



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, November 8, 2016

Day 46

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 29th Legislature

Second Session

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Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (ND)	Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)
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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

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, November 8, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

Mr. Hinkley: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a group of students from Maskwacis Cultural College. Now, they are not here just yet, but if we could give them the traditional warm welcome, it would be appreciated when they get here.

Thank you.

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

Ms Sweet: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you students and accompanying teachers from John Barnett school. Along with them are their teachers, Peggy Wright and Kenny Babatunde, and their chaperones, Ubah Ali, Kostas Karayiannis, and Nadine Bright. If I could ask them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour today to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly students and staff and parents from a school that's close to my heart, Donnan elementary school. They are accompanied today by parent chaperones Jade Gray, Cathy McMorran, and Lane Whitten and, of course, by their teachers, Mr. Scott, Mr. Burke, and Mr. Peters.

Mr. Speaker, if you'd like to indulge me for a minute, I'd like to acknowledge that Mr. Peters was my daughter's grade 6 teacher when she was in his class. There are teachers who make a difference in the lives of their students, and I know that he made a difference in the life of my daughter. I am so pleased that he continues to make that difference in the life of his grade 6 class to this day.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Minister of Culture and Tourism.

Miranda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly staff in the Ministry of Culture and Tourism: Margaret Stewart, Brittany Sapiuk, Adam Bentley, Shauna Coombs, Fahad Khalid, Tom Bernier, Matt Brown, Clarissa Atienza, Hilary Pittel, and Martin Sasseville. I invite them to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Are there any other school groups, hon. members?

The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly a group of outstanding young athletes, coaches, and support staff who made Alberta and Canada proud this summer at the Olympic and Paralympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. These fine young Albertans showed us all what human skill, endurance, grace, and strength look like in action. Our province is home to some of the best athletes in Canada.

I am extremely proud that we were so well represented by Blair Nesbitt from Stony Plain, Katelyn Wright from Edmonton, Amber Skyran from Plamondon, Tammy Cunnington from Red Deer, Heidi Peters from Edmonton, and Ross Wilson from Sherwood Park. Joining us today as well are members of the dedicated Paralympic support team: sitting volleyball coach Nicole Ban, massage therapist Chris Petch, team operations manager Charlotte MacNaughton, and team manager Ingrid Ruys.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to point out that the sitting volleyball team made history in Rio as the first Canadian team, men's or women's, to compete in sitting volleyball at a Paralympic Games. I'd also like to congratulate Ross for winning Canada's first medal of the 2016 Rio Paralympics and for taking home silver medals in paracycling, individual pursuit and individual time trial.

I am confident that I speak for all members of the Assembly when I say that each of these fine young athletes, coaches, and support staff makes us proud to be Albertans and Canadians this year. We look forward to their many future successes. Mr. Speaker, they are seated in your gallery, and I invite all members of the Assembly to extend a warm welcome to this tremendous group, who made the 2016 Paralympic Games so memorable. [Standing ovation]

The Speaker: Welcome. I think the applause reflects our pride in each and every one of you.

The Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased to introduce to you and through you to the members of this Assembly veterans present in the House to mark Aboriginal Veterans Day. John McDonald, the president of the Aboriginal Veterans Society of Alberta, is a retired chief warrant officer who served 38 years in the military, with service in Korea, a peacekeeping mission in Egypt, and two tours of duty with NATO in Germany. His wife, Myrtle Calahaisn, also joins him. Mr. McDonald is also the co-ordinator and recruiter of the bold eagle program, a summer employment program for indigenous youth conducted by the military in Wainwright each summer.

Wallace Bona is a retired corporal who served 26 years in the military, with service with NATO in Germany and two tours of duty in Bosnia.

Jocelyne Eastman served 16 years between the Royal Canadian Air Force and the Canadian navy. Clint Eastman served 20 years in the army and six years in the Royal Canadian Air Force. They are joined by their son Damien.

I would ask them to now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly. [Standing ovation]

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. A real pleasure to introduce to you and through you to the House four individuals near my hometown. While these hard-working students complete their studies, they're also advocating on behalf of their fellow postsecondary students, including foreign students, for improved affordability, for extended employment opportunities, and for reduced tuition. Representing the students at the University of Lethbridge are Cameron Howey, president; Hailey Babb, vice-president academic; Royal Adkin, vice-president, student affairs; and Michael Gale, vice-president, operations and finance. I would ask that they rise and receive the traditional welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly three visitors from my constituency: Sherilyn Danis, Karen Popoff, and Bev Decore. Sherilyn and Karen are the co-managers of the Foundation of Administrative Justice, and Bev is an instructor and co-ordinator there. The foundation is a nonprofit organization that provides training to agencies, boards, commissions, and tribunals. It's a national leader in delivery of administrative justice training and education. I ask that all members join me in welcoming Sherilyn, Karen, and Bev to the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly individuals associated with the Myeloma Alberta Support Society. I can only name a few of these individuals, but we have approximately 40 volunteers, including patients, caregivers, family members, and doctors, taking part in multiple Myeloma Awareness Day here with us. Visiting us is the cofounder and chair of Myeloma Canada, Aldo DelCol. I'd ask him to rise. From my constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud we have Robert Thiessen with the Edmonton chapter of the Myeloma Alberta Support Society, and from Calgary we have Norma Gilbert, president and caregiver, as well as Phil Unland, who's a patient in southern Alberta. I would now ask that they receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

1:40

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

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly two of our youth leaders in the PC Party. The first, Emily Gilroy, has been PCYA president of events for the last two years, actively involved in the PCYA executive since her mid-teens, and has contributed an enormous amount of work to the party, especially since the May 2015 election. The second, Mr. Adam Brown, is the University of Alberta Progressive Conservative Association president as well as VP of operations and finance for the AUFJSJ as well as serving PCYA VP policy for the previous year. Mr. Brown's grandfather was a previous member of this Assembly. I ask these two young people to stand as amongst the best and brightest in Alberta and accept the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Are there any other guests, hon. members?

Members' Statements

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Foundation of Administrative Justice

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As you know, under the former PC government compensation and spending for Alberta's agencies, boards, and commissions grew out of control. I'm proud to represent a government that is committed to increasing transparency, fiscal responsibility, and having diversity reflected in Alberta's agencies, boards, and commissions, which is why the vision of the Foundation of Administrative Justice is so important as it ensures that individuals involved with the ABCs are trained and certified in administrative justice.

In ensuring this vision, the foundation, a nonprofit organization, prepares agencies and tribunals for their responsibilities by

providing effective and vital training in administrative law and natural justice. The foundation also provides training for people who appear before decision-making boards. The training focuses on the best practices and procedural fairness. Training in administrative justice helps organizations write better decisions and creates more efficient and effective environments for decision-makers to work within.

All levels of government, adjudicators, unions, professional disciplinary panels, and indigenous people are examples of the people and groups that benefit from these courses. The foundation provides comprehensive education for members of commissions across Canada. The course focuses on interpreting laws, presenting and weighing evidence, holding effective hearings, and making and writing decisions.

The foundation was the first organization in Canada to implement a certification program for appeals and tribunals. Recently they launched e-learning to make education more accessible. To date 455 people have graduated with a certificate in tribunal administrative justice.

I would like to take this time to thank the foundation for their hard work and for providing legal training and educational opportunities to many Albertans. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The leader of the third party.

Job Creation

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to talk about jobs, specifically the numbers released yesterday by the NDP government. While it's impossible to dissect all of the wild claims made in yesterday's news release in two minutes, I'd like to take a closer look at a couple.

First, there's the claim that the government's capital plan has been a major driver of job creation this year. Every single public infrastructure project that produced a paycheque in 2016 was announced, planned, and funded by previous governments. To date no new infrastructure projects have been announced by this government. Even if they were to announce them all today, it would be two years until a shovel hit the ground.

Now, let's talk a bit about the increased drilling numbers. While I'm happy to see that drilling activity in Alberta has increased, a projected increase of 53 wells next year according to PSAC, Petroleum Services Association of Canada, my enthusiasm is tempered by the fact that Saskatchewan's increase is 240 more wells. That's four and a half times more new wells and four and a half times more jobs than here in Alberta. Saskatchewan has the same low oil price. I find it interesting that the government continues to blame everybody but its own policies for the difference, because the facts, Mr. Speaker, prove otherwise.

The rest of the highlights in the government's news release were mere estimations of jobs they hope will exist at some point in the future, like a unicorn. While I'm sure the government's crystal ball is in good working order, none of these jobs exist today, which is of little comfort to the tens of thousands of currently unemployed Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, after a closer examination, it's a bit rich for the government to claim that they were at all responsible for any of these new jobs. By my estimation, the only jobs that they can actually take credit for are the jobs that exist in their imaginations, like a unicorn, and the last time I checked, imaginary jobs don't pay real mortgages.

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

Multiple Myeloma

Drever: Thank you. On September 28, Mr. Speaker, people gathered from across the country to march and raise money to help fund research for multiple myeloma. This was the first march to take place in Alberta, and it so happened to be in my beautiful riding of Calgary-Bow. I would like to take a second to thank Pamela Roberts for bringing this important cause to my attention and for the opportunity to participate.

Mr. Speaker, today marks a very special day as it is Myeloma Awareness Day in Alberta. It is supported by the Southern Alberta Myeloma Patient Society, the Myeloma Alberta Support Society, and Myeloma Canada. These three groups provide myeloma patients and caregivers with necessary information and support and also promote myeloma research.

Multiple myeloma is the third most common blood cancer in Alberta, after leukemia and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. In 2012 there were 209 Albertans diagnosed with multiple myeloma. This includes 127 women and 82 men. In that year 111 Albertans died of multiple myeloma.

As Alberta's population continues to grow and age, the number of new myeloma cases is projected to increase by 60 per cent over the next 15 years. In fact, at the Cross Cancer Institute and the Tom Baker cancer centre a large number of clinical trials on multiple myeloma have led to the development of new drug combinations that successfully shrink myeloma and extend survival rates. Thanks to increased prevention and screening efforts, new treatments, technological advances, and new research, more people are being diagnosed earlier, entering treatment sooner, and living longer.

I would just like to thank all of the people who came out today to support and raise awareness of multiple myeloma.

Thank you very much.

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

Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Supports

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Volunteers are the lifeblood of Alberta's communities. There are almost 25,000 nonprofit and charitable organizations in Alberta. This sector contributes \$9.5 billion to our GDP and employs 187,000 people. These volunteers and their organizations benefit and enhance life for all Albertans. They provide opportunities for volunteerism, connectivity, and caring for others, which creates self-reliant and compassionate communities. Charities do great things with enthusiasm and donations, resulting in minimal cost to government.

I commend the spontaneous generosity of Albertans. We are the most charitable province in Canada according to the CRA, but Albertans are concerned. The policies of this government are not helping in these difficult economic times. This government is taxing charities with a carbon tax, that will harm their efforts to supply struggling Albertans with the bare necessities of life. We have asked time and again for this government to exempt charities from this tax. We need to reduce costs on our nonprofits instead of increasing them.

As time goes on, it begins to appear that this government is against charities. Charities are saying that regulations are stifling their attempts to help vulnerable Albertans. When charities jump through all the regulatory hoops, bureaucrats create more blockades in the form of judgemental, subjective decisions on what charities can and cannot do. We need to create policies that help instead of those that harm.

Charities receive some funding by volunteering at casinos. In the north, with only one casino, the charity rotation is twice as long as

anywhere else in Alberta, which means half as much funding. Such disadvantage only adds to the loss of service and decline of community viability.

I call on all members to support our nonprofit, volunteer ventures through public policy and private participation.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Peace River.

Aboriginal Veterans Day

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my privilege to rise today to honour Aboriginal Veterans Day. It is difficult to know exactly how many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit people served in the two world wars and Korea, but indigenous people are believed to have had one of the highest rates of wartime participation in this country.

1:50

Many aboriginal veterans reside in my own constituency of Peace River. Canada's aboriginal volunteers often overcame cultural challenges and made impressive sacrifices to help our country restore world peace. Although many were awarded medals for bravery, they were serving a country that often discriminated against them. Equals on the battlefield were not always considered equals after the battle, and many indigenous veterans did not receive the same benefits other veterans were accorded, something the federal government apologized for in 2000.

Aboriginal Veterans Day, which began in Manitoba in 1994 with a private member's bill, is a day to celebrate the heroism and valour of indigenous members of the Canadian armed forces. It gives us a chance to honour remarkable individuals like Henry Louis Norwest, the Métis marksman from Fort Saskatchewan who set a sniping record during the First World War; or Charles "Checker" Tompkins from Grouard, who translated messages in and out of Cree to fool enemy forces during the Second World War; 300 men from Lac Ste. Anne who signed up to serve in World War II; Robert Berard, who always led by example, not only laying mines during that same war but by taking the lead as an 83-year-old veteran to raise funds for a memorial plaque honouring the aboriginal veterans of Alberta that was erected in 2004 in front of this Legislature Building next to the fountains.

Aboriginal Veterans Day also recognizes the everyday contributions, sacrifices, and accomplishments of these veterans and their families, who to this day continue to serve this country with honour. Aboriginal Canadians have demonstrated time and time again their great service and sacrifice for our country through their participation in Canada's military, particularly during times of conflict. In this season of remembrance we must never forget that.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

AISH Administration

Mr. Jean: There is nothing compassionate about a cold, centralized government that's more interested in paperwork than in taking care of Alberta's most vulnerable, but that's exactly what the Auditor General found yesterday in a scathing report into funding for those living with disabilities. He found a system that just doesn't care, that is clogged with red tape, leaving people waiting 200 days for benefits, a system that often doesn't even speed up for those facing terminal conditions, and he found a total lack of oversight from this

minister. How is the Premier going to hold her minister accountable for this?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much to the member for the question. I share his concern about the speed of access to AISH services for Albertans who are eligible for those services. It's something, actually, that has been a long-standing issue for me, and that's why one of the things that we can say is that the minister has already directed his staff to look into ways to streamline and to speed up the application process for the AISH system. Now, that's not the only thing to do. We know that more needs to be done, and we'll be looking at ways to improve the system for all eligible Albertans.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Jean: In 2013 this Premier released damaging documents that she obtained which proved that under the PCs, the former government, wait times for eligibility status increased to 23 weeks, but now things have even gotten worse. Application processes are overly complicated, bureaucratic, and difficult to fill out for some of Alberta's most vulnerable. This is not compassion. This is a total failure of the previous and this current government to reform a broken system. Applicants are now waiting up to 24 weeks. Why hasn't this government done anything to improve Alberta's system?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, as I just said, the minister has already directed staff to come up with a program to simplify and streamline the application process. I would also go further to say that we have not done nothing. Quite the opposite. We've increased funding to AISH by roughly \$30 million. Generally speaking, with the disability community the minister has been working very hard on getting rid of the SIS evaluation, which was a big irritant, and also coming to resolution with respect to the accommodation standards. As well, we know that we have stabilized funding for that ministry as a whole, and the member opposite needs to remember that we would not have a stabilized situation in that ministry if we went ahead with the \$2 billion drop in operating . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Jean:

I could go on forever about how we . . . discriminate against the people with disabilities . . . because the very system we set up to establish their eligibility discriminates against people whose capacity to navigate that system is impaired by [their] condition.

That was this Premier speaking in this House in 2014, two years ago, so she knows the problem. It's the exact same system that she has failed to change, and her minister, according to the Auditor General, has no idea how to fix it. This is not compassionate. Why has the Premier done nothing in the last 18 months to fix our problem system?

Ms Notley: Well, again, Mr. Speaker, I think I just outlined a number of things that our minister and our government have done in order to stabilize the system and to slowly get improvements in the system, because I absolutely reject what the member opposite has just said.

That being said, though, I think I just need to reinforce the previous point I made. One thing that the member opposite cannot suggest is that taking \$2 billion a year out of operating expenses will do anything to reach the objectives he claims he wants to achieve, because it won't, Mr. Speaker. We care very much about

disabled Albertans. We will continue to work to improve the system.

