and they need to be considered before we move forward. We here in this House need to be adequately satisfied with sufficient evidence and assurances by way of a full economic impact analysis when being representatives for our constituents. We owe it to them. It's our job to make sure that any bill that surfaces is adequately studied and that we have the time to make sure that it is a just cause for Albertans.

Wildrose does not disagree that climate change is happening, and we do know that Alberta must help bring about changes to improve conditions. However, this bill may be too much too soon, and proper process should always take precedence. The financial impact that it will have on society could be very detrimental. Albertans will be paying the toll, and it will be way too much, especially now when Albertans are out of work. Alberta needs to recover, and I don't think this government gets that. I asked the question earlier in the evening under Standing Order 29(2)(a) to one of the ministers about why normal Albertans are footing the bill and have to suffer through a carbon tax to help supplement research and development for bigger companies. It doesn't make any sense that they're exempt

from the same carbon tax that their employees and regular Albertans will have to pay.

This government is so focused on their risky, ideological ideas that they appear to have lost focus. The rebates that the government has promised to those who qualify will not be made available to nonprofits, schools, charities, and small and medium-sized businesses. [interjections] That's quite funny isn't it? Apparently. They'll have no choice but to either pass the bill to Albertans or to reduce their services. It's always enjoyable to stand up here to talk and listen to the members of the government laugh about people paying taxes and losing their jobs. It just makes my night.

What will that look like when municipalities have no choice but to reduce services or increase their taxes because of the increase? Will this continue to escalate every year when the carbon tax increases? How will Albertans be able to rebound from the financial mess that they're in now, and how can this NDP government continue to keep the blinders on and not see what Albertans are going through? These are the kinds of things that should be taken into account, and this government should be held to account and be required to do an economic impact study on this carbon tax. Part of that economic assessment should also include how this will affect the school boards and health centres. How will they keep up with the rising costs when they often struggle with resources? The schools will have to pass the extra fees on to parents, some of whom are already struggling.

10:30

I was at a meeting in St. Paul last night talking to people from AltaGas. They're a supplier as well as a customer, so they've got a very complex accounting system that they're going to have to put in place just to deal with this carbon tax.

Unfortunately, the NDP government has not only proven that it will not eliminate mandatory education fees but that, on the contrary, it will be increasing costs to these schools through tax increases. Schools will not be able to bear the burden alone, and fees will have to be increased to parents. Unfortunately, those who are elected to municipalities and school boards are the ones who will be blamed when they are forced to increase the fees. They'll bear the brunt of it, just like the municipalities did when they pulled the grants in lieu of taxes, when they pulled the \$50 million from the MSI funding. Municipalities have no choice but to pass those expenses on to regular ratepayers.

What about health care centres? Will the government be giving them the extra funding they will need when their costs increase from this tax burden to make sure that patient care is not sacrificed? The money has to come from somewhere. You have to cut somewhere.

The trickle-down effects of this tax will cause a huge burden to Albertans in more ways than can be imagined. I cannot express enough how imperative it is that an economic assessment be done. I still don't understand how anybody could not understand the need for an economic impact study to be done before you implement a tax like this.

What about those who invest in our economy? Our competitors are not facing the same carbon pricing, yet investing in Alberta now will be that much more expensive. As I said earlier, we're already hearing that people are backing away. They're holding off because they don't trust this government. They've seen nothing but increases in corporate taxes, carbon taxes, and just the instability and unpredictability of this government. They don't know what's coming next. Is this a time for us to be gambling with reducing our competitiveness for investors? Once the oil prices rebound, will investors even be interested in bringing jobs back to Alberta with

all the increases? They'll have other options, B.C. and Saskatchewan for one.

These are all things that this NDP government needs to take into account before barreling ahead with such risky taxes. The NDP budget will make things much worse, and now, with all the extra taxes, families will be hurting.

Yes, climate change is happening – I agree – but let's work through all of this systematically and make sure that all of the bases are covered and that we are not creating more problems than we are solving. We need to be sure of the cost impact. We need to be sure of the costs alluded to by my friend here from Grande Prairie-Smoky.