The Speaker: The hon. leader.

Electricity Supply

Mr. Jean: This government's ideological push to eliminate Alberta's coal industry comes at a tremendous cost. Thousands of Alberta jobs will disappear, entire communities will absolutely vanish, and billions will be paid out to compensate power producers for their stranded assets. On top of all this, Albertans will have to pay – get this – to import electricity from British Columbia. Can the Premier explain to this House and to all Albertans just how much wealth she plans to transfer to B.C. in exchange for Alberta to be able to keep its lights on?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, it must be, you know, that in honour of the election down south the member opposite is engaging in a higher level of hyperbole than usual. Nonetheless, that is what it is.

To be clear, Alberta already imports electricity from B.C., Mr. Speaker, so to suggest that that's somehow a new thing is somewhat misleading. What we are doing is working carefully with communities, and we'll be working with impacted workers to ensure a just transition as we move off coal to a cleaner renewable energy fuel, which will be better for all Albertans going forward.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Jean: There's nothing funny about Albertans' hard-earned tax dollars.

Albertans have just shelled out \$17 billion to pay for the transmission line overbuild authorized by the former PC government. It was an enormous, unnecessary expense, and taxpayers know that, and now the NDP is about to send more good money after bad. Instead of relying on Alberta's inexpensive natural gas system, the NDP's decision to import electricity from B.C. would mean that a new transmission line will have to be built. Can the Premier say unequivocally that Albertans will not pick up any of the billion-dollar price tag for this new electricity infrastructure?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, what I can say is that Albertans know that it is long past time for this province to get off coal as its primary source of electricity. It is time for us to move forward with our climate leadership plan, not only because it helps us with respect to social licence in other jurisdictions but also because it is better for the health of individuals and for the health of our environment. So we will do that, and in the long term it will pay off both economically as well as environmentally.

Mr. Jean: The Premier is giving away the farm so that we can import electricity from British Columbia over power lines that Albertans actually have to pay for.

It gets worse. This week the Trudeau government confirmed plans to ban tanker traffic off B.C.'s north coast. Goodbye Northern Gateway. A Wildrose motion to oppose the tanker ban and support pipelines in all directions was passed unanimously in this House, but the Premier has been silent on it. Can the Premier please explain why her multibillion-dollar plan to buy social licence for pipeline has only bought a licence to import power from British Columbia instead?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, I think that the member may well be just speaking a little bit prematurely. But let me just say, generally

speaking, that I'm very pleased about the announcement that was made yesterday by the federal government with respect to marine safety. I think that the federal government is making great progress with respect to meeting a number of the conditions that the government of B.C. had outlined with respect to ensuring safety on their west coast, so I'm pleased by that. I hope that as we all continue to work together to make sure that we protect the environment while still building our economic infrastructure, ultimately we'll get to success on the economic infrastructure as well.

The Speaker: Thank you.

AISH Administration
(continued)

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Auditor General released a shocking report on the state of Alberta's assured income for the severely handicapped, or AISH. This report reveals serious issues with almost every facet of this program. Problems with appeal decisions, application forms, assessments, communication of denials, monitoring, prescreening, timelines, and transparency are just a few of the problems revealed in the AG's report. Can the Premier tell us: how has this been allowed to happen under her watch?

2:00

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I said, first of all, to ensure that these things work on time, you need to have staff there, and one of the things that ensures you still have staff there is continuing to fund the ministry. Of course, we increased and stabilized the funding for that particular ministry by 2 per cent this year, quite a bit different than what was proposed by the members opposite. In addition, we increased funding to AISH by \$30 million. We have made progress with both getting rid of SIS and moving forward on the accommodation guidelines, and we are now in the process of reviewing mechanisms to streamline the application process, as I've already indicated to the member opposite.

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

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. That's interesting because in addition to basic accessibility, the AG's report also highlights serious concerns surrounding eligibility. According to the report bureaucrats within AISH are given insufficient guidelines for making funding decisions. They're also provided insufficient training, and as a result of this they're making inconsistent decisions. Apparently, it really depends on which day of the week a loved one fills out the AISH application as to whether they're going to be approved or denied. What immediate action will this Premier take to address the inconsistencies of the funding process?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the minister has already indicated, prior to the report coming out, he'd already directed staff to look at ways to streamline and improve the application process. In addition, we will look further at the recommendations made by the Auditor General, and we will implement all of them. We will move quickly on this because this is a matter we care a great deal about. To be clear, when we say that

we care about it, we also match that with a plan to not cut \$2 billion out of the annual spending of the government.

Mrs. Pitt: Mr. Speaker, on June 3 the Minister of Human Services bragged in this House about the improvement to AISH wait times, yet from this AG report, which uses data up to July of this year, it is clear that this is not the case, that wait times are actually increasing. Furthermore, the AG's report states that "the department does not [even] know what it needs to change to improve the program." No clue. Can the Premier explain how she will ensure that vulnerable Albertans don't have to wait 200 days to receive AISH supports?

Ms Notley: Again, Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, this is an issue about which I care greatly. As I've said before, we've been working on trying to improve the performance in this area and to streamline the process to ensure that we get better outcomes. The minister has asked for that work to be done. It will be done, and I look forward to reporting on the improvements to this House.

The Speaker: Thank you.
The leader of the third party.

Coal-fired Electric Power Plant Retirement

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, yesterday this NDP Premier, when asked about her government's faster coal phase-out, instead referred to the policy before she made things worse for Alberta coal communities. At a press conference the NDP blamed low oil prices and the struggling economy for their absolute failure to create jobs. They continue to point the finger at everyone but themselves. Alberta's coal communities know better. The Premier admitted yesterday in this House to not talking to communities and to hiding the Boston report from them and the families whose livelihoods hang in the balance. To the Premier: will you now hit the brakes on your accelerated plan and stick to the federal timeline for coal phase-out and stop killing Alberta jobs?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to certainly correct one thing that was part of the member's question yesterday. I have been advised that the minister's office has been in regular contact with all the affected mayors that were referenced in the previous question, so you might want to check your facts on that one.

That being said, we are working diligently with both the coal companies as well as the coal communities to put together both a package so that we're not leaving capital stranded and, in the meantime, to work on a just transition, something that is long overdue in this province.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. McIver: Well, the Premier's call to the mayor of Hanna is like that unicorn: just didn't happen, Mr. Speaker.

Only one member of the advisory panel on coal communities is from Alberta. The lawyer hired for the PPAs is from British Columbia. Since the government doesn't know any good Alberta lawyers for the job and can only find one qualified Alberta coal expert to get advice from, including the people in the communities your policy will kill, this shows your disdain for the skills and abilities of Albertans. Mr. Speaker, to the Premier: with so little faith in the knowledge and skills of Albertans, how can you possibly be trusted to defend their interests?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Generally speaking, as we move forward on these projects, we look for people who have experience with the same kind of matters that are being dealt with. Now, it is true; we have not ever in Alberta phased out coal. Quite the opposite. Anyway, where was I? We burn 60 per cent of the coal for all of Canada because these folks could never get it together to find a way to move towards a more renewable, more sustainable energy sector. So what we need to do is look outwards for people who have dealt with this.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. McIver: There you have it. The Premier just said that qualified people in Alberta, like the unicorn, don't exist. We just heard it.

We know that coal jobs are the long-term mortgage-paying jobs for Alberta families. We know that oil and gas jobs pay the mortgage for Alberta families. Mr. Speaker, we know that installations of windmills and solar panels are short-term construction jobs, with few long-term mortgage-paying jobs attached to them after the fact. Since the NDP world view hampers or eliminates the industries with jobs paying Alberta mortgages today, please, Premier, on what basis do you call your so-called jobs plan just that . . .

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

Ms Notley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, as the member outlined previously and as he knows from information that's been provided in this House, in fact, our jobs plan is creating jobs. We are working very carefully on it, and we will continue to work on it. You can't create jobs by cutting billions from operating expenses. You can't create jobs by cutting \$9 billion from capital. You need to work with businesses. You need to invest in the people of Alberta. You need to provide stability when otherwise there is instability as a result of international economic conditions. That is what we are doing, and we will keep doing it.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.
Calgary-Mountain View.

AISH Administration (continued)

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. My questions today are for the Human Services minister. For many years MLAs and constituency offices have been hearing about AISH: the application process, the delays, the inconsistency in appeals. It requires too much outside help and is inconsistent and unfair. We've heard now from the Auditor General that the times actually have increased between application and decision-making. How does the minister reconcile his statement that application times have decreased and the Auditor General saying that they have increased?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. I believe that Albertans deserve to receive the supports that they need when they need them in an accessible and timely manner. We have heard the concerns from Albertans, and we are working on a plan to reduce the wait times. We also accepted all of the recommendations that the Auditor General made, and we will make sure that they are implemented, wait times are reduced, and Albertans receive the supports that they need.

Dr. Swann: Well, perhaps, Mr. Speaker, the minister could outline what he's done since he took office to improve the wait times, especially since the Auditor General said that they've actually increased.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. First, we have increased AISH funding by \$29 million to make sure that Albertans receive the supports they need. Secondly, as of yesterday we have improved the website. The new website is online, with a focus on plain language and making it easier and accessible for Albertans. I've also directed my ministry to look into ways to streamline the application process.

Dr. Swann: It all sounds very good, but it isn't improving the wait times, Mr. Speaker.

Given that the MLA salaries have kept up with the cost of living, when are we going to allow AISH people to keep up with the cost of living?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Member, for the question, and thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have increased funding for AISH, but due to our economic circumstances we can't do everything that we wish to do. We are absolutely committed to making sure that AISH recipients receive the supports that they need. It's not only the cash benefit. There are other benefits that are available with the AISH program, and we will make sure that we have stable funding to provide those benefits to all Albertans.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-North.

2:10 Apprenticeship Training Awards

Mrs. Schreiner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many students in Red Deer are receiving technical training from Red Deer College, but given that the downturn has resulted in many apprentices not being able to find work in their trade, to the Minister of Advanced Education: how are you ensuring that the government's future-ready initiative helps our province's unemployed apprentices?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to my friend from Red Deer for the question. We know that Alberta's tradespeople have been especially hit hard by the economic downturn, and that's why I was pleased to announce two weeks ago the apprenticeship training awards. This is \$1.5 million to support apprentices to complete their technical training, and I can tell the House that I was touched by the words of a gentleman who spoke at the event who will directly benefit from this award. Without this assistance he says that he wouldn't be able to continue to progress toward earning his journeyman's ticket. There's no doubt that this award is preparing Albertans for success, allowing them to continue with their skills training and helping them find better employment in the future.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mrs. Schreiner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that these services must be accessible, to the same minister: can you explain who is eligible and how apprentices can access these awards?

Mr. Schmidt: Such a perceptive question, Mr. Speaker. I'd encourage the opposition members to take some notes. The last thing that we want to do is make our students jump through hoops to receive this award. That's why we've ensured that all eligible apprentices who aren't currently working in their trade will be contacted by our department. Once their eligibility has been confirmed, they can expect a cheque in the mail covering approximately one whole period of technical training. This award will be broken up into \$1,000 awards for up to 1,500 apprentices to ensure that they're able to keep building the skills that they need in their desired field.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mrs. Schreiner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that we have seen the challenges that arise when there are not enough skilled tradespeople, to the same minister: can you speak to how this initiative supports Alberta's economic recovery?

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you to my hon. friend from Red Deer for that final question. First of all, we know that education is a cornerstone of a healthy economy, Mr. Speaker. That's why our government is working to ensure that Albertans are prepared for success, whether they're in the third grade or the third period of their technical training. This means providing a leg up to apprentices so that they're able to stick with their trade and complete their training. We're supporting Albertans to not only better their lives today by helping them become skilled trades professionals, but the apprenticeship training award is also great news for the economy as these are people who will be needed to support Alberta's economic success tomorrow.

Health Care in Central Alberta

Mr. Cooper: Mr. Speaker, last week I received a call from a constituent, Art Martin, alerting me to the fact that the cardiac stress testing and cardiac rehab programs had been cancelled at the Didsbury hospital. I am deeply concerned to learn that front-line workers have lost their jobs and that residents now will have to travel to Calgary for treatment. Worse yet, those residents will have to pay \$500 out of pocket for treatment. To the Minister of Health: why is she cutting programs and front-line workers in central Alberta?

The Speaker: The Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Our government is engaged through Alberta Health Services in a review of the programs that are being provided in order to ensure that we are providing the best health service that we can across the province based on local needs.

Thank you.

Mr. Cooper: Given that local decision-makers wanted these services to stay in Didsbury and are now concerned with forcing central Albertans to drive to Calgary for treatment, particularly heading into winter, and given that, to make matters worse, residents of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills will now be paying the bill for both gas to drive to Calgary and now to attend TotalCardiology, will the Minister of Health respect the fact that cardiac stress testing and rehab programs were working well at the Didsbury hospital and reverse this job-killing decision?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for the question. Our government is taking a province-wide approach to health spending as well as to health programs, ensuring that programs are available where they're needed based on the needs of the population. It is important for us to remember that the members opposite wanted us to cut billions of dollars from health care, which would make these situations even worse.

Mr. Cooper: Given that the cardiac stress testing and rehab programs aren't the only programs that have been cut at the Didsbury hospital and given that four ALC beds were closed just this summer, resulting in the loss of local beds and positions for front-line health care aides, will the Minister of Health provide assurances right now to the people of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills that the writing isn't on the wall and that this isn't a long, drawn-out plan to close the Didsbury hospital?

The Speaker: The Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Our government is committed to a strong public health care system that is available to Albertans when and where they need it. We are not going to make ad hoc promises like the previous government. [interjections] We are going to take a strategic approach to health care services across our province, and we are going to support health care where it's needed.

The Speaker: We were doing so well. The volume . . . [interjections]
The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Police Street Checks

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Justice has characterized street checks, which is a practice known as carding, as police just having conversations with people in the community. Well, that view alarms me. Police must have reasonable and probable grounds to suspect an individual is connected to an offence in order to stop them. Randomly asking citizens for ID, recording their personal information violates their fundamental right against arbitrary detention. It's also a form of psychological detention because they do not feel they can just walk away even though that is their right. To the minister: how many police services in Alberta card their citizens?

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

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, as the member would well know, the process of street checks or checkups can encompass a number of things. It can encompass carding. It can also encompass talking to individuals without asking for ID. The premise behind community-based policing is well known, and we will continue moving forward with that. We have been working very closely with the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police to ensure that we have guidelines in place around when someone can be asked for their ID and to ensure that everyone can be onboard with that program.

Mr. Ellis: Police must have reasonable and probable grounds.

Given that from 2011 to 2014 the Edmonton Police Service randomly stopped and documented 26,000 citizens and given that African-Canadians and indigenous people call this practice a form of racial profiling and given that last year the minister told the media that she had not acted on this issue because no one made an official complaint, again to the Justice minister: has anyone complained now, and if so, what are you doing about it?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I think I'd like to begin by pointing out that the statistics from 2011 to 2014 were when the member's party was in government. Since we've taken government, we have been working very closely with the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police to deal with this issue and to ensure that all people feel respected in Alberta. Not only do police have a need to ensure that they're able to talk to members of the community, but people have rights to ensure that they know that that's not going to be based on irrelevant factors. We're moving forward with that plan to make sure that everyone feels respected.

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

Mr. Ellis: Thank you. I was a police officer during that time, and that was not my instructions to the people that worked for me.

Given that carding violates the privacy rights of tens of thousands of Albertans and given that research shows that carding results in institutional racism at the hands of police, to the same minister: will you direct Alberta's police services to stop the unlawful practice of carding?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Well, I think the member will be aware that reasonable suspicion is grounds for detention, but in this case we're not always talking about detention. We're talking about a number of different practices, which is why we are working very carefully with the Alberta Association of Chiefs of Police to ensure that this issue is addressed so that police can attain their objective of making sure that everyone is safe while at the same time respecting the rights of all members of society.