You know, our province is very clean. I've worked in the oil and gas industry most of my life. I know that we have a very responsible group of companies up there. The AER follows them. ERCB inspections are done all the time. The people that live up there, work up there don't want to pollute their own lakes and rivers. I can be very confident of that.

We need to be sure of the impact. We need to be sure of the cost. How will this tax improve CO₂ emissions? According to this bill they actually get to increase the carbon by 30 megatonnes. It's incredible. Carbon dioxide is the primary greenhouse gas emitted through human activity. We agree with that. Is the cost going to outweigh the impact, and can you prove this? During a severe recession is not the time to be introducing it. Waiting until the economy recovers is beneficial to all.

One of the issues is how the funds that will be collected from this tax will be redistributed. British Columbia has a completely revenue-neutral tax in that all the funds collected go to tax cuts. This government is not willing to do that. As I alluded to earlier, when I was asking a question, the revenue from the carbon levy may only be used for initiatives related to reducing emissions of greenhouse gases or supporting Alberta's ability to adapt to climate change. Again, is innovation in the oil and gas industry going to fall on the backs of the average Alberta taxpayer? That's what I read from that. British Columbia has a completely revenue-neutral tax in that all the funds collected go to tax cuts. This government is not willing to do that.

This bill will make the poor poorer, and Albertans will suffer those consequences. Next year Albertans will be paying extra for their natural gas, \$1 more per gigajoule – that's actually \$1.05 – and the year after that, it will rise to \$1.52. I'm not sure how those that are struggling will deal with these extra costs. They will have to make detrimental choices one way or another. You know, it may cut into their food budget or into what their kids do after school.

Gas prices are one thing, but to heat people's homes is not optional during harsh winters. In Alberta we had a mild winter last year, but maybe next year it's going to be – we've had 30 days in a row at minus 40. I've had to work in those conditions, and you just don't turn your heat down.

All we are asking for is that Albertans be adequately satisfied with sufficient evidence and assurances by way of a full economic impact analysis to ensure that no one suffers because of this tax. We are not saying that climate change is not happening. We are just asking this government to make sure they know the full impact this tax will have on Albertans who are struggling the very most. They can't afford it at this time. We need to look at it and make sure that we know exactly how much it's going to cost each family and each business. We do not need any more job losses in this province.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: Any questions to the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to thank the hon. member for educating us about exactly what we're looking at in the bill that's coming forward. Now, I did hear the member talk about loss of jobs and that the direction this province is going in is probably not conducive to what we've been used to in the past. I am proud to say that the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills is a neighbour of mine. He is feeling a lot of the same difficulties within his riding that I am feeling in mine.

You know, the fact is that when we start seeing the difficulties coming forward from this bill – and this has affected the oil sands because the oil companies didn't know where Alberta was going with this carbon tax until it actually had been released. Having worked in the oil fields for a long period of time, I believe there's a real experience that we can draw on from my colleague because he's been working within the industry for a long time. He's worked with the different companies within the area. He's had a lot of experience with them. Now, this is where I believe that that experience in working within the industry, having worked with other employees that have worked in the industry and having been a diligent follower of the environmental guidelines – to the member: do you feel that adding costs onto our oil sands at this time, maybe not directly but through the gas tax, is appropriate? And do you think that this is actually going to shut down more businesses within your riding like it is going to in mine?

Mr. Hanson: Well, actually, I think it will have an impact. We're already seeing, especially up north of Bonnyville, in the air weapons range area that I worked in, that a lot of the companies I worked with and had working for me and a lot of the employees – you know, you get to know these guys after working with them for 15 to 20 years, and you get to know their families. A lot of these guys are hurting. Some of them have lost their homes. Some of the businesses have had to close down. They've had the cutbacks. The oil companies have forced them to reduce rates to the point where they're just barely getting by. They're trying to bid on jobs at bare-bottom dollars just to keep their employees working because for a lot of these guys it is family. They've had these employees for 20 years, some of them, so they don't want to let them go. They know how difficult it will be to get them back, especially if they have to move away to a different centre.

10:40

So adding a tax onto these companies and these employees at this time is just very distasteful to me. Some of the companies up there have taken a 30 per cent cut just to stay in the industry. Like I said, they're bare bones and are sometimes dipping into their expenses or having to sell equipment just to keep their crews going. So, yes, it does have a detrimental effect on my area for sure.

I know the St. Paul area, and all the schools that I've talked to are putting together pricing right now to get me the numbers on exactly how much per school and per school board it's going to cost. I've also asked some of the medical centres and the seniors' homes for that. You know, it's pretty easy. You take all your bills from last year, see how much fuel you burned, and apply this tax to it. All these people are starting to do that, and we're starting to see on Facebook and Twitter and in the papers that the concern about this carbon tax is actually starting to boil. We will see people get as excited as they were about Bill 6 when they finally get the gist of exactly how much this carbon tax is going to cost them, how it's going to affect their families and their businesses.

I really think that we need to take a step back and do some proper analysis of this. We shouldn't have to ask the hospitals and school boards how much this tax is going to cost them. We should be able to tell them: "This is how it's going to affect you. This is what we're going to do to help you out so that you don't have to lay off front-line workers to make it happen."

Thank you very much.

The Speaker: On 29(2)(a), any other members?

Hon. Member for Edmonton-South West, are you speaking to the amendment?

Mr. Dang: To the amendment. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I think it's really good to be able to have this fulsome debate here in the House on this amendment. The amendment is about the economic impact and why there hasn't been an impact analysis done on the effects of the Climate Leadership Implementation Act. I want to really set the record straight on some of these issues because what some of the opposition are saying is simply absurd when we look at the realities of what the Climate Leadership Implementation Act actually does. What the act does and what the plan will do is that it will diversify our economy and create new jobs.

I know that members across the way talked quite heavily and quoted quite extensively – they cherry-picked but quoted it quite extensively – from the climate leadership report that was commissioned by the government, and I want to speak a bit about that. Members spoke about the climate leadership report, and that's exactly why we commissioned that report, Mr. Speaker. That report was done so that we would understand in a fulsome manner, in a whole manner, what the issues were surrounding carbon pricing in this province and how we were going to move forward in a tangible way to reduce emissions because we understand that man-made climate change is real.

We can look at the Climate Leadership report and at what the panel did, which was to consider over 25,000 online submissions, over 920 people attending public open houses, and 535 commissions from NGOs, industry, and academics. When we take all of these things together, we can try to piece this together and say: who was doing this analysis and generating this report for us? Who did the government commission to do this analysis and to do this assessment so that we could receive this data and move forward with the climate leadership plan?

Some of these were people like Dr. Andrew Leach, an economist here at the University of Alberta who does economic analysis as a daily part of his job; people like Linda Coady, who's an expert on corporate sustainability and economic interdependence; and people like Gordon Lambert, who's the Suncor sustainability executive and is a member of the Ivy Business School. We see that the panel that did all of this analysis and did all of this research and compiled the report for the government to use as we move forward with the climate leadership plan was filled with industry experts, filled with economists, and filled with people who really understood the business implications of what was going on.

Mr. Speaker, I want to quote from one of the submissions to the climate leadership report, which was from an economist that many people in this House might know or know of, Jack Mintz. He said that when you're making investments in very expensive technologies, you tend to like carbon taxes because you do get price certainty for carbon. We know that Jack Mintz isn't necessarily always one of our friends here on this side of the aisle, but even Dr. Mintz understood the gravity of this and understood that there absolutely was a reality that we did need a carbon levy to get price certainty for carbon.

I think that really speaks to this amendment. The opposition would like you to believe that no economic analysis was done at all, when we see world-renowned economists from all across Alberta and across the world, quite frankly, looking at this document and saying that there are tangible things that we need to be doing and very realistic things that are positive coming out of this legislation.

If the opposition believes in climate change and really wants to help, I want to refer them to another quote from that report that they were talking about, which is that we need to be framing this as "carbon competitive." That's an interesting quote because we can look at that and say: well, the report speaks to being carbon competitive in a global market. What does that mean? It means that the report did extensive analysis on how we can be competitive in a global market with a carbon pricing model. What that means, Mr. Speaker, is that we did have analysis done and presented to the minister and presented to government and presented to the public in the very report that they were reading. They read some of those economic effects themselves as I saw them quoting it right in front of me. It's going to be in the Blues and in *Hansard*.