2:20 Fire 'n' Wheels Raffle Licence

Mr. Taylor: Mr. Speaker, after eight years of successful fundraising, AGLC told Fire 'n' Wheels the shocking news that they could no longer apply for a licence to donate raffle contributions to local fire departments in the MD of Wainwright. This money has helped local fire departments purchase rapid response trucks, jaws of life, and other life-saving equipment. That's been done for years. To the minister: why are the heavy-handed bureaucrats standing in the way of local charities who are just trying to support firefighters?

The Speaker: The Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much for the question. You know, whenever a charity has an issue with regard to how they're wanting to expend their dollars, they do talk to AGLC officials, and there's usually a clarification of things that go on. So I would encourage Fire 'n' Wheels to connect with the AGLC representatives if they haven't done that. If they have done it already, circle back again, and I'll also do that.

Mr. Taylor: I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker, there was no real clarification to them.

As a volunteer firefighter I know the long hours these men and women commit to making our communities safe. Given that the government had the nerve to tell Fire 'n' Wheels that departments, not charities, should do their own fundraising and given that it's not always realistic, considering that these men and women have full-time jobs and young families, will the minister demonstrate some

common sense and commit to allowing charities to continue fundraising on behalf of firefighters?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much. You know, there are hundreds and hundreds, probably thousands, of charities in this province that raise money and are connected through either casinos or other ways, raffles like you said. The fact that AGLC is connected to all of them and it works all of the time, perhaps not in this case, means that AGLC is doing a stellar job, and I support them for it. But I'm certainly interested. If you have the information, please provide it to me.

Mr. Taylor: Well, thank you for that.

Given that we recognize the important role that firefighters play in communities across Alberta and given that Fire 'n' Wheels is facing an onslaught of red tape that is preventing them from acquiring the same raffle licence that they've obtained for the past eight years, will the minister commit to sitting down with me – and it sounded like you were saying that you might – and helping Fire 'n' Wheels obtain a raffle licence and cutting the red tape that's preventing the charity from purchasing new life-saving equipment for Alberta firefighters?

Mr. Ceci: Well, what I will say, Mr. Speaker, is that I'm always interested in supporting the charitable community and the work that they want to do in Alberta, as is this side. We are connected to charities. We are connected to serving Albertans. That side is backward looking. I'll sit down with that individual and Fire 'n' Wheels and check into this.

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

PDD Service Delivery

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Human Services. PDD service providers across this province are very concerned about the new template contracts, especially given the multitude of changes to the system. Providers need to be assured that community-based organizations with long-standing service to their community are not in jeopardy. Will the minister respect the strong community-based relationships of PDD service providers and work with them to create mutually acceptable contracts?

The Speaker: The Minister of Human Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. We are working with the Alberta Council of Disability Services, service providers, guardians, and Albertans who are receiving PDD supports to make sure that whatever step we take is in consultation with that group. We have demonstrated that by conducting a consultation on standard 8 and by eliminating the SIS, and I will continue to do that.

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

Mr. Orr: Thank you. Given that many opponents to the new contracting process are worried that it undermines service quality and destroys community-based service capacity and development that leads to stronger communities and given that other service agencies such as women's shelters, family-managed services, and some aspects of children's services have already been exempted, does the minister have plans to exempt PDD-funded service providers from the new procurement model?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. Everyone deserves to receive the supports they need in a way that respects their dignity. I want to make it very clear that we have no plan of putting PDD services up for bid or auction. That's not the plan. Clients will have the choice of who they want to receive services from. We will work with the client and the service providers to make sure that Albertans get the supports they need.

Mr. Orr: Given that when we are talking about these organizations, we're talking about people on the front lines providing care to those with developmental disabilities and given that this government has mandated minimum wage and carbon tax increases that impact service providers yet has no plan for how they will deal with the resulting economic impact, what is this government's plan to deal with the consequences of their ideological policies in a way that doesn't force a reduction of services?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. Our government believes that all Albertans working full-time should not have to live in poverty. They should be able to put food on their table. They should have shelter. If that's ideology, we are sticking to that ideology. Having said that, we will work with service providers to make sure that the impact of the minimum wage is accounted for and that Albertans receive the services they deserve.

Thank you.

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

Indigenous Youth Suicide Report Recommendations

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Six months ago the office of the Child and Youth Advocate released *Toward a Better Tomorrow*. This report looked at seven indigenous youth suicides and offered recommendations on what the government could do to strengthen its support for indigenous children and their families in order to prevent tragic deaths like these in the future. The report made 12 recommendations for government to address the issues and move forward with our indigenous communities. To the Minister of Human Services: could you please, sir, update us on how many of the 12 recommendations have actually been implemented by your government to this point?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Human Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. Our government is very concerned by the incidents of suicide in indigenous communities, and we are committed to working closely within the government with indigenous leaders and community partners and the federal government to make sure that we have supports and safeguards in place for indigenous communities. My ministry is leading the co-ordination of the implementation of those 12 recommendations along with other partners in the GOA: Education, Health, Indigenous Relations, and Alberta Health Services.

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Minister. The indigenous communities are looking for a number, hopefully towards 12.

Given that within this report number 8 dictates, "The Government of Alberta should ensure that mental health programs are more accessible, holistic and readily available in First Nations communities" and given

that without a thorough and collaborative response this issue will get worse before it gets better, to the Minister of Indigenous Relations: could you please update this House and all Albertans on the specific initiatives that your ministry is undertaking? And, please, sir, what metrics are you utilizing to measure any and all successes?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. As I mentioned, Human Services is co-ordinating the government response and working closely with Education, Health, Indigenous Relations, and Alberta Health Services. Mental health, certainly, is part of that. The work is under way on three initiatives. We are in the process of developing a youth suicide prevention strategy, we are also funding research on indigenous youth suicide, and we are also in the process of developing a cultural understanding framework. So there is work under way. We want to assure Albertans that . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

2:30

Mr. Rodney: I was looking for a response from the Indigenous Relations minister, but let's try number 3. Given that mental health is an extremely complicated issue, which, fortunately, is beginning to be discussed publicly, and given that youth who are suffering psychologically may not be comfortable or open when speaking with parents and caregivers and given that the same report noted in recommendation 6 that "Alberta Education should develop and implement school-based suicide prevention programs," to the Minister of Education: are programs like these actually being developed by your ministry, sir, and if so, what are the estimated implementation dates? Because every day it could be another . . .

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. Certainly, we recognize as a government the importance of having a comprehensive mental health strategy, that I'm working on in conjunction with the ministries of Health and Human Services and Indigenous Relations. We have been working very closely with school boards and also ministry-wide to develop mental health strategies that can be implemented both into the curriculum and into support services that we have at each school. Certainly, this is an important issue.

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

New School Construction

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that the student population in this province continues to grow and that we will need new and modern schools to make sure that they are ready for success. To the Minister of Education: can you provide us an update on school capital projects, including how many new schools have opened this fall?

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. In these past eight weeks we saw 32 new schools and modernizations completed. Many people, including members opposite, were invited to these openings. It's been a grand occasion for all. These schools benefit about 22,000 students, and we expect another 17 projects to be completed by the end of the

year. We worked very hard to find efficiencies in the process to ensure that these schools were started and finished on time, and I'm very proud . . .

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

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the changing needs that students and schools face, to the same minister: could you please share some of the design features of these new schools that opened in the fall?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Yes. Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker and for the question. I've had an opportunity to go to about a dozen of these openings, and certainly we can see the employment of very innovative design features as well as accommodation for programming. For example, Nelson Mandela school in northeast Calgary has an aviation program and a very open design, flexible classroom space which allows for team teaching and so forth. At Pembina North community school I saw a fantastic commercial-quality kitchen, a learning commons at Nellie Carlson. We're seeing innovation to build schools that are not just schools . . .

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

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that schools are required to meet population needs, to the same minister: what steps are actually being taken to ensure that all future schools will open on time?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we've been endeavouring to bring up those schedules. We found that there were some building and budgetary problems that were getting in the way, so we have put \$1.9 billion into school projects in Budget 2016. We initiated a detailed monthly reporting risk analysis and a pay-as-you-go plan to cut down costs. I can tell you that schools are coming in much lower than the tenders that we expected. We've saved millions of dollars in this endeavour, and we've brought up the completion dates to many more schools being on time.

Calgary LRT Green Line Funding

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, for some time Wildrose has supported the construction of LRT in Calgary. The former federal government committed 1 and a half billion dollars towards this green line project, but the NDP government has made no commitment to the project. The money is not needed right now and can be spread out over a period of time, so why won't the Premier commit to helping fund Calgary's green line LRT?

The Speaker: The Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Well, certainly, we've had a number of meetings with the mayor with respect to this matter. We know that the council is very interested in it, but they are continuing to look at that and to refine costs. I am planning to travel down and have a briefing with Calgary transportation officials in the next week or two. We're going to do our very best. It's a very expensive project, but we're going to do our best to help the city of Calgary with that project.

Mr. Panda: Mr. Speaker, given the city of Calgary formally applied for government funding for the green line LRT in January 2016, with a deadline of needing to know by the end of October 2016, and given that the city of Calgary will have to split the project into phases without partners providing stable, predictable funding, can the Premier give a clear answer to the city of Calgary? Yes or no?

The Speaker: The Minister of Transportation and of Infrastructure.

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Eventually we will do that, but the city of Calgary is still in the process of refining costs, and there's a lot of work to do jointly between Transportation officials and officials in the city of Calgary as well as politically between myself and the mayor. I want the member to know that we're going to get to a clear answer, but I'm certainly not going to give it to him right now. That's something we're discussing with the city of Calgary.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Minister. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the constituencies of Calgary-Buffalo, Calgary-Klein, Calgary-Mountain View, Calgary-Northern Hills, and Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill stand to benefit from the green line and whereas the constituencies of Calgary-Fort, Calgary-Acadia, Calgary-Hays, and Calgary-South East would also benefit from the green line LRT construction, to the minister: you have administered Mayor Nenshi's funding commitment deadline, so what's the answer to Calgary? I'm asking one more time. Yes or no?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I've given him my answer, and I'm not going to change that, only suggest, however, that the Wildrose Party in their platform promised to reduce capital spending over five years by \$9 billion. If they get into power, God forbid, there will be no green line.

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

Forest Industry Issues

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The forest industry is one of Alberta's strongest industries and could lead the province in diversification along with the agricultural industry, but as with what happened in the energy industry, uncertainty will drive investment out of the province, uncertainty in timber supply and uncertainty in the market, because the softwood lumber agreement has ended. To the minister: given that the government is planning on increasing the cutblock retention from 5 per cent to 10 per cent, how will the government assure certainty in the forest companies' timber supply?

The Speaker: The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I will thank the member for the question. Our government very much supports the forestry sector here in Alberta. In fact, as we speak, the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry is in Asia with a number of forestry and agricultural companies looking at opportunities to increase our exports and our capacity to export to other markets. I look forward to talking a little bit about the state of the softwood lumber agreement in the next response.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the forestry industry is dependent upon their timber allocations to maintain strong businesses and given that they operate on an expected size of timber allocation, to the minister: with your latest plan to restore caribou habitat in Little Smoky and A La Peche, will your protection plans for caribou rangelands result in decreased timber supply and uncertainty for Alberta's forest industry?

The Speaker: The Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member for the question. Certainly, Alberta must move forward with a range plan by October 2017, so that's why we're taking the time to get it right. We have put forward a draft, and I emphasize that word "draft." We are going to be speaking further once we are out of the duties of this House and go and speak to communities about that draft. But the fact of the matter remains that if we do not have a range plan filed by October of next year, one will be imposed on us by the federal government, and that is simply not a situation that is good for Albertans.

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

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Not much certainty in the first two questions.

Given the predicament with the mountain pine beetle destroying the same timber supplies, the lichen that caribou eats and given that both these could decrease timber supplies, to the minister: what are you doing to make sure that your healthy pine strategy does not affect timber supply certainty for Alberta's forest producers?

2:40

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We certainly know that mountain pine beetles remain a grave threat to the health of Alberta forests. In 2015-16 our government spent \$35 million to combat the mountain pine beetle, and we are working to minimize the spread of beetles north and south along the eastern slopes and to prevent beetles from spreading further east in the boreal forest. The spread of the mountain pine beetle has not been as significant as we were anticipating, and this is thanks to the weather and the good work done by the ministry. We will continue to push the federal government for assistance in fighting mountain pine beetle in the Hinton area. We understand this concern. We're listening to producers, and we . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Marijuana Legalization

Ms Goehring: Mr. Speaker, given that the federal government has committed to legalizing marijuana and given that this will impact various areas of our communities, to the Minister of Justice, who recently travelled to Colorado to learn about the issue: how will the government tackle the issue of selling edibles and candies that contain marijuana?

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the very important question. I want to begin by thanking officials in Colorado for sharing their knowledge in terms of what they've learned from the legalization of marijuana.

Our priority continues to be the safety of children and of our roads. This will require us to move forward very carefully, ensuring that there is strict monitoring of ingredients that go into edible products so that people know exactly what they're getting and regulation around packaging and design as well as childproofing and the shape that candies can be in.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Denver has seen a spike in the number of marijuana-impaired driving cases, to the same minister: what is the government doing to ensure roads are kept safe when marijuana is legalized?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. Road safety is critical at all times and particularly in light of the legalization of marijuana that's coming. Despite the fact that Colorado has seen a significant increase in marijuana-impaired driving, those cases are still a very small percentage of the overall impaired driving cases that they're witnessing in that state. I think all Albertans need to keep in mind that driving while impaired by any drug is dangerous and illegal.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister: how is the government addressing concerns over where marijuana dispensaries would be located once it is legalized?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, one of the critical factors as we move forward on this plan is ensuring that our children are safe. We will be working with all levels of government to ensure that the right regulation is in place to ensure that this is kept away from schools. Depending on how the federal government ultimately decides to move on this issue, we will step in, and we will work with all levels of government to ensure that children are kept safe.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. members.

I understand that the Government House Leader has a supplemental piece of information.

Capital Infrastructure Funding

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Yes. I want to supplement my response from yesterday to the Member for Calgary-Greenway. We're creating 8,000 jobs this year from enhanced infrastructure investment. Under our government funding has increased by approximately 15 per cent, several major projects, including the \$80 million Gaetz-QE II interchange project in Red Deer, which will support 300 jobs; the University of Lethbridge destination project, which we are accelerating and providing increased funding for; postsecondary facilities like NorQuest, which had seen capital spending cut by the previous government by \$16 million. This employs 170 workers per month.

We've also doubled what was spent on capital maintenance and renewal by the previous government, going from . . .*

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. McIver: I appreciate the answer, the additional information, Mr. Speaker, from the hon. minister. But he mentioned just now

*See page 1724, left column, paragraph 2

about doubling the expenditure on capital maintenance. On the average condition of the infrastructure will you have higher or lower percentages of good and poor infrastructure after you do that capital spending?

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much for that question, hon. member. We've seen, in fact, a deterioration in the quality of many roads in the province as a result of the previous government reducing expenditures on capital maintenance, and it's very much a challenge. Alberta has more kilometres of roads than any other province. In fact, the previous government took in secondary roads from rural municipalities, so we have more roads to deal with. I'm not sure that even this will fully restore that, but we're doing our very best, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Members' Statements

(continued)

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

Government Policies

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The generally accepted definition of a recession is two consecutive quarters of economic decline, and no one disputes that Alberta is in one of the worst recessions since the 1980s. Over the past 12 months well over 100,000 full-time jobs have been lost. That number increases drastically when you include contractors. Getting Albertans back to work shouldn't be a priority; it should be the priority. Yet, inexplicably, Alberta does not even have a comprehensive job plan despite repeated efforts by the opposition to get the government to adopt our recommendations.

Just what has this government been doing over the last year? Well, the NDP has continued to appoint party insiders to nonpartisan posts. It has been engaged in cash-for-access fundraisers in Ontario. Just this fall they spent 20,000 taxpayer dollars on a partisan, invite-only, campaign-style event. More than that, last week this government was held in contempt of the Legislature for spending a half million dollars on a taxpayer-funded advertisement. After ramming Bill 6 through the Legislature and blocking a study of the carbon tax on farmers, the NDP has seen fit to dispatch the agriculture minister on a series of international junkets. While health care wait-lists and rural ambulance wait times continue to grow, this government is actively implementing policies that make health care more expensive at the behest of their union friends, all the while voting down a motion to bring greater transparency and clarity to AHS.