They spoke, and they had very specific, cherry-picked quotes. I want to go on and explain to you a bit more about what those quotes really meant. They spoke about how there will be an impact on future economic growth and stability [and] the government's ability to pay for . . . services [in this province].

Well, the very next line, Mr. Speaker, if the hon. member had decided to keep reading instead of perhaps taking a break from doing whatever it was he was doing, is:

It means market demand will rise for low- and no-carbon energy sources and fall for high-cost and emissions-intensive resources. Technologies capable of separating economic growth from energy use and energy production from carbon emissions will prosper. This is the future for which Alberta must prepare.

Mr. Speaker, it is very clear that this report that they were quoting from intends for Alberta to prepare by doing things like implementing this legislation. What the opposition has done is that they have presented an amendment which impedes Alberta's ability to prepare in a timely manner for this very realistic and low-carbon future, that we must move towards.

Mr. Speaker, the opposition also quoted a line that I believe was from the fifth paragraph, from what he was saying. But the very next line, when he spoke about how there would be realities of how the carbon levy would affect the economy, was: "However, it is important to note that we are already experiencing real impacts from the status quo." What the report speaks to and what this government understands and what some members opposite don't seem to is that we as a society are feeling real economic pressures from not doing anything.

While some members of the opposition may decide that the best way to get around not doing anything is to yell and scream at our friends and our neighbours, that we're having to work with to make sure that we can get our product to market and to make sure that we have a realistic economy that we can grow here in Alberta, I don't think that that would be a very tangible and good thing to do. If they were to commission an economic assessment themselves, Mr. Speaker, I do not believe that that economic assessment would suggest that they go and yell at the people you are trying to do business with and complain to the people you are trying to do business with and then disrespect the people you are trying to do business with. In my opinion, I do not believe that that would be a very tangible way of accomplishing your goals.

We look at some of these things, we move forward, and we say: well, how do we know that this government is keeping a very close mind and a close eye on this legislation doing very tangible things to ensure that we have a positive economic outlook and going back

and making sure that this economic impact assessment isn't really going to push forward this legislation? Well, what we can look at and say is: what is this legislation doing? It's enabling things. Like, this summer we'll be bringing in a large number of engagements on issues such as performance standards, innovation and technology, the methane emission reduction strategy, and energy efficiency. As we move forward in the summer, once we pass this legislation, there are going to be lots of very tangible ways that this government is moving forward to make sure that our business is competitive on a global scale.

When we look at things like the performance standards measures, we're seeing that this report and this legislation were crafted in a very delicate manner, were crafted in a manner very cognitive of what the realities of the economy were and what the realities of the economy today are, Mr. Speaker, which is why there are things like phased-in carbon pricing and things like looking at performance standards so that we will not be double-impacting people with the carbon levy.

10:50

We'll be absolutely making sure that we do ensure that businesses which are trade exposed will not be adversely impacted by a carbon levy. That's why we're looking at things like making sure that certain industries that will fall under the performance standards legislation will be able to have those movements and fluidity because we understand that there absolutely are economic realities in this province, Mr. Speaker. We absolutely understand that there are things that are going on that are outside of the control of this province and that there are things that are going on that are outside of the control of this government, quite frankly.

When we move on that, we can look and say: we shape legislation to ensure that we do the best job we can. We shape legislation to ensure that we do the best job we can to implement this report, which has done great economic analysis. It's done great social analysis. It's done great analysis in all sorts of aspects, Mr. Speaker. They speak about, for example, that we didn't do an economic impact analysis on what this would mean for certain types of families or certain types of low-income earners. That's why the report recommends and the government implemented things like the rebate program, where 60 per cent of Albertans will receive a full or greater than full rebate, and two-thirds of Albertans will receive some rebate altogether. I think it really does speak to the thoughtfulness and the fullness of this legislation. It's being rolled out in a very meaningful way.

We can look at how there are endorsements from industry such as Suncor, CNRL, and Cenovus, Mr. Speaker, that have looked at this piece of legislation and said: "You know what? We can work with this because the economics of this legislation and what we're doing here is something that we can get behind, and we recognize that in the global marketplace it's something that we must absolutely do." I can quote the Suncor Energy submission to the panel here, which says:

An efficient way to quickly target a significant and growing amount of end-use emissions would be the application of a natural gas, electricity, gasoline and diesel carbon price at the point of sale. There are various mechanisms for levying a carbon price, which combined with revenue recycling . . . could protect lower income Albertans while sending a clear price signal to change choices and energy use habits.

Mr. Speaker, what we're looking at here is a very large player in the Alberta economy. Suncor is a very large oil company that is trade exposed in some cases and does deal with a lot of large industry and a lot of large business across the province and many jobs. We can see this, and we can see that this is absolutely

something that Albertans can get behind, that the industry can get behind, and that we have done a meaningful analysis on this.

Mr. Speaker, really, in closing, I do want to emphasize that the government has done extensive analysis. The government has commissioned an extensive report, that is over a hundred pages long. I would know. I read it multiple times. We looked at this, and we can say that there absolutely was work done from the get-go. From the very beginning the work was done, and from that we can move forward on this legislation.

This amendment is nothing but a parliamentary trick the opposition is trying to do to hold up the progress of this government. I would urge all members of this Assembly to vote this down.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have to say . . .

The Speaker: Under 29(2)(a)?

Mrs. Aheer: Yes. Thank you, sir.

. . . that the passion is overwhelming, and it's appreciated at this time of night especially, so good on you.

One thing I'd like to say is that there are a couple of little things that are in here regarding an economic analysis or economic benefit or any of those things that we're bringing up. It is absolutely the responsibility of any government bringing through this type of legislation, that is going to alter the way that business is done in this province, to make sure that that's appropriate and that that's there for people to see. That's part of transparency. I do believe that you ran on that the same way that we did. It should be something that you look at. You take advice from us, and be proud of that, and bring it forward. It's a huge ask. We realize that. But it's an imperative ask when you're going forward in an economic situation like we are in right now.

I'd like to talk about the thoughtfulness comment and also about economic realities. I'd like to share a small story about economic realities with you for the last four minutes that we're in here. I have – it's an absolute privilege – in the beautiful and diverse riding of Chestermere-Rocky View a little coffee shop in Chestermere. Very, very, very good friends of mine. I have to say that as impassioned as the speech was that just came across the floor, what it lacks is the added imperative behind that passion, and I wish the passion was as much about what it is that you say on paper and what actually happens in real life. I wish that there was that wisdom, that understanding, and maybe that life experience in that speech and passion . . . [interjections] I don't understand why that's – it's straight across the board.

I agree, but I am saying that there is something in there, in that passion, that, if it could expand to understanding what's happening in his constituency, in my constituency, in the businesses in these constituencies, if a little bit more went into actually the businesses that are being impacted by this particular piece of legislation – you know what? – it would be such an impactful thing coming from that side of the room.

What I'm saying is – I'm talking about my little coffee shop, and I'm sure that the member has places in his constituency that he can relate this to and perhaps take some of my thought process and go forward within his constituency and ask the same questions that I've posed in mine and actually received from many, many, many people in my constituency. This little coffee shop we're talking about is a small, family-run business. Even at the best of times, especially in a place like Chestermere-Rocky View, approximately 90 per cent of the population – I mean, that's a guess – empties out

into Calgary every week to do their work there. A lot of the work that is done in Chestermere by the small businesses is supported only during certain times of the day, as you can imagine, because most of the people empty out and work in Calgary.

So not only are we dealing with a specific time frame when people can work; there are other challenges that go along with that. We're dealing with small businesses that are not only incorporating what's going to happen with this carbon tax but a minimum wage and corporate taxes and personal taxes and everything else, all of that accumulation of things that goes on there. Honestly, to the member across the way, if you could take that passion and actually apply it to the realities of what is actually going on in this province at a small-business level in any aspect outside of just what is written on paper – the model on paper hasn't shown any transference to real life. Those of us who have small businesses and are actually seeing what is happening on the ground know what's happening. We're being impacted directly every single day. [interjections] I'm not saying that you don't.

The Speaker: Hon. member.

Mrs. Aheer: That's what I'm saying . . .

The Speaker: Hon. member, make your comments through the chair.

Mrs. Aheer: I'm sorry, sir. I apologize.