This is my favourite, Mr. Speaker. Over the summer the NDP committee announced their intentions to require direct, political-party funding from taxpayers. That's right. NDP MLAs spent the summer fighting to line their campaign pockets with taxpayer money in the form of reimbursed campaign expenses.

I know Wildrose will be debating hard to help get Albertans back to work, but when it comes to the definition of self-serving government, Mr. Speaker, clearly there is no debate.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The Minister of Service Alberta and Minister of Status of Women.

Bill 29

Vital Statistics and Life Events Modernization Act

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to introduce Bill 29, the Vital Statistics and Life Events Modernization Act.

Vital statistics services are essential. There are over 60 amendments proposed in this legislation, the response to Albertans' expectations for modern services and an inclusive, compassionate approach to major life events.

I urge all members of this House to support this legislation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 29 read a first time]

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

Bill 30

Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm honoured to rise today and request leave to introduce Bill 30, the Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act. This being a money bill, Her Honour the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of the bill, recommends the same to the Assembly.

This bill will enable government to establish two tax credits that, taken together, will drive innovation, diversify our economy, and create jobs. One credit will bring Alberta investors and small businesses together while the other will help ensure that Alberta is attractive and competitive for larger capital investments. By encouraging investment in new products and services and capital projects, the tax credits will offer increased opportunities for more economic activity, diversification, and employment growth. Introducing these measures at a time when businesses are facing challenges will make Alberta more competitive in attracting and retaining investments while creating much-needed jobs. Together these tax credits provide significant support to Alberta businesses when they need it most.

This legislation will ensure that the government continues to promote economic diversification, support employers and entrepreneurs in creating jobs, and encourage investment in this province.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 30 read a first time]

2:50 Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm rising today to table five copies of a January 15 article from *Maclean's* titled Stephen Harper: Oil's Worst Enemy, that I quoted in my Bill 25 speech on November 7, 2016. This article quotes many industry executives who see the value of having a price on carbon while arguing that the Harper federal government sent Canada down the wrong path when it came to providing environmental leadership.

The Speaker: The Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the requisite five copies of the Alberta jobs plan report. This report provides an update on some of the key economic initiatives and outcomes that have been achieved by our government as part of the Alberta jobs plan to date.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Any other tablings or returns, hon. members?

Hon. members, I'd like to table for the information of members a copy of a letter I received from the Government House Leader at 12:56 p.m. today in connection with the purported question of privilege that was argued yesterday in the Assembly.

Privilege

The Speaker: Hon. members, I am prepared to rule on the purported question of privilege that was argued yesterday. Before I deliver my ruling, I want to alert members that although I did receive a statement from the Government House Leader shortly before the Assembly reconvened this afternoon, there was no new information nor additional citations offered, and I want to assure members that that information played no part in my ruling.

On November 3 the House leader for the third party raised a purported question of privilege in regard to comments made by the Minister of Environment and Parks describing the government's renewable electricity program prior to the introduction of Bill 27 in this Assembly. Having heard the arguments with respect to this purported question of privilege and having carefully considered all of the information, I'm now prepared to make my ruling.

To begin, members will recall that the House leader of the third party raised this question immediately following the introduction of Bill 27, on November 3, which can be found on page 1701 of *Alberta Hansard*. No objection was made to this approach; however, I would note that it is normally provided in writing at least two hours prior to the opening of the afternoon sitting pursuant to Standing Order 15(2). This would have provided notice to all caucuses before the issue was discussed in the Assembly.

However, I also note that the House leader for the third party tabled three documents related to his purported question of privilege, which are marked as follows: Sessional Paper 331/2016, which is a printout of a government of Alberta website detailing the renewable electricity program; Sessional Paper 332/2016, which is a government news release entitled Renewable Electricity Plan to Create Jobs, Spur Investment; and Sessional Paper 333/2016, which consists of a CBC News article under the headline Renewable Energy Program to Add 5,000 Megawatts of Capacity by 2030, Says Environment Minister.

The House leader of the Official Opposition also tabled two similar documents, marked as sessional papers 326/2016 and 327/2016.

Based on the documents tabled in this Assembly and the arguments presented from all sides, I understand the relevant facts of this matter to be as follows. Bill 27 appeared on notice in the Order Paper on November 2, 2016. The bill was not introduced in this Assembly until the afternoon of November 3, 2016. In the period between the bill being put on notice and when it was introduced in the Assembly, the Minister for Environment and Parks made public statements about the government's renewable electricity program to the media and at a conference in Calgary. In addition, the government of Alberta issued a news release which also detailed the program.

As I understand it, the central argument raised by the House leader for the third party is that the work of the members of this Assembly was impeded as a result. It was impeded because information about Bill 27 was disclosed publicly by the Minister of Environment and Parks as well as in the government news release while the bill was still on notice but prior to first reading.

The House leader for the Official Opposition further argued that public statements made by the minister discussing the ability of ISO, the Independent System Operator, to deliver programs that

were contingent on elements contained in Bill 27 presupposed decisions of this Assembly.

I would characterize the purported questions as twofold. Were members obstructed from carrying out their duties as a result of the statements made by the hon. minister and contained in the government communications? And did such statements offend the dignity of this Assembly? I want to clarify that the question being raised is probably termed more appropriately a question of contempt rather than a question of privilege although I'm advised that they are treated in much the same way.

You may recall my ruling on November 1, 2016. The Assembly "claims the right to punish, as a contempt, any action which, though not a breach of a specific privilege, tends to obstruct or impede the [Assembly or its members] in the performance of its functions" or which offends the dignity of this Assembly. You will find a further elaboration of this principle in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, page 82. I can tell you, hon. members, that I have read that document many times.

Speaker Zwozdesky addressed a similar question of contempt in his ruling of October 31, 2013, which you will find at page 2655 of *Alberta Hansard* for that day. In that case a concern was raised about information that was released about a bill that was on notice prior to its introduction in the Assembly as well as a related government advertisement. In coming to this decision, Speaker Zwozdesky noted the crucial difference between providing the text of a bill or detailed comments to the media or any other outside entity prior to its introduction in this Assembly and a minister making general statements about a policy initiative contained in a bill. There should be no question that all members are entitled to see proposed legislation in its final form before a bill is disclosed to outside parties, the key point being "in its final form."

3:00

Not every statement about a bill that is on notice will automatically lead to and qualify as a prima facie case of contempt. This approach was also applied by Speaker Kowalski in his ruling of March 5, 2003, at page 304 of *Alberta Hansard* for that day. Speaker Kowalski applied it with respect to a government briefing provided to the media about a bill which was on notice but that had not yet been introduced. In that case Speaker Kowalski found that a departmental briefing had in fact provided detailed information concerning the bill and, therefore, constituted a prima facie case. But he went on to note that consultations on proposed legislation are not out of order, nor is the practice of sharing bills with members of the opposition before introduction.

Speaker Milliken of the House of Commons came to a similar conclusion in his ruling on November 5, 2009, which dealt with comments made by a federal minister at a press conference. In that case he noted that the federal minister had not disclosed details of the bill prior to first reading by broadly discussing policy initiatives proposed in the bill. While the House leader for the third party argued that sharing information about Bill 27 circumvented the role of this Assembly in the legislative process, no allegation was made by any member that the text of Bill 27 was provided to any outside party prior to its introduction in this Assembly.

I would also note that there is nothing that I can see in the materials tabled by the House leader for the third party or the Official Opposition leader which contains specific details of what was in Bill 27. As noted by the Government House Leader in his arguments, the government's renewable electricity program has been discussed in this Assembly and in public on numerous occasions, including policy statements made about implementing generation projects through auction.

After carefully reading Bill 27, I also note that the public comments made by the Minister of Environment and Parks as well as statements included in the government news release did not contain any details of the text of Bill 27 in its final form. The information provided by the government communicated only broad statements of policy and did not impede members of this Assembly in the discharge of their duties. I can also see no evidence in the materials which would have suggested that the government was presupposing the outcome of Bill 27 in this Assembly.

Pursuant to Standing Order 15(6) I find that there is no prima facie question of contempt with respect to this matter.

Finally, as I've noted before, a question of privilege, as I understand and continue to learn, is one of the most serious matters that can be raised in this Assembly. I again encourage members to carefully consider all of the facts of a purported breach of privilege as well as past rulings made in this Assembly before raising such issues. Let me also add, hon. members, that I want to caution the government again with respect to being more attentive to these kinds of announcements in the future.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 25 Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act

Mr. Panda moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

[Debate adjourned on the amendment November 8: Mr. Loewen speaking]

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

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Well, previously when I was speaking, I was talking about having this bill, Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, referred to committee. This cap is bad for the economy of Alberta. This cap will restrict investment in the oil sands, and it will create further uncertainty in Alberta's energy sector. This government has already done multiple things that have created uncertainty in the energy sector. This kind of uncertainty restricts investment in our province, investment that turns into jobs.

Now, by adding a cap on oil sands emissions, we'll be forced to deal with an issue down the road of what will happen to the energy companies that have purchased leases whose production would fall under this cap. We've already determined, I think, that this cap won't allow for the full development of all the leases that have been sold already. So when you have companies that in good faith purchase leases from the government and do research and development to determine when they're going to produce these leases and then they find out that now they may not have an opportunity to recover any kind of income from these leases, we find that as Albertans the government may put us in a position where we're responsible to pay back that money and any of the damages that could result from these companies not being able to do what they were promised they could do.

This is just another example of this government trying to pick winners and losers in industry, and we know the government has a very poor record of picking winners. I guess that's it. Yeah. They

have a really poor record of picking winners. The government has a pretty good record of picking losers. With this cap we will have government deciding what's best for the market instead of allowing the market to develop naturally.

When we look at this cap of 100, if I was buying – let's say I was going to my local tire shop and buying a set of used tires. The owner of the shop might just say: yeah, give me a hundred bucks. That's a nice round number. But I would hope that when government makes a decision on something so important and so big to Alberta's economy like a cap on emissions of one of our largest sectors in our economy, they would probably not just be picking numbers out of the air, a nice round number like 100, for making such an important economic decision.

Now, the government hasn't given us any information on how they chose that number. In fact, when we look at the bill, it almost looks like the government picked a number and then thought: "Oh, we didn't think about this. We didn't think about that." The first thing that happens in this bill is that we start talking about exceptions, and then we add maybe another maximum of 10 megatonnes for these other exceptions.

3:10

I don't know that we should be jumping into this quite so fast. We have a 100-megatonne cap, and we have no justification for the number, nothing at all. A hundred is a nice round number, but we're not buying a set of used tires here. This is a huge thing in our economy. When we talk about this cap, we need to realize that this cap could affect jobs for working Albertans, for families. We're already sitting here in this province with over a hundred thousand jobs lost. Again, that doesn't include contractors. It doesn't include contractors that are only working a day a month or a couple of days a month. Those contractors don't show up on the unemployment numbers. So here we have a government coming up with the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, throwing a number out there, no justification for it, at a time when Albertans are suffering, families are suffering.

Now, there have been some studies done on what the cost of this loss of production will be on Alberta's economy: \$150 billion to \$250 billion. That's an enormous amount of money. We talk about pipelines here a lot and how much of a benefit pipelines would be to the Alberta economy, to the Canadian economy. Well, that pales in comparison to the potential loss of revenue that this bill could cost Albertans.

The Speaker: The Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills under 29(2)(a).

Mr. Hanson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just have a short statement and then a question for the Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky. You know, about 20 years ago we had a new company move into our area, and they took over some existing wells and facilities up there. They came in with some new ideas, new ways of doing things. They revitalized some wells that the previous companies had given up on, and some of those wells 20 years later are still producing oil. That's innovation, and that's what we need in the province. That's what's built our province. They would have been absolutely delighted in the early '90s with \$40-a-barrel oil.

A lot of times, I remember, when they were facing layoffs in the industry and things had slowed down to a trickle when oil was \$11 a barrel, they kept on drilling, kept progressing. It was part of the way we do things up there. When you're in a steam-injection facility, you kind of have to keep rolling and hope that things get better. They did get better, and that company is now one of the biggest oil and gas producers in Canada. From humble beginnings

back in the '90s to one of the biggest oil and gas producers, and I'm very proud to have been part of that and a lot of the innovation that they brought into the oil and gas industry in our province.

Now my question for the member. That entrepreneurial pioneer spirit brought our oil industry to where it is today. How is this new cap going to affect that? I would really, really discourage any members from encouraging a bill that is going to take away innovation, new ideas. It's very easy, when you're a large operator, to get stuck in the roll of things. It takes somebody coming in there with fresh new ideas sometimes to really revitalize our industry. I'd just like the member to comment on how he thinks this bill is going to affect that entrepreneurial spirit in Alberta.

Mr. Loewen: I'd like to thank the member for the question and his comments. Yes, when you put a cap on something like the oil sands emissions, what happens is that you restrict the opportunity for other businesses to come in there because they know that if they come in and there are already producers in there that are trying to use up the limit to that cap, they won't have an opportunity to grow. So they have decide: okay, am I going to invest in something like this? This investment is huge money. We're not talking about thousands of dollars. We're talking about millions and millions of dollars that these companies would have to invest, knowing full well that they may not be able to grow their company to a point to get a good return before the other companies that are already in place have used up the cap.

Now, these small companies that this is going to restrict: those are the companies, like the member mentioned, that would like to see their innovation, their ideas used to grow their own company. By putting a cap on there, we actually cap innovation from some of these small players that would love to get into this market but can't, and the ones that are existing there will look at it and say: "Okay. What can we do now? What are we going to do? Are we going to continue investing money and trying to grow, only to be swallowed up, or are we just going to have to give up and get out of this business?"

Now, when we look at this, we want this sent to committee. We want an opportunity to hear from experts, to hear from industry, to hear from some of these smaller players. We could even listen to the oil sands advisory group, that the government set up to advise us on the oil sands. Now, we know that the government appointed a radical environmentalist, an anti-oil, antipipeline environmentalist, as a co-chair. We know there are other members that are involved with organizations like ForestEthics, that boasts about having stopped pipelines. So what have we got going . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Any other members who would like to speak to second reading of the referral amendment? The Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak in favour of referring this bill to committee. As all bills, I believe, should go through a committee process, this bill in particular, Bill 25, the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, raises many concerns for myself and the good people of Airdrie. Certainly, I and the good people of Airdrie would like to see this go to committee, where this bill can be thoroughly discussed and vetted. It can have time for the good people of Alberta to provide feedback on the implications that this will have for them.

Mr. Speaker, Bill 25 certainly sends a message to industry and possible investment that we're just not really interested – "We're good; we've got enough; we want to remain stagnant; we don't really want to bring anybody else in" – and that's certainly a concern for the people of Airdrie, the future of our children, and

what that absolutely means to them. I'm certainly raising a generation of entrepreneurs, where the sky is the limit, and when you teach your children that the sky is the limit, they can do anything they put their minds to if they work hard, if they get a good education. They can start up their own oil and gas company.

But this bill actually says to my children, to the people of Airdrie, and to the people of Alberta: "Actually, you're at your limit. That's it. That's all. Do no better because the government says that you can't." The government has decided: "That's it. We're good. Let's stay where we are."

3:20

Mr. Speaker, I have many concerns about this bill. In particular, the Alberta government put together an oil sands advisory group, chaired by radical people, people who believe and have authored the Leap Manifesto. Actually, this plays into that where it says: "Keep it in the ground. We're good. That's it. Actually, maybe go in reverse a little bit." This isn't progressive. This isn't forward thinking. This is ridiculous. This is actually in line with what Albertans feared when the NDP government signed on to the Leap Manifesto at their last AGM. It makes us shake, you know. Albertans know that. They sent a message in the last federal election, where 1 per cent thought the NDP was okay. One per cent. In saying that, I think that that in itself is actually a very good argument to send this bill to committee, where it can be discussed more thoroughly or where recommendations can be given, because 99 per cent of Alberta is not in favour of keeping it in the ground.

Alberta was created through an entrepreneurial spirit, where the sky is the limit, where you can do anything. I think that's the message that we need to send to investors. When this government wants to go about saying that they create jobs, this is actually a message that works against that. Investors do hear this message. They do see this. If this bill were to pass, I can tell you that that will go on the list of things to repeal in 2019.

Mr. Speaker, we need to send this bill to committee, again, because the oil sands advisory group, which has many controversial people connected to it, actually hasn't, from what I heard – maybe I missed it – made any recommendations yet either. So why do we have this group? Are they going to work on the back end of this bill and provide more feedback on this to actually make this thing worse in regulation? I'm not really quite sure. I don't know why we're creating oil sands advisory groups if we don't actually ask them to advise on anything. This simply doesn't make any sense. I mean, par for the course: there are multiple things with this government and their policies and their bills that just really don't make any sense. So perhaps we should send it to committee to knock out those details.

Albertans will certainly feel better. This government can feel better if they choose to pass this, what I think is a horrible piece of legislation, but maybe the due diligence would be there, and Albertans could be on their side. If this government had actually presented any arguments in favour of why a carbon tax is a good thing, that might have gone over better as well. You know, looking back, sometimes it can help you when you're trying to go forward.

The 100-megatonne cap on GHG emissions will place large costs on Canadians, not just Alberta – this is a far-reaching bill – through the constraint of future growth in oil sands development, but it will provide little in the way of avoiding actual GHG emissions. So what is the purpose there? This cap is entirely arbitrary. The government hasn't explained this number. There's, again, no argument from the government side. They have no actual good talking points on this thing. I have yet to see this.

Mr. Speaker, this bill should be referred to a committee because committees are part of the democratic process even though

sometimes the government doesn't treat them that way. This policy has the potential to constrain future oil sands production by over \$150 billion in lost value to Alberta's economy, even upwards near \$200 billion. That alone should be a place to pause, something to discuss in committee.

There's not enough room under the cap to even accommodate the leases that the government has already sold, so future investment actually stops right there. There is no more. This bill doesn't make any sense, but I'd be open to a debate or a conversation should the government ever stand up and defend their pieces of legislation.

Why would we trust that the regulations will be fair or good for our industry without proper debate? Let's do it in committee.

There are concerns about how the performance standards for GHG emissions will be crafted. Will it be by unit? By site? By company? This government does play and pick winners and losers. This bill does not answer any of these questions, Mr. Speaker.

If Alberta isn't producing the energy that the world wants, it will come from our competitors, plain and simple. Everyone else is laughing at this. Our competitors are loving the legislation that Alberta is pushing through here. We're the laughingstock of the world for the economic limits that this government keeps placing on us for arguments that they have not quite yet made.

Only a few major players have actually agreed to this cap. They might have considered that it will reduce the competition – I'm pretty sure they have – and give them a PR win without affecting any of their growth plans. So congratulations. You are now on the side of big oil, which is funny because many of you have protested big oil in the past. Environmental groups are also celebrating this decision because, of course, it keeps it in the ground, but they still want to oppose pipelines in every single direction. I was told that the carbon tax would give us a social licence on pipelines.

Mr. Fildebrandt: How did that work?

Mrs. Pitt: That was denied right after, right? It didn't help. It didn't work. So let's try again: let's further punish the people of Alberta in the NDP's effort to get a pipeline built but, in fact, stop us on both ends. This is unbelievable.

The world will need more oil – they will – and no other jurisdiction is limiting its long-term production. Nobody else is doing it. You're not leaders. This is not a forward-thinking plan. You are not being leaders here. You're making us the laughingstock of the world. People are embarrassed right now to be called Albertans because of NDP government policies.

Now, it's unclear, Mr. Speaker, how they will decide which of the current leaseholders will get to develop. It's actually interesting. Our liquor store industry is regulated. There are only a certain number of licences that are actually allowed to be in the market. It definitely caps. If you're lucky enough to be a leaseholder of a liquor store, that's just fantastic. It limits the number of liquor stores that we have in our communities. Airdrie seems to get a lot of these licences, which is interesting, and Chestermere, too. They go in the small communities. They become sort of these golden tickets, and liquor store owners will do various things to get these. I feel like this is the wrong direction to go in to regulate such an industry. There might be payout costs if they have to cancel people's leases, because somebody is going to lose here. The people of Alberta are certainly in that path.

The main decision-makers for how this is managed are the oil sands advisory group, co-chaired by the controversial Ms Berman and featuring other leftie radicals from out of this province. Why are we letting people outside of this province make decisions for people inside of this province, people who don't understand that the reason they have \$7-a-day child care is because Alberta is paying

for it? They're laughing at us because even they know that. How is it that the NDP government is the only one that doesn't understand how that works? It is absolutely shameful.

If Alberta isn't producing the energy that the world wants, you're not going to make the want or the need go away. I will still heat my house in the winter. I turn it very low when I'm not home and at nighttime.

3:30

If Alberta isn't producing the energy the world wants, it will come from our competitors, and some of them have horrible, terrible human rights records. Unbelievable. Shouldn't we stand up for that instead of impeding our own economy? These would be some of the things that we could work out in committee. We could bring in witness testimony, experts. Heck, we should bring in other countries that have actually gone back from their carbon-limit plans.

I get that you're trying to save the world. I had those hopes as a kid. My children have those.

An Hon. Member: Who killed your dreams?

Mrs. Pitt: The NDP killed my dreams, and they're killing my children's dreams, Mr. Speaker, but I won't let that happen by 2019. The people of Alberta will make sure our children have dreams and aren't limited.

It actually says in the bill: limit our oil sands emissions. It's the most ridiculous concept I've ever heard of in my entire life. I think it would perhaps be prudent for this government to encourage an innovation fund so that the players in the oil sands will continue to develop technology that is seen nowhere else in the world but right here because we develop our energy responsibly, and we should be sharing those technologies. We have and we do, but we should be encouraging those kinds of technologies, not cutting our legs from underneath us, Mr. Speaker.

I really do caution this. When I hear from my constituents that actually send me information about the green policies that other governments have done, the failed ones, I might add, they have some serious, serious, valid concerns over what Alberta is trying to do here. These people are simply trying to do better. They're trying to show their children that the sky is the limit, that if they work hard and get a good education, they can be and do anything they want. They are so concerned that they're being absolutely limited in their ability to just be better. You know what? It brings up everybody around you when you do better and you can be better. "Keeping up with the Joneses" is a phrase coined for that very reason.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

I just want to remind all members of the House, first of all, to be respectful to both sides of the House as they comment and make their observations.

I also want to remind the House that we are speaking to a referral amendment, and I would draw the House's attention particularly to 23(b)(i), where at this particular juncture of the discussions we're speaking to the referral amendment.

Is there a question under 29(2)(a)?

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was interested in the member's comments, and one thing that struck me is that she talked about the wide-ranging effects this bill could produce. It made me think. You know, she was just speaking in reference to how it affected her constituents in Airdrie. That's fair enough, for sure, but what it brought to my attention was how when we had the fire in Fort McMurray, the oil sands had to shut down for a short period of time – I think it was about two weeks if I remember rightly – and

how that actually had a noticeable effect on the Canadian GDP. It was a measurable effect. Two weeks of this industry being shut down had a big enough effect across Canada that it was measurable in the GDP. So I think we need to realize the full effects of the bills that we pass in this Legislature.

Now, we're speaking to the referral of this bill to committee. If we have a chance to view this in committee and hear different people speak to this – experts, economists – then maybe we could get a full understanding of what the effects of this bill could be. I appreciate the member striking that up in my mind as far as how the bills that we pass in this Legislature and the things that we do, what kind of effect they can have not just in Alberta, not just on our economy here in Alberta, not just with jobs here in Alberta but on the entire Canadian economy.

Now, she also brought up the point about some of the members of this committee. We talk about the Leap Manifesto and how the NDP supports the Leap Manifesto. Some of the members across say: "No, no, no. We don't believe in that. No, no, no." But these same people hire people that support the Leap Manifesto to work for Albertans. I don't know if that stands to reason, but if we had a chance to take this to committee, maybe some of these questions could be answered as far as who's making the decisions. If we sent this to committee, we might be able to listen to the oil sands advisory group's recommendations. But if the government's intention is to just pound this through in legislation and not wait for the oil sands advisory group report, then we won't have any idea what these people in this group would suggest.

The Speaker: Hon. member, you're waiting to hear some feedback from the Member for Airdrie?

Mr. Loewen: Yes. I'd love to. I'd love to, actually. Yes, I would just like to hear the member's comments on the effects and how wide-ranging this bill could be for the future of Albertans and Canadians. Then if she has any other comments to share, that would be great to hear, too.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Airdrie, do you have any comments on the referral amendment?

Mrs. Pitt: I have many comments on the referral amendment, and I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his comments and his insight. I do know that up in his riding of Grande Prairie-Smoky there are many people that are very directly related to our beautiful, wonderful energy industry. I'm sure he gets quite a bit of feedback, Mr. Speaker, from his constituents, as all of us do because I believe that there are so many, a high percentage of Albertans, that are connected to our energy industry and very much love and want to protect our energy industry. This is why this bill is of such concern. I believe that my constituents and the people of Grande Prairie-Smoky would also actually like to have some input into this, and a committee would be a wonderful place where they could provide their comments.

Thank you. I have so much more to say.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

You're speaking to the referral amendment to Bill 25? The Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Thank you. I am intending to speak to the amendment to refer this bill to committee.

If there was ever a piece of legislation that was brought here that looked like it's not only half baked but unbaked, it would be called Bill 25, the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, largely because when

you go through the bill – it isn't a long bill; it's just four pages and one paragraph on page 5 – what it effectively does is put an arbitrary emissions limit on the oil sands, 100, which really speaks to just how arbitrary it is. It doesn't say that this is a number that represents a certain amount of growth in the industry versus a certain amount of improved technology and whether all that balances off, including the growth in the world's demand for energy and how likely it is that Alberta will get there, and that this is about where we think it should settle out. You know, you would think it would actually be the result of not just math or arithmetic but a calculus formula with all these variables built into it. In fact, Mr. Speaker, it's a round number: 100.

3:40

I understand to a certain degree why the government is doing this. They said a year ago that they were going to put a cap on emissions, so now they feel obligated to live up to the people that give them money and send them volunteers for committees and stuff like that, that they have to fulfill some of the promises that they made to their NDP-world-view friends. I get that, but I guess what this House deserves and what Alberta deserves is a little more thought and a little more substance and a little more meat on the bones before you make a major policy decision.

It doesn't even consider what unintended consequences there might be, how we might get to those unintended consequences, how we might avoid them. Nothing. It's absolutely without thought. I won't criticize anybody for trying to keep their political promises. But this one, if indeed all it is is a promise kept to, you know, the NDP-world-view people that the government is trying to please – even they shouldn't be happy, Mr. Speaker, because the government hasn't shown their work. They haven't shown how they got to this number, 100. They haven't shown that there has been any work into this number. There's nothing. They just said: we said that we're going to put a limit on it, and here it is. No indication whether this will be good for Alberta long term, whether it'll be bad for Alberta long term, whether it'll be good for the world's environment, whether it'll be bad for the world's environment. Nothing. They haven't done the work.

So when I see the amendment that says, "Okay. If you're that married to putting a limit on, let's do the work first," that makes sense. The bill by itself doesn't make sense, but if we support this amendment, we could give it a chance to add some sense to it, to add those considerations against unintended negative consequences. We might even be able to work together with experts, although the Premier did say in question period today that Alberta has no experts, nobody that she trusts to do anything. Nonetheless, I think there are lots of experts in Alberta that we could actually talk to. With all due respect to the Premier, I think she was incorrect on what she said out loud, in black and white, in question period today about nobody in Alberta being up to the task of making these decisions.

I think that if we actually pulled people together, we could say to Albertans: "If we're going to put a limit on the extraction of the resources that Albertans own, not that the NDP owns but that Albertans own, we're actually going to give you a good reason for doing it. We're going to actually put some math and some reasoning behind it. These are the unintended consequences that we have thought of on your behalf, Albertans, to make sure that you don't get caught without energy, that you don't get caught without royalties that you deserve, that you don't get caught cold in the winter, that you don't get caught without enough electricity because the line between Alberta and B.C. has been cut off because of a winter storm though there was lots of energy in Alberta that the government was unable to use to keep the lights on and the heat on in the winter."

Actually, this would be really neat: if there was a plan to extract more of the resources in a more environmentally friendly way to provide more energy for more of the future and more of the world through more pipelines to more tidewater. See, that would be a plan that would actually be in line with Albertans' best interests and their higher aspirations and hopes and plans for our children and our grandchildren. That's what Albertans deserve. You know what they don't deserve? Something written on the back of a napkin. "Because it's been a year, I owe my political supporters something, so fire this up, call it legislation, and serve it up to Albertans and hope they don't notice we haven't done any work at all."

The Official Opposition is actually throwing the government a lifeline here, a chance for them with their piece of legislation to be able to say to Albertans: "Now we've done our homework. Now we actually have a reason to put a limit on this. Now we've actually thought about the future of your children and grandchildren and the jobs you have today, that we're taking away as fast as we can in every other way. This time, at least, we're going to actually think about that before we limit the jobs in the future and everything else."

For that reason, Mr. Speaker, I'll be supporting this amendment because the amendment turns out to be not just twice as good but about a hundred times as good as the bill is unamended.

The Speaker: Are there any questions of the Member for Calgary-Hays under 29(2)(a)? The Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the hon. member. I echo many of the sentiments that you brought forward.

If you don't mind, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to make a few comments before asking my question. A couple of the things that the hon. member had mentioned – and I think it deserves to be spoken about again, that we are cutting off production of the most ethically produced and ethically developed oil in the world. If anywhere should be producing more, it should be us. We are the definition of doing it right, and if we are going to produce more, it should be here. Any government that would suggest otherwise and cut this industry at the knees – I don't understand it. I don't think Albertans understand it.

I think, to some degree, that's what the hon. member was bringing up, too, that you're looking at the most ethical, environmentally regulated industry in the world, and this government is looking at stopping that. Well, what's going to happen, then? Somebody else is going to produce that. It doesn't stop other jurisdictions from doing that. That's why we keep referring to this thing called carbon leakage. That means that whatever we're not producing here, where we can watch it, where we can regulate it, where we understand what's going on, where we can check the emissions, where we can have metrics that actually show what we're capable of, is completely out of our hands.

On top of that, it's an attack on prosperity in Alberta and in Canada, straight up. The minute that Canadians start getting wind of what this government has done and the impact that that's going to have on them, not only on us, what you saw happen on the weekend with those rallies is going to be minor in comparison to when Canadians actually understand what's happening as a result of this cap.

This is about understanding what we do right here. There are a bazillion different ways that we can improve, but capping the industry is not the way to do it. There are so many other ways, and given the opportunity to go to committee, we would have opportunities, if the government so desires the opportunity, to find out what to do. Or maybe, as the hon. member mentioned, this arbitrary 100-megatonne cap is the wrong number. Wouldn't that

be incredible, to actually sit down with all of us who are vested in this, not just on behalf of our constituents but on behalf of Canada, to figure out what that number should be, if there even should be one? Because again I reiterate: we do it best here.

I highly, highly recommend that the government understand that if we are not having that production in this country, happening here, where we have the best regulations, it will go somewhere else, and let me tell you that it's not going to be done to our standards, and we have no control over how that happens.

My question to the hon. member. There are many, many questions and many things that you've brought forward with regard to the economic impact. If you could speak a little bit about, potentially, some of the emerging markets and other things that could come as a result of bringing in specialists to a committee to understand: what are the opportunities that we have going forward given the fact that we could have a discussion about whether there even should be a cap but the detriment that could happen to any emerging markets coming in and investment coming into Alberta, potentially, with this cap coming forward?