My point, Mr. Speaker, is that I know that they have small businesses. That's why this is so hard to comprehend. I understand that all of the members in this House have as diverse a region as I have. I completely respect and understand that. That's why I don't understand why that conversation does not come back to what we're actually talking about here, the impact on people, the economic realities, that the member so passionately spoke about. That's what I'm asking about. So the question to the member is . . .

The Speaker: Through the chair.

Mrs. Aheer: Sorry.

Through the chair, could the member please explain what economic realities he's speaking of in his constituency that he can relate to?

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Leduc-Beaumont.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [interjections]

The Speaker: It's getting late, folks. Let's stay focused.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Focus is hard at this late time of night.

Bill 20 is a huge step forward for Alberta, Canada, and our position on the world stage, Mr. Speaker. It puts in place a framework that will substantially change our society for the better. One of the opposition members likes to ask: what about the children? While I enjoy that, that is also a huge reason why we're bringing this forward. We're trying to create a better future for our children and our grandchildren, not only in terms of protecting the environment they will grow up in but also creating more diverse economic opportunities.

We've seen the research on climate change. We have read the research on climate change. We've heard the voices of scientists, academics, business leaders, and political leaders the world over, and they're all saying the same thing, that climate change is real and the best way to address it is to put a price on carbon. Should we

ignore them? I think not. We know that this is real and that wishful thinking is not going to make it go away. We will use this knowledge to make a positive difference in the world around us.

11:00

As Albertans we will not shy away from our responsibilities to future generations. We will do our part, and we're going to help Albertans to do their part. As part of the climate leadership plan we're establishing Energy Efficiency Alberta, a first-of-its-kind agency in Alberta which will help families, businesses, and communities reduce both their energy costs and their greenhouse gas emissions. That is a very important part of this bill, and we need to make sure that no one is left behind.

Mr. Speaker, we're also going to work to transition Alberta's electrical system. There are a growing number of indicators that suggest growth in the world's demand for electricity, particularly renewables-based electricity. As prices continue to fall, renewables are starting to outpace conventional energy types around the world. In fact, it was reported that in 2015 renewable energy was the largest source of new power added to the U.S. electricity grids last year. Technology is always evolving, so we know that costs will most definitely continue to go down. Albertan companies and communities have already been early adopters and investors in these technologies, and this government will make sure that we will not fall behind. Wind and solar systems, in particular, are appealing to all sizes of communities as they are highly scalable and distributable even without an existing electrical grid. While many jurisdictions are likely to have at least one or more options to produce electricity from renewable sources, Alberta is ideally suited for many of these sources, whether that be solar, wind, geothermal, bioenergy, cogen.

Mr. Speaker, we'll be needing hydrocarbons for some time to come, and Alberta is blessed with strong natural gas resources, which can help us reduce our dependence on coal and integrate with renewable options. Hydrocarbons will also have a bright future as more than just fuel. They are needed for plastics, agricultural chemicals, waxes, and asphalt, just to name a few.

As Albertans we need not fear this transition or ignore it, as our colleagues across the aisle would have us do. Rather, this is about seizing an opportunity, an opportunity to transition to more diverse sources of energy, an opportunity to create new jobs, an opportunity to take advantage of the vast amounts of natural renewable resources we're blessed with, and an opportunity to make a cleaner, more sustainable world for our kids.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to speak briefly to a project that exemplifies what this bill embodies, a project I'm incredibly excited about that speaks to comments from other members who voiced disbelief that anyone would invest in renewables here or that companies would come to invest in our province. I represent Nisku, where proud oil firms are hurting. But this slump also offers an opportunity. There's a solution that can create many, many jobs for oil workers, and it's starting at the centre of my riding, at the site of Leduc No. 1, a discovery that transformed Alberta's economy.

Leduc No. 1 has launched the living energy project, which combines oil and renewable energy industries in a way that has never been done before, the green and the black, and it does it in a way that gets oil workers back to work. This flagship project will change Alberta and Canada, cutting carbon emissions and power bills while lowering the cost of producing oil. That's why the oil industry supports it. It showcases gas, oil, wind, geothermal, solar, energy storage, and smart energy management systems all working together. It's a project built by oil workers and designed by Alberta energy entrepreneurs.