3:50

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I thank the hon. member for her question. Well, I think the answer is that we don't know the answer, and there is the problem. The government hasn't done the work, and what the amendment suggests, to send this to committee, is that we actually do the work. Extrapolating the simplest of analogies, the oil sands now produces about 66, 67 megatonnes of carbon gases, GHGs, per year. The bill says to stop it at 100, at one and a half times. What if a pipeline does get approved even while this government is here? It could happen. It could happen because of their efforts. It could happen despite their efforts. It could happen, and all of us should be hoping for it to happen. Let's just say that it does happen and that because of that, there is a draw on Alberta's energy of one and a half times what it is now, say twice what it is now. Why wouldn't there be? There are 4 million people in Alberta. There are, you know, 300 million in the U.S. They're not using all of our oil. We'll be cut off . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to stand up and speak to Bill 25, Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act, the referral motion, just to be clear. Before I get started, I'd just like to point out – and my colleague from Grande Prairie-Smoky alluded to it earlier – that, you know, there's an old saying that a leopard can't change its spots. Now, we've seen – everybody, all Albertans – the pictures, protestors that are now sitting across the aisle, photographs. We've seen the books written or edited. We've seen the involvement in the Leap Manifesto. And now Albertans are expected to believe that the entire group is on the side of the oil and gas industry, that they now wholeheartedly support pipelines. I'm here to tell you that Albertans don't believe it, not for a minute, and we don't over on this side.

Getting back to the referral motion, important legislation deserves the scrutiny of committee. Now, we found last Wednesday that there was a very important piece of legislation, the Ukrainian-Canadian Heritage Day Act, the culture act. You know, everybody agreed, "Let's push this through," and, boom, we got it done in one day. I understand it was only the fifth time in Alberta history that such a feat was accomplished. Now, that was a very, very important piece of legislation, too, so I'm not saying that every important

piece of legislation deserves to go to committee because obviously that one didn't. But anything that's as important as this, that's going to affect the future of Albertans, the future of our children, the prosperity of our province, deserves the scrutiny of a committee, deserves having people – Albertans, companies from Alberta, professionals from Alberta – with an interest in the oil and gas industry come forward and talk to us and give us their ideas.

Now, I spoke earlier about how proud I am of my part in the oil and gas industry up in northeastern Alberta and about some of the innovation that we saw. Some of the productivity that we saw up there was absolutely incredible, with the innovations that came forward. Those are the kinds of things that, you know, we threaten to stifle here without taking this to committee. There are many, many stakeholders that haven't had a chance to put forward their concerns.

An Hon. Member: Most.

Mr. Hanson: Most. You know, very few people have had a chance to speak to this.

As one of the biggest or the biggest industry in our province, innovative companies are sent all over the world to help out. They are sent over to Russia, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait – you know, they've been all over the world – to South America. We've had drillers that have gone down there to help out those countries get their industry going. We have the technology. We have the people here. We have the innovation here. A lot of stuff, you know, that's being used today in the industry was invented here. Why would we want to stifle that by putting on a cap and reducing ourselves to only a few operators? We need small companies to come in, step in with new ideas – new geologists with new ideas, new engineers with new ideas – and bring them forward.

This legislation may cause some of these companies to become less competitive in an ever-increasing and competitive global market. On this side of the House there's no secret that we've supported pipelines in every direction, and we need to make that happen. Unfortunately, we're led to believe that the current government is now suddenly supporting pipelines, but the industry doesn't believe it, and Albertans don't believe it either, and I don't think the rest of Canada believes it, to be honest with you.

Alberta has always been a land of opportunity, especially for new exploration companies, some of the most successful oil companies in Canada, and I spoke about them earlier. The company that I worked for at one time, you know, started off as a small player with some good ideas. Now it's one of the largest in Canada. It's amazing. It's an amazing story, and it needs to be told, and we should be bragging about those types of innovations and those types of companies.

Like I said, a lot of their technology has been handed out. You know, the industry is quite good at sharing technology. We've shared that technology with a lot of other places in the world. We have absolutely nothing to be ashamed of here in Alberta as far as it goes with oil and gas production. I'm not embarrassed to be an Albertan.

Specifically, I don't want to see any legislation that takes away the pioneering, explorer spirit that has made our province great. What Alberta is all about is innovation. We talked about it last Wednesday, with the new settlers that came to Canada. It was the land of opportunity. If I might, my wife's grandfather started with a nine-acre piece of land, and when he passed away, he had 32 quarter sections of land. That's a success story. That's all we're asking here, that we do not limit the success stories in our province. Let's keep it going. Why should we stop now? Let's keep going.

Many times we have stood in this House not to try and stall legislation, as is the thought on the other side, but to give Albertans the opportunity to have their input into legislation that will affect their future and their prosperity. We do not want to see all the good people that we have trained and grown here in this province moving to B.C. and Saskatchewan or other places in the world and that then, when the price of oil comes back, we're struggling again to bring skilled labour back into our market. It is just not something we want to see, so we need to do everything we can to get the oil field back on its feet, to promote drilling in our province, to get these pipelines built, and to get the prosperity back that we once had.

Right now, today, I think we're sitting at close to \$45-a-barrel oil. Like I mentioned previously, there was a time when Calgary would have been leaping for joy at \$30 a barrel, and now at \$45 a barrel suddenly we're struggling, and I don't quite understand that. I think we just need to give the oil companies the opportunity to innovate and quit trying to penalize them for what they're doing. That's why I would like to see this bill sent to committee, where we can invite stakeholders to the table, get their input on whether there is a cap needed, if other jurisdictions are doing it.

If we're going to put a cap on our own emissions and create instability by introducing carbon taxes and reduce our competitiveness – my colleague talked about carbon leakage. We at least have some control over it here. We've got good bureaucracy that oversees the oil and gas industry here. It's not just running amok. Some horror stories from down in the States, when it came to the fracking that was going on in Pennsylvania, where people in the neighbourhoods had no control over what was going on: well, that doesn't happen here in Alberta. There's a whole process to go through before you can get a licence to do that kind of stuff. You don't just pull into somebody's backyard and set up a fracking rig, right? It doesn't happen.

That's why this particular legislation and many other important pieces of legislation – this won't be the last one in this fall session that we stand up and do a referral motion on. I can guarantee you that. There's more legislation coming that we will be asking to be referred to committee. I don't think it's a stretch. I don't think Albertans will be disappointed in their government if they backtrack and decide to send this to committee. I think it would be a good thing. It would show some faith in Alberta and the companies that work for us here. I don't understand why there is such reluctance to put some of this stuff to committee, where we can deal with it properly.

4:00

Albertans have a lot to say. Our Alberta oil and gas companies are some of the best in the world. They've got some great ideas, and maybe if they had the opportunity to come and talk to a committee, they might be able to bring some of those ideas forward and educate the people that are trying to make rash decisions here.

Any members that would deny Albertans their right to have a say in legislation that will affect the future of our province may be limiting their political careers. I think that was proven again – I'll reiterate what my colleague said about the election down south. Yes, it was federal, but it sent a very good message: 1 per cent – 1 per cent – one person in a hundred actually agrees with what's going on.

I would urge all members to support this motion to refer this bill to committee, where it belongs, in the interests of Alberta, of Alberta's oil and gas industry, and of the future of our province.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, under 29(2)(a) are there any questions or comments with respect to the Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills?

Are there any other individuals who would like to speak to the referral amendment for Bill 25? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an honour to rise to speak on the referral motion for Bill 25, officially known as the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act. You know, bills can sometimes get pretty funny names when they come to this place. They're often very politically loaded terms. A more appropriate name would be the economic opportunity limitation act. We give bills names that are designed to be political. The most famous one is perhaps the Patriot Act in the United States. No one can even remember what that actually stands for. Today we have the Oil Sands Emissions Limit Act. But we are not limiting emissions; we are limiting economic opportunity here. This is all a part of the climate leadership action plan, an unfortunate and irritating acronym.

You have to wonder if this bill was written alongside the Justice minister on their trip to Colorado, Mr. Speaker, because it doesn't make any sense. It's very fuzzy, it's very hazy, it lacks details, and it's quite arbitrary.

You know, you can generally tell how proud and enthusiastic the government is about its bills by how many speakers they put up for it. Well, they are silent as church mice over there right now. I'm waiting for a few heckles on that. They're not really speaking to this because they're not proud of it. That, or they don't know how to defend it. I remember the Bill 6 debates, where we all stood up, every single member on this side of the House. The Official Opposition and the third party all stood up and spoke to it consistently and with passion, and the members opposite sat as quiet as church mice. They're quite quiet now, Mr. Speaker, either because they're not proud of this piece of legislation or they don't know how to defend it. Both are quite disturbing.

Now, this policy very much resembles a cap-and-trade policy, and we were told that the carbon tax was to be a substitute for a cap-and-trade policy. You don't have to cap emissions if you're taxing emissions. Well, we're actually getting both ends of the stick on this one, Mr. Speaker. We're going to see a huge, \$30-a-tonne provincial carbon tax imposed, and they seem very happy to accept a federal carbon tax of \$50 a tonne attached. They're very happy to have that imposed on them because they like it when Ottawa tells us what to do. This is a government whose very nature is that they like Ottawa having more control over Alberta, and they're happy to have policies imposed as long as it meets their agenda. But they're going to impose a carbon tax on Alberta and a cap on emissions at the same time. We were told – the proponents of a carbon tax always tell us: well, this is the alternative to command-and-control economics; you don't have to have a cap-and-trade system if you have this.

This is evidence, Mr. Speaker, that the carbon tax is a cash grab. It'll do nothing for emissions. The carbon tax is going to take \$3 billion out of the productive sectors of our economy right now – \$3 billion – when we're already facing a massive recession. In Brooks, Mr. Speaker, it is approaching near-Depression levels right now. The Calgary unemployment rate exceeds 10 per cent. Our unemployment rates exceed Nova Scotia's for almost the first time in our modern history as a province. Out of the \$3 billion carbon tax the government is going to turn around and take \$10 million, 0.3 per cent, and give it to farmers to put windmills on their tractors or something of that sort.

The boosters of a carbon tax have said that it'll be a market mechanism to deal with global warming instead of command-and-

control economic regulations, but this bill is proof positive that they're going to give both. We're going to get a carbon tax on the one hand, and then we're going to get command-and-control regulations on another. We are getting the worst of both worlds.

That is because every expert agrees that if a carbon tax is to do what they hope it will do and change the economic incentives of the people, it will have to be many times the price that they're proposing. The \$3 billion carbon tax at \$30 a tonne is already a huge penalty on the families and small businesses of this province, but all it's going to do is to take money away from them. It's not going to significantly alter economic behaviour. You can't take the C-Train from Brooks to Strathmore, Mr. Speaker. People have to drive. People have to heat their homes. This will not significantly change people's behaviours. Most experts agree that a carbon tax would have to be many times the price they're actually proposing.

It is just a cash grab, which is why they're also now going down the road of command-and-control economics in the form of a cap of 100 megatonnes. But where did the cap of 100 megatonnes come from, Mr. Speaker? None of them can tell us. It's a number they picked out of thin air. It is arbitrary. It is based simply on impressing UN bureaucrats and Hollywood celebrities who are concerned about the danger of chinooks.

The Environment minister will be travelling to Marrakesh to meet with the UN soon to discuss this, and it reminds me of a song from Crosby, Stills, and Nash, the *Marrakesh Express*. If you'll indulge me.

Sweeping cobwebs from the edges of my mind
Had to get away to see what we could find
Hope the days that lie ahead
Bring us back to where [we've] led
Listen not to what's been said to you
Wouldn't you know we're riding on the Marrakesh Express,
[Mr. Speaker]

Now, "Mr. Speaker" was added by Neil Young when he joined the group later on. He also had something to say about the oil sands, I believe. As the *Marrakesh Express* says, they are not listening. They are imposing arbitrary regulations on the economy of this province, arbitrary laws. Edmund Burke says, "Law and arbitrary powers are in eternal enmity."

The carbon tax and this cap are supported by big oil but not by small and medium oil. The Big Country Oilmen's Association in Brooks represents mostly small and medium-sized oil companies, and they want nothing to do with this scheme. They want nothing to do with the carbon tax. They want nothing to do with the cap on emissions. You know why? They're not going to get any of the money back in corporate welfare on the carbon tax. They're not going to see their areas protected from competition.

Now, some of the existing large players in the sands will support this because it limits new entrants to the market and market competition. It effectively creates a cartel. It creates a cartel within the oil sands, a carbon cartel, if you will, Mr. Speaker, similar to what some municipalities have done with the taxi industry. If you issue a finite number of taxi medallions and refuse to issue more as the market and demand for them grow, you're going to create a cartel. You're going to create a near monopoly or duopoly for the existing market players. That's why existing taxi companies often like these kinds of systems, but new entrants don't like them. That's effectively what we're creating on a grand scale in the oil sands.

4:10

Now, no other major oil producer on the planet has any plan to cap their growth. Nobody intends to do this. The Fraser Institute, an institution regularly cited by members of the government, says that the cap of 100 megatonnes will reduce growth in the oil sands by

\$154 billion in economic activity by 2027. This at a time when we desperately need jobs in this province, Mr. Speaker. This is the absolute worst time to be doing this. The world is going to need more oil, not less.

If we're going to need to produce more oil in the world, Mr. Speaker, why not from Alberta? This will only increase the market share of Saudi Arabia, Russia, Iran, Nigeria, Venezuela. As much as the NDP might like to mimic the policies of Venezuela, I'm sure that even the Venezuelans understand that it doesn't make sense to cap the production of oil. It has not done anything for us. It has not bought social licence. The reason the government is doing this, the reason they're imposing this is to appease those Hollywood actors, UN bureaucrats, and their ideological base.

The Speaker: Hon. member, I do hope the *Marrakesh Express* goes past the referral.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Mr. Speaker, the *Marrakesh Express* is heading exactly where it needs to go.

The government has no mandate to do this, Mr. Speaker. We have to send this to a committee to ensure that we are getting it right. The leader of the third party put this very well: perhaps there's some merit in regulation of the oil sands, and we have that already. We can study the regulation of the oil sands without imposing an arbitrary cap of 100 megatonnes.

Not a single person on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, is likely to stand up today and give a concrete and clear answer as to why they picked 100 megatonnes. I bet you \$20 that none of them are going to stand up and give us a real answer. They're going to spout some platitudes and ideological talking points, but they're not going to give an answer about why they picked 100 megatonnes because they have no mandate to impose this. I didn't see anywhere in the NDP platform where they said that they were going to cap emissions from the oil sands. I didn't see anywhere in the NDP platform or manifesto where they said that they would impose a \$3 billion carbon tax on the people of Alberta.

In fact, no government, federal or provincial, right now has any mandate for a carbon tax. No federal voters voted for the Liberals for a carbon tax. No provincial voters have voted for the NDP for a carbon tax. Mr. Speaker, the only people so far who have had a chance to vote on the carbon tax were the federal voters in Medicine Hat-Cardston-Warner, and as you know, the NDP are giving a new sense to the term "the 1 per centers." Only 1 per cent in that by-election voted for a carbon tax endorsed by the NDP government here. They have no mandate for it, and they have no support from the people of Alberta for it.

Mr. Speaker, I've been to the oil sands. I've seen the in situ sands in Cold Lake. I have seen the open-pit mining in Fort McMurray, as has, I believe, every member of the Wildrose caucus, and I would encourage members on the government side who have not gone to see this to go there and see it for themselves. Don't see it through the lens of Leonardo DiCaprio or Neil Young. Go and see it for yourselves. I'm sure you'll get to go up there for free. If you call one of these oil companies, I'll bet you that they'll bring you up there and they'll show you around. They'll even give you a little box lunch on the trip.

Mr. Speaker, I've seen this, and I am sick and tired of us vilifying our own industry. This is not something to be ashamed of. This is a miracle of science and one of the greatest achievements of mankind, and it was done right here by Albertans in Alberta. If that makes us embarrassing cousins, you should meet my family.

This bill is foolish. It is foolhardy. It is arbitrary. It lacks science. It lacks evidence. It lacks any form of measurement as to why they are setting a benchmark of 100 megatonnes. Mr. Speaker, this bill

is not worth the paper that it was printed on. We should send it to a committee and defeat it.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Are there any questions or comments to the member under 29(2)(a)? Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: I'd like the hon. member to stand up and tell us how he really feels.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Mr. Speaker, I can smell a trap when I see one.

This is one of the biggest issues facing the Legislature this session. We've got some bills before us that are relatively inconsequential. We've got some bills that are administrative in nature, that we might find some agreement upon. But this is one – this is one – where we see a fundamental divide between members of the government and the opposition, where even the Official Opposition and the third party have found common cause in understanding that this bill is economic vandalism. It is economic vandalism.

Other bills that they have proposed, as foolhardy as they may have been, at least had some form of trade-off. There was a cost and a benefit. In my opinion, many of these bills' costs certainly outweighed the benefits, but on this I can see no benefit whatsoever. There is no benefit to capping Canada's market share in the global economy right now. There is no benefit whatsoever to saying that we're going to produce less oil as a share of the world market than Russia, Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, and Nigeria. It doesn't make any sense. We are cutting off our nose to get nothing for it at all. It is purely to satisfy the ideologues that make up the base of the NDP and the Hollywood actors who they feel they need to kowtow to.

Well, I don't really care what those guys have to say because when I go to my constituency of Strathmore-Brooks, you know what people want, Mr. Speaker? [interjection] It's not a laughing matter in Strathmore-Brooks because people are losing their jobs. In Strathmore we have lost Western Feedlots. Bill 6 and the carbon tax were cited as some of the primary reasons for why they shut down Western Feedlots. They said that the carbon tax will impose huge new costs on them and make each head of cattle more expensive in Alberta relative to other jurisdictions. They're still open in Saskatchewan, but they're not open here anymore. So now we've got a mothballed feedlot in my constituency and for no good reason. We got nothing for that. It is economic vandalism.

You know, the members opposite laugh. They laugh at any kind of debate that questions the orthodoxy of extreme environmentalism, that puts environmentalism completely out of balance with economic development. I just don't believe that being responsible stewards of the environment must be mutually exclusive of economic development. The oil sands, Mr. Speaker, are a miracle of science, technology, and economics. We are able to take dirt and power cars with it. That is amazing. I am proud of it, but the members opposite are not proud. That's why many of them were professional protesters before they were elected. Many of them were ardent opponents of pipelines. The Minister of Education himself chanted, "No new approvals; no new approvals" on the steps of this Legislature just a few years ago, before he was the minister.

So now they've had to change their language around, Mr. Speaker, and I am glad that they've changed their language. But have their opinions changed in their hearts? In their hearts have they changed their minds, or are they still the radical, anti-economic development environmentalists that they were just a few years ago? I do not believe that being a good steward of the environment is mutually contradictory with economic development, and that is

why I will oppose a bill that arbitrarily caps oil sands development at 100 megatonnes without any scientific explanation why.

The Speaker: Are there any other questions or comments to the member? Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, under 29(2)(a)?

Mr. MacIntyre: Yes, sir. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to ask the hon. member a question regarding this 100-megatonne cap. If we cap our oil sands development at 100 megatonnes and no one else in the world is going to cap any of their expansion, I'm just wondering: how, then, do we actually impact greenhouse gas emissions? Does that mean that if we cap at 100 megatonnes, somehow people in the world are going to use less oil? There will be less demand because they read in a newspaper . . .

4:20

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

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak in favour of this referral motion.

You know, we had the opportunity this past summer to have one of our caucus meetings up in Fort McMurray, and as part of that, I got the opportunity to go to Fort McMurray for the first time and to see the oil sands plants for the first time. Their size was pretty impressive. When you stop to look at what they're doing up there and how they've carved this oil industry out of the wilderness, literally in our lifetime, it is one of the most awe-inspiring things I've seen in a long time. We had the opportunity to speak to the people that were there and to speak to the workers and to the managers of the facilities, to see the reclamation sites. I don't know how anybody could walk away from that not realizing just how important the oil sands are to Alberta, to Canadians, and, indeed, to the rest of the world.

I guess it's because of that that when we start to look at this referral motion – you know, this isn't just a minor decision. This is a decision to place a cap on an industry that has been the workhorse of our economy. This is a very, very important decision that we're going to be making. Because of it's seriousness and because of the size and the scope of this decision that we're going to be making, it makes sense to this MLA that we would send this to a committee for study.

You know Bill 25 sets out a greenhouse gas emissions limit for all oil sands sites of a combined 100 megatonnes per year. As some of my colleagues have already mentioned, I'm not aware of how this was determined. How did we get 100 megatonnes? Why not 150? Why not 200? Why not 50? Why was it 100 megatonnes per year? For somebody like me, a layman – I was a teacher for 30 years – that's where some of the expertise of a committee could come into play. This is where we can bring in some of the oil sands producers, and we can ask them: is that a reasonable limit? We could ask the scientists to come in, and they could help to educate.

I think we've got many people in this House that have been involved in the oil industry at one point in time or another, and maybe they have a little more understanding than some of us. But I think there's a significant number of us in this House that could use the education that comes from being able to sit before a committee, to be able to listen to the people that come before it, to be able to bring that expertise to the table and help us to make a good decision because, as I've said already, the decision that we're going to make on this is going to be extremely serious. It's going to be very important for the Alberta economy and for the Canadian economy as a whole.

I know that for the people in my constituency that are so intimately tied to the oil industry, these decisions will impact my constituency. For the businesses that are going up to Fort

McMurray on a weekly basis, or have been, you know, this means jobs or no jobs. This means that their company either makes a profit at the end of the year or it doesn't. So the decisions in this House are not without their consequences, and it's important that we as a Legislature make a very educated and wise choice when we make this decision. That's why I believe that this referral motion is a wise thing to consider.

This is part of the overall climate leadership plan. The government, on the opposite side, claims that it's faced increasing scrutiny over unchecked emissions. Those who support this bill, Bill 25, believe that without government intervention, the emissions would surpass 100 megatonnes and that this was going to be unacceptable under almost any conditions. You know, that's what this committee could delve into: is that a reasonable position to take? Are we going to be creating such a serious situation going over a 100-megatonne limit that the consequences of that would just be unacceptable? I would love to hear the evidence for that, and this committee could delve into that question deeper.

You know, under Bill 25 the mine sites, the in situ sites, the processing plants, the primary production sites: all of these will fall under the new cap that this bill is proposing. And if it's passed, Executive Council is going to be able to make sure that the oil sands industry will not go over that 100-megatonne cap. They will use regulations and financial penalties for companies that do not reduce or do not bring their emissions under control.

Now, this 100-megatonne cap, as we've said, was agreed to apart from the Leach report, and it brought an unusual group of people together, whether it's Suncor or Royal Dutch Shell or Cenovus or Canadian Natural Resources, and I guess that speaks to one point of view. But I've heard other members of this House question whether or not the players, these major oil sands producers, weren't really acting out of self-interest, that it was a PR win for them, that it won't cost them anything, but that it will limit the competition that's already up in the oil sands. You know, there's some merit to that. It would be interesting to have a referral committee take a look at this and see if the position of these major stakeholders was self-serving or whether it was done out of a sincere interest to deal with an environmental problem.

We know that there are other major stakeholders, other energy firms that are strongly opposed to this cap. Whether we're talking about TransCanada or Imperial Oil, they've spoken out clearly against this cap. They also need to come before this committee. We would need to be able to see and hear their point of view as well. It's not like the industry that's working in the oil sands is speaking with one voice, so it would be important for us to hear all of those points of view. So before we do this, it would be wise, in my estimation, to call the experts to a committee and to ensure that indeed all Albertans' best interests are being served by this decision to either support or to not support Bill 25.

Now, I'm going to speak in favour of this referral motion because I think we need to better understand how Bill 25 will send what I believe could be a very negative economic message to the oil players in this world. I think this committee should study that and should consider this. I mean, this cap is just one more signal that we're sending to investors that the government of Alberta is not on the side of business and it's not on the side of marshalling and taking care of the Alberta economy. As a matter of fact, it could very well make our economy even worse than what the recession is creating as we speak. You cannot understand, I don't think, Albertans' anger over this bill without understanding all of the other NDP actions, all of the other government actions that came before this bill that have negatively impacted our economy.

I know that I've had members from some of the major stakeholders in the Alberta oil industry come to my office. They tell

me that over the past year every time they spend money in this challenging economic environment, they must do something that they call a risk analysis. You know, this risk analysis will look at things like – they tell me that every time they go to spend money and have to put this risk analysis together, they have to include things like: has the government increased personal or corporate taxes? Well, yes, we have. Every time the government decides to shut down a job-creating, low-power, cost-viable industry like coal, this again is considered to be a negative thing that you would put on a risk analysis. Every time a government rips up a contract that costs a business millions of dollars, that sends a really negative message to the businesses that are looking to invest in our province.

4:30

You know, that's something that we need to hear as legislators. I think that's something that all of the legislators in this Legislature need to consider but perhaps especially the ones on the opposite side of the House. Every time this government chooses billions of dollars of deficit by unprecedented borrowing and unprecedented spending, we see businesses add another item on their risk analysis. They've told me quite bluntly that they can spend their money anywhere they want in the world and they're looking for an investment climate where they will be allowed to see a profit, where the regulations will not keep them from pursuing profit, where they can invest their expertise with a reasonable expectation that they can benefit the economic climate, both theirs and the province's.

I think we need to have this referral motion because we need to make sure that we're not creating a climate in Alberta that is going to scare the capital away from this province. I think we need this committee to be able to hear from these major stakeholders so that when they come to us and they start talking about choosing where to spend their capital, when they start looking . . . [A cellphone rang] Am I supposed to dance, too?

They maybe can hear from these major stakeholders just how important it is for this government to be sending a positive economic message out there that this government is open for business, that they are looking for businesses to invest and for workers to move here and for this economy to grow. This committee could hear those kinds of presentations.

I think that when I look at the people in my riding, they've sent a very clear message that they do not support this cap on emissions, that they do not support a carbon tax, that during a recession they did not support the raising of corporate income taxes. According to a recent survey that I was able to find, 67.2 per cent of Albertans of voting age didn't really want a carbon tax.

Well, I know that last Saturday I stood out and listened to some of my constituents as they talked about a carbon tax and they talked about a carbon cap on emissions. It's just another facet, they believed, of the same misguided message that this government is telling the rest of the world. The message that they believe is being sent by this carbon emission cap is that it's safer to do business somewhere else other than in Alberta, and I think that's something that this committee could clarify. I mean, it's one thing for us as lay people to arrive at that decision and come to that belief, but a committee could clarify those things for us. They could provide us with the evidence that we need.

This committee needs to study the impact of Bill 25 on our economy because I believe that it's actually going to make our economy, that is already suffering, much worse. The oil sands have been the economic engine of Alberta – they've been the economic engine of Canada – for the last number of years, and Bill 25 is going to directly impact that engine. Bill 25 will make the oil sands the first major oil jurisdiction to intentionally limit its long-term production with a cap on emissions. You know . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members.

Mr. Smith: . . . the recently released Fraser report entitled *How Alberta's Carbon Emission Cap Will Reduce Oil Sands Growth* . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members. Thank you.

Please continue. I'm giving you another 30 seconds.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm sure that they'll really appreciate my 30 more seconds.

The oils sands, as I said, were and are the economic engine of this country and of this province. It's the first major oil jurisdiction in the world that will intentionally limit its long-term production with a cap on emissions. The recent Fraser report entitled *How Alberta's Carbon Emission Cap Will Reduce Oil Sands Growth* estimates that placing a ceiling on carbon emissions could cost the Alberta economy \$150 billion to \$250 billion because of the resources that were intentionally locked into the ground.

Now, if we're going to make a decision like that, Mr. Speaker, it doesn't seem unreasonable to me that with that kind of wealth and with that kind of impact on our economy that we would bring in the experts to take a look and see if that is indeed what is going to happen to the Alberta economy. Is that what's going to happen to the Canadian economy? This doesn't just affect Albertans, and it doesn't just affect the workers that are up at the oil sands in Fort McMurray; it's all of the other industries across this country that have steel and buses and the trucks and all of the things that we purchase to be able to keep the oil sands running. This is not a decision that we make here that is only going to have an impact . . . [Mr. Smith's speaking time expired]

Thank you.

The Speaker: Just for the record you did get the 30 seconds.

The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake under 29(2)(a). Is that correct?

Mr. MacIntyre: Yes, sir.

The Speaker: Please proceed.

Mr. MacIntyre: Thank you very much. I appreciate the comments from my esteemed colleague from Drayton Valley-Devon. I would be interested to understand a little bit more about what he's saying. Specifically, if he could comment perhaps on this issue: if we cap our resource development, will it do anything whatsoever to reduce the amount of demand for oil globally or even domestically? If we don't produce it and if we don't benefit by that \$150 billion to \$250 billion worth of economic activity, does that mean that that won't happen anywhere? Does that mean that Saskatchewan will not fill that void? Does that mean that Russia won't, Nigeria won't, or maybe Saudi Arabia won't?

An Hon. Member: Venezuela.

Mr. MacIntyre: Or Venezuela? Does that mean that India's growth in demand, which is slated to grow 32 per cent over the next six years for oil, won't be there for oil because the mighty province of Alberta isn't going to develop those resources, we're going to cap that development, we're going to restrict that development? Does that mean that greenhouse gas emissions globally are going to decline because we don't develop that resource? Like, if we don't do something up there, does that mean the whole world stops?

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. member.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, that is, I guess, one of the most telling arguments for why we need to go to committee and have a referral motion. I think that there are some misconceptions out there, some that must be shared by members of this House, a belief that if we put a cap on our emissions, all of a sudden the other players in the oil industry around the world are going to stop producing oil. Of course, that's just not going to be the case.

We don't have to look very far to see that we do have the cleanest oil and energy production in the world. If we're going to stop producing the cleanest oil in the world, it's going to be replaced by other countries who are producing in ways that are actually going to make the greenhouse gas issue and climate change issue worse. How can we in all conscience sit in this House and under the guise of trying to make something better, actually make it worse?

4:40

Obviously, there are some on the other side that don't believe that that's the truth. That's why we need this committee, Mr. Speaker. They don't understand, I guess, the argument, and they don't understand the facts. They need to be able to be educated, and this committee could help them do that.

You know, others have argued and maybe some on the other side of the House, Mr. Speaker, that the economic sacrifices that they're expecting Albertans to make when we strand our oil sands assets in the ground will be worth it because we're doing our part to reduce greenhouse gases. Well, Canada produces about 1.8 per cent of the global greenhouse emissions, and our oil sands are less than 9 per cent of that. So even if we shut down the entire oil sands, it would have a negligible difference in global output, about one and a half tenths of 1 per cent of global emissions.

An Hon. Member: One more time.

Mr. Smith: About one and a half tenths of 1 per cent of global emissions.

So we're proposing to take \$150 billion out of the Alberta and the Canadian economic engine for what is nothing more or less than a statistical rounding error. If this was actually going to have a statistical – if we could see that this was going to have a real advantage to the climate issue, if we were going to make a significant dent in it, you would probably be able to get the support of Albertans.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Is there anyone else who would like to speak to the referral amendment to second reading of Bill 25?

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on the amendment lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:42 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Please be seated.

Sergeant-at-Arms, the doors are secure? That is prompted by my experiential learning, as to why I say that.