The living energy project will boost economic diversification, innovation, and agriculture. Alberta's energy industry is a world-class innovator, and we're proud of it. This project pioneers and showcases a unique Albertan invention that will cut fuel bills. It creates ultrasmart geothermal systems and intelligent combined heat and power units. The platform controls on-site energy reduction and power storage to cut the transmission tariffs that make up half of our energy bills. This designed and built in Alberta energy platform allows oil companies to slash their power usage and carbon emissions, pushing back at those who block pipelines, and it saves them money. Farmers have been using wind turbines for decades. They understand the economic benefits of renewable energy better than anyone. This living energy project will blaze a regulatory path for the use of the next generation of made-in-Alberta renewable energy.

Geothermal heat from wells that have already been drilled. Alberta only has 148 hectares under greenhouses, so it imports food from California. Ontario, in contrast, has thousands of hectares of land under glass. But we have a unique Alberta advantage: nearly 80,000 suspended oil wells that contain trapped geothermal heat. All they need is a permit for a change of use, a pump, and a heat exchanger, and that's 80,000 greenhouses or fish farms, let's say, supplied with free heat. This project includes Canada's first abandoned oil well to geothermal conversion using innovative, hydrocarbons-renewables bridging technology, and as I speak, its technical proposal is making its way to Alberta Energy, who will work with the Alberta Energy Regulator to test and issue this game-changing permit that won't cost taxpayers a cent. It will create a boom in, like I said, horticulture or fish farms or many other things. It's a groundbreaking innovation that will allow land and well owners to put abandoned and suspended wells back to work producing energy, farming and oil working together, the green and the black.

Under the regulations set by the previous government, when low prices forced an oil firm to stop producing, the regulators could seal up the suspended well and abandon it, which costs hundreds of thousands of dollars. There are approximately 230 small producers staring into the abyss of bankruptcy, and these regulations can push them over the edge. Allowing them to convert a well to geothermal cuts out the abandonment costs, keeping them in business, and preparing wells for geothermal puts the drillers back in my riding to work. At this very moment the oil firm is transferring the well to Leduc No. 1 and is preparing the well for conversion. Its contractors are local oil service firms suffering in the recession, but they are donating their services for free, proudly driving this project. They want to change Alberta, and they want to get back to work.

Methane escaping from producing oil wells into the environment is a wasted resource. This living energy project showcases an innovation that captures this free methane to power a horsehead pump, which is normally driven by an electric motor, and this cuts production costs and gains carbon credits. This lowers the cost of producing oil, and it saves small oil firms from the receiver, slashing oil's carbon footprint. As I said, the green and the black working together.

The coming renewables support program in this bill will create Alberta jobs. The living energy project's solar systems, made by Albertan oil workers, are cheaper than the Ontario systems that Alberta imports today, and these rugged, extreme-temperature, renewable systems are designed for Alberta's climate. They actually tilt to dump the snow off them, so you don't need somebody to brush that off. They are built by Albertan oil workers and are used by Alberta's great oil industry in oil fields that are off the grid. Free sunshine is cheaper than trucking in diesel for generators. It's designed in Alberta, it's made in Alberta, and it's

an Alberta solution, a renewable hydrocarbon hybrid system for the oil patch.

The project has already attracted German technology and Swiss capital. A Nisku steel fabricator, CCI, which is partially First Nations owned, was hurting in the recession and let go most of its workers. When Leduc No. 1 on my advice looked for local oil service firms to build its system, CCI stepped up. It got Swiss capital to develop a renewables division and transferred German technology and started hiring again. CCI is a proud Alberta oil services firm. It will export these systems to B.C., the self-proclaimed kingdom of green energy, and Nisku will be its export hub.