For the motion:

Aheer	McIver	Rodney
Drysdale	Nixon	Schneider
Fildebrandt	Orr	Smith
Hanson	Panda	Taylor
Hunter	Pitt	Yao
MacIntyre		

5:00

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Gray	McPherson
Bilous	Hinkley	Miller
Carson	Horne	Miranda
Connolly	Kazim	Nielsen
Coolahan	Kleinsteuber	Phillips
Cortes-Vargas	Larivee	Piquette
Dach	Loyola	Sabir
Dang	Luff	Schmidt
Drever	Malkinson	Schreiner
Eggen	Mason	Shepherd
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Sweet
Ganley	McKitrick	Turner
Goehring	McLean	Westhead

Totals: For – 16 Against – 39

[Motion on amendment to second reading of Bill 25 lost]

The Speaker: We are now back to the bill. The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I move that we adjourn debate on this bill.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

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

Bill 24

Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016

The Chair: Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to move an amendment to Bill 24, the Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016. Would you like me to start or wait?

The Chair: If you could just wait until I get a copy, please, hon. member.

Go ahead, hon. member. This will be known as amendment A1.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would move that Bill 24, the Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016, be amended as follows: (a) section 12 is amended in the proposed section 23 by adding the following after subsection (2):

(3) A forest officer shall notify the person referred to in subsection (1) whether the fire control plan is satisfactory within 14 days of the date the forest officer received the fire control plan.

And (b) section 17 is amended in the proposed section 32(2.1) by adding "for a period not exceeding 365 days or any extended period that the Minister may authorize" after "secure an area of land or premises."

That's the amendment. Would you like me to speak to it now?

The Chair: Go ahead. Continue.

Mr. Drysdale: Okay. Madam Chair, it's pretty straightforward. These amendments are intended to place reasonable time limits on

a couple of actions allowed by Bill 24. First, we're looking to introduce a two-week limit on how long a forest officer can delay before either approving or rejecting a fire control plan. We would like to see this amendment accepted to assure Alberta industries that the government is committed to moving quickly on reviewing fire plans. As the legislation currently stands, industrial operations could be held up, with no end in sight. We would like there to be some clarity about the length of time they can take.

The second part is a one-year limit on the length of time that a forest officer or fire guardian can cordon off an area during an investigation. This is not intended to limit an investigation. It is again about providing clear timelines for those impacted by these actions. We believe that one year should be more than enough time to complete an investigation. Of course, the minister would have the option to extend that time period if the circumstances warrant it.

I think, Madam Chair, that's pretty self-explanatory, and I'll take my seat.

The Chair: Any hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

Mr. Nixon: Thank you. I'd like to just rise today to speak in favour of this amendment. Again, it's not to limit the ability of anybody in forestry to be able to do their job or to limit any investigation. But I can think of a couple of examples in my constituency right now where people are being delayed because of time constraints from SRD and forestry. Often we get phone calls from constituents in regard to leasing arrangements, particularly grazing leases, that they're trying to transfer between themselves, sales, and those types of things, Madam Chair. Sometimes those delays are well over a year or so, and it can often cause significant trouble in the agricultural industry for producers.

I can also think of a couple of other leases on the tourism side in my constituency that have right now been waiting over a year to get their leases renewed. It's holding up sales for those businesses, which is causing, of course, consequences. So if that same type of thing was to happen now with larger industrial operations in our constituency, I could see how this would cause significant trouble if they're waiting well over sometimes a year or two years just to transfer a cattle grazing lease. You know, if we're dealing with larger industrial operations, the consequences of that could be even more catastrophic.

In addition to that, I lived in a place where a large forest fire happened in the forest reserve, and during some of the investigation there it took a very long time for us to return to and be able to operate our business. So putting an appropriate timeline so that people that are impacted by, you know, what could be a catastrophic event in their business or in their life are able to get back to that kind of forces forestry to be able to accommodate and get something done in a reasonable amount of time.

I would encourage all of my colleagues to support the hon. member's amendment.

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

Mr. MacIntyre: Thank you, Madam Chair. I, too, would like to rise and speak in support of this excellent amendment. I think every one of us in this House has experienced times where we've made an application to a government agency and then we hurry up and wait. And we wait. In the case of businesses, time is money. It speaks to reducing the struggle that we have and the challenges we face regarding red tape in dealing with government.

As is noted in this amendment, "a forest officer shall notify the person referred to in subsection (1) whether the fire control plan is satisfactory within 14 days of the date the forest officer received the fire control plan." Having dealt with these kinds of safety plans and emergency plans in a previous life, 14 days is plenty of time to review these plans – many of them are going to be fairly straightforward – and get back to the applicant and let them know: yeah, you're good to go. We need to do things in a timely manner.

This province suffers from red tapeitis. It's a terrible disease. It slows down development. It slows down just about everything, and that costs money needlessly. It also puts jobs on hold. Many times there are subcontractors who are waiting and waiting to get going on a contract that has been awarded to them. Meanwhile the general contractor is waiting for some kind of government approval to come down the line before these subcontractors can begin their work.

I think it is extremely important, especially for something of this nature, that we put in place a timeline so that we're not inadvertently holding up Albertans from getting a good job done. Furthermore, if there is an issue with the fire plan, it is a timely situation where the forest officer can get back to the applicant and say: "You know what? You've got a problem here, and you've got a problem here." And in a timely manner they can make the amendments and get it back again for reconsideration rather than waiting six months, seven months only to find out that there are issues with the plan and now they have to go back to the drawing board. It's unreasonable to do that, and it does put things at risk. So I think timeliness is paramount. This amendment deals with that well.

I will be in support of this amendment, and I hope everyone in this House will be in support of this excellent amendment to put some time limits on these fire control plans so that both forest officers and developers can get the ball rolling with these fire plans, get them in place, make amendments if they have to, but get things in place so that our forests can ultimately be a safer place.

Thank you very much.

5:10

The Chair: Any others wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Yes. Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'd like to thank the member for his very thoughtful amendments. You know, I've considered these amendments, and I'm not going to be supporting these. I would encourage members not to support the amendments for the reasons that I'm going to describe.

In terms of the timeline of 14 days for the fire plan I'd like to let the members know that we've consulted closely with the industry on this, and they've told us that the existing practices could be shorter or longer depending on the size of the industry and the complexity of the operation. I would be afraid that putting a time limit takes away our flexibility to ensure that we have the time to do our due diligence. In cases where there are very complex plans, putting a 14-day time limit might take away our ability to have that back and forth with the industry to make sure that the plan is satisfactory. It also allows us to work with forest companies and other businesses in the forest protection area and to engage in a thorough back-and-forth conversation.

In terms of the 365-day time limit for securing a scene, the experience that the industry and the ministry have had is that that time limit is not necessary. In fact, most cases can actually be secured within six months or less, and often smaller fires can actually be secured in less time than that. After the investigation is completed on-site, there's often a part of the investigation that

occurs off-site, so the scene no longer needs to be secured after the time that the on-site investigation is complete.

Just in the case where a scene would need to be secured in excess of a year, which, I just want to reiterate, has not been our experience, we want to make sure that the investigators have the tools available to them if it's necessary to go beyond the one-year time limit, without the need for the minister to renew or extend the timelines. This would include the ability to secure the scene so that investigations can be concluded.

Just in summary, Madam Chair, I think the member has put forward some very thoughtful suggestions, but in the experience of the ministry and with the consultations that have taken place, the amendments aren't necessary for the bill, so I would recommend that members vote against this amendment.

The Chair: Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak. I must take exception to the previous speaker because I will support the amendment. The intent here is not to restrain the efficiency of government operations, not to put them under undue stress, but the reality here is that we need to balance rights. Because we have in government the ability to create the rules of the game, we really shouldn't always be carving out for ourselves unlimited opportunity and unlimited space and an unlimited amount of: well, what if we just create all of the potentials that we can possibly imagine? The reality is that we need to balance expectations here, and these can be significant impediments to the rights, to the financial success, to the future of Alberta individuals, companies, even municipalities, in fact.

I'm currently dealing in my riding with an entirely different situation, yet it is a somewhat relevant situation. There have been endless numbers of requirements put upon a construction company and consulting engineers, that have actually dragged the process out into years. What happens is that they reply with a requirement and hurry up and write it up in a week or two and supply what's asked for, and then they sit and wait for two, three, four months before they get any response back. Then there's another requirement, so they hurry up and reply with that one, hoping to get this resolved, and then they sit and wait for two, three, four, five months. This has gone on multiple times, and it costs the future; it costs the community.

In this particular case it's impacting the municipality. The municipality has a statutory plan in place, which has been impacted, and in this case not a forest officer but a different officer of the government has held this up literally for years. There needs to be just some sort of reasonable expectation of time.

For anybody operating in any kind of a committee or a relationship where there are shared partnership responsibilities, there should be some kind of time commitment. You know, if I say that I'm going to do something for somebody or if somebody says that they're going to do something for me, I'm never satisfied until I ask them: well, when? And if there's no answer to "when," that, in effect, negates the offer and the responsibility and makes it null and void because "when" can essentially turn into almost never or beyond the point of when it matters anymore or to the point where the individual or the company has been completely rendered dysfunctional because they're still waiting.

I think it encourages excellent public service to put reasonable timelines on, so for that reason I will in fact support the amendment. Thank you.

The Chair: Any others wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. MacIntyre: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise again to speak in support of this amendment. I must say that I was not at all surprised to listen to the hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane speaking against this amendment. I realize that for some people who have certain job experiences, delays and time delays and having some sort of expectation put on them to actually get off their butt and get the job done in a timely fashion is a novel idea. However, for most of the people that live in Alberta, right across Canada, actually, we have what is known as a get 'er done kind of mentality. These are the people in the private sector, the people that actually get out there and get dirty and get the job done in a timely fashion.

We have here an amendment regarding a potentially very dangerous situation, where we have developers that need to provide an actual fire plan and provide it to an expert in such things such as our forest officers are, to have it reviewed and get a response back in a timely manner. The whole, entire time that that applicant is waiting, there is not an approved plan in place. So if this drags on for a month, two months, three months, four months, and then finally the forest officer gets the job done, gets it back to that applicant, and says, "No, you need to amend it," now we have a few more months to wait.

It is not inconceivable given certain departments within this government to be waiting six months, seven months, or more before this applicant has an approved plan in place to protect Alberta's forests. It is inconceivable to me that any member of this House, given an opportunity to put a timeline in place that is reasonable, that protects our forests, that makes sure that government employees are getting after it, getting the job done, getting back to these applicants in a timely manner, and getting that fire plan approved and in place – that should be the norm and not the exception.

This is an excellent amendment. The arguments put forward by the Member for Banff-Cochrane are, in my opinion, unfounded and ridiculous and putting our forests actually at risk by not having some kind of timeline in place, whether it be the timeline referred to under subsection (3) of 14 days or whether it be the timeline under section B regarding the 365 days. There's nothing wrong with timelines. They're a good idea. It keeps things moving along, and it eliminates unnecessary, costly, and potentially dangerous delays.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

5:20

The Chair: Any other speakers to the amendment? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to speak in favour of this amendment also. When I read section 23(1) and (2), it says this:

A person carrying on or having charge of an industrial or commercial operation on public land or within one kilometre of any public land shall at the request of a forest officer submit a fire control plan satisfactory to the forest officer, within the time determined by the forest officer.

The forest officer can ask for a fire control plan, determine the time that he would like it. There are no guidelines here as far as how long the forest officer can give a company or an industrial or commercial operation to produce this plan, this fire control plan.

Now, it goes on to say:

(2) If a person referred to in subsection (1) fails to comply with the request of the forest officer within the time determined by the forest officer, the Minister may, by order, suspend the industrial or commercial operation of the person until a fire control plan satisfactory to the forest officer has been submitted to the forest officer.

This amendment here adds:

(3) A forest officer shall notify the person referred to in subsection (1) whether the fire control plan is satisfactory within 14 days of the date the forest officer received the fire control plan.

Now, Madam Chair, if the forest officer feels that a fire control plan is necessary, he can demand that, and he can demand it in a time frame that he or she determines, but there's no requirement in this legislation for the forest officer to even respond on whether it's satisfactory or not. I don't find it unreasonable at all that the industrial or commercial operation at least receive some sort of response suggesting whether what they've done is acceptable or not within 14 days, two weeks.

Now, I don't know the exact implications of this other part I'm going to bring up now. "The Minister may, by order, suspend the industrial or commercial operation of the person until a fire control plan satisfactory to the forest officer has been submitted." I don't know if that will somehow put at risk this business's ability to operate while it's waiting to find out whether the plan is satisfactory or not, because the minister could shut down or suspend that operation. I believe this adds nothing but a little bit of clarity and a little bit of respect to the industrial operation that's required to do this.

The forest officer already has virtually complete control over every other aspect of this. There aren't any other timelines on this whole process except now the suggested amendment that the business receive a response whether the fire control plan is satisfactory. I'm quite certain that businesses required to do this would want to make sure that they did a proper job. I would think that they would want to know even sooner than 14 days whether they'd done a proper job or not, but of course this bill, without amendment, doesn't allow that opportunity, doesn't allow that respect.

Now, the second part of this amendment, part B, section 17, has to do with the cordoning off of an area. It says:

Section 32 is amended by adding the following after subsection (2):

(2.1) A forest officer or a fire guardian may, for the purposes of an investigation, temporarily cordon off or secure an area of land or premises and prohibit any person from entering or remaining in the area or premises until the investigation is completed.

Then (2.2) says:

A person shall not enter an area or premises that have been cordoned off or secured under subsection (2.1) without first obtaining the permission of a forest officer or fire guardian.

This is for the purpose of an investigation. If we're talking about a forest area here, I can't imagine how much of an investigation can happen one year after the fire. I would think that after one full year, for one thing, the investigation should be over. I mean, if it's important enough to investigate, you would think they would do this in under a year. Also, how about the evidence? What's going to be left of evidence a year after a forest fire when the forest starts growing immediately after the fire is done?

I don't see anything unreasonable about these amendments. I know this government has a hard time accepting amendments. They propose lots of bills that they, of course, bring forward their own amendments on because, obviously, they didn't do enough consultation or research to start off with, but when the opposition comes up with ideas to make a bill better and this government just flat out turns them down, I think it should be alarming to Albertans that this government seems to be unwilling to accept . . .

An Hon. Member: Common sense.

Mr. Loewen: . . . advice, some common-sense advice.

There isn't anything in this amendment here that isn't very reasonable, and it doesn't change the point of the bill. It, in fact, helps it: 14 days to look over a fire control plan that was demanded by a forest officer, to look at it and say, "Yeah, that's good" or "No, we need a little bit more." Does it make any sense to look at it for 60 days or 100 days and then come back and say, "No, it's not good enough"? Why not 14 days? Why not fewer than 14 days?

Of course, going back to the period of 365 days for an area to be cordoned off, we don't know what area could be cordoned off and how big an area and what effect it might have on businesses or individuals that want to access that. In fact, I would suggest that 365 days is probably double what's necessary. How about six months? What are they going to learn between six months and a year that they wouldn't learn in an investigation in the first six months? I don't see anything there, any reason why. Like I say, one year I think is plenty of time for an investigation, too much time, of course, when we see how fast forests grow after fires.

I think this amendment is very reasonable, a very reasonable amendment. I'd like to thank the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti for proposing this, and I think we could do well in this Legislature for Albertans by passing this amendment. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Chair. I wanted to rise in support of the amendment moved by my colleague from Grande Prairie-Wapiti. Consistent with what I've come to expect from my colleague, this is a good, solid, common-sense amendment that the government would do well to consider. The first section surely only talks about whether a fire control plan is satisfactory within 14 days of the date that the forest officer received the fire control plan. Well, you know what, folks? It doesn't actually hurt, when you're securing an area to keep it safe from fire, to have a time limit on it. I think that's all this does.

I mean, right now, while the government might have received legitimate praise from all members, including me, for the good job that they did with the evacuation and rescue from the fire up in Fort McMurray, that should all by itself make us real cautious and nervous about what we can do to prevent future occurrences. Certainly, the Minister of Municipal Affairs' municipality suffered greatly from fire just a few very short years ago.

5:30

Again, in section B of the amendment: "for a period not exceeding 365 days or any extended period that the Minister may authorize' after 'secure an area of land or premises'."

I don't think I need a long speech on this, Madam Chair, so you're not going to get one, but I would just counsel and recommend to members on all sides of the House and, I guess, specifically, government members that what you're getting here is good advice from someone elected