As well as steel, renewable systems need cement, electronics, aluminum fabricators, and laser cutters, and all these systems can be made by Alberta firms. This project is expanding Alberta's manufacturing base and will proudly showcase these made-in-Alberta solutions. The site was a centre of the first major discovery in energy and now will be the second discovery in a century. The living energy project will establish this great province as Canada's undisputed leader in green energy. Its systems are better than Ontario's, and we will export them to B.C. Alberta's proud oil industry will show these provinces yet again how to do energy as it transforms the province into a total energy powerhouse, the complete energy capital of Canada. The project is by the oil industry and for the oil industry. It will help us get pipelines built. It will change Alberta. It will change Canada. It's a win-win-win: a win for oil workers, a win for the environment, and a win for taxpayers.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be a part of the project, and this and many other projects to come are part of the reason why Bill 20 is being brought forward. We want to spur entrepreneurs and businesses from all over Alberta, Canada, and the world to come see this great province and to continue to make it a great place to live, work, and innovate. This is the right thing to do for today and for future generations.

Thank you.

11:10

The Speaker: Are there any questions under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Little Bow.

Mr. Schneider: If I could, please, Mr. Speaker. There are so many unintended consequences with this tax that aren't spelled out. The Member for Leduc-Beaumont lives in a rural area or his constituency is rural. Farmers that grow grain other than to feed their own or feedlot cattle mostly ship that grain for sale. That means that it has to run through an elevator, and then it has to be shipped. Rail already saw an increase in diesel fuel in the last NDP budget. I would assume that rail will take another hit on fuel with this carbon tax.

A farmer may have his product hauled to town to that elevator, and that sometimes means hiring a trucker. That is a commonly used form of getting grain to town. I mean, some folks have spent their money on their farms on other priorities. It's hard sometimes for farmers to have the ideal piece of equipment that they need for every operation, so farmers hire truckers quite a bit throughout this province to haul their grain to the elevator.

The elevator itself has a lot of electrical motors and such that elevate that grain. I've talked to one of the last independent grain elevators in western Canada. The amount of electricity used in their Alberta elevators is 111 megawatts of power per month. That's an average amount of power. Multiplied by 12, of course, it's 1,332 megawatts in a year. That cost has to be passed on to someone. They aren't going to eat that cost. It'll be passed on to the producer.

The price is poised to increase anyway as a result of the wind-down of coal-fired power. Even though we don't know exactly how

much that will be, the estimate in the *Canadian Tax Journal* was that a \$30-per-tonne carbon tax could increase the consumer price of electricity by about 7 to 8 per cent, a bit less in the first \$20-per-tonne increase, about 5 per cent. That may not be the correct percentage at the end of the day. I haven't heard what it may be, understanding that the regulations are still in the process of being written. If I was handed Bill 20 today and had to read it, I would understand that electricity is going to rise by that much.

What if a farmer irrigates? He has a cost for electricity for running those pumps that actually get the water to the crop, and he has a cost for electricity to run the pivots or whatever kind of irrigation equipment he uses. Only one person pays for that. Only one person pays that extra cost.

Sure, the purple fuel on a farm is exempt. That is great, that this government took the initiative and was determined to help out the number two industry in Alberta.

But do you see the unintended consequences that appear as we dig a little deeper? So many costs have to be passed on to the producer. I'm only talking about one industry here. A producer that cannot dictate the price of his grain: he's at the mercy of a global market. That's something that farmers worked for a couple of decades ago and wouldn't change now for anything. Now he's going to be charged more to grow his grain, more to get it to the elevator, more to get his product to the coast in export position because locomotives will be paying more for fuel and will have to pass the cost on to the user.

An Hon. Member: Just when they go through Alberta.

Mr. Schneider: Just when they go through Alberta. Well, this is where we are.

Mr. Speaker, for the member: do you understand the costs passed on to this one industry in Alberta? Producers in this province will have to pay more to get the same. I just wonder if you understand the unintended consequences.

Thank you.

Mr. S. Anderson: Unlike what opposite members continue to say, we do completely understand. That's all I'm going to say about that.

The Speaker: Any other questions under 29(2)(a)?

The Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Seeing the time and the progress we've made this evening, I move that we adjourn debate on Bill 20.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, we've done a lot of good work on both sides of the House – I enjoyed the debate from just about everyone – so I rise to move to adjourn the House for this evening until tomorrow morning at 9.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:15 p.m.]

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For inquiries contact:

Managing Editor

Alberta Hansard

3rd Floor, 9820 – 107 St

EDMONTON, AB T5K 1E7

Telephone: 780.427.1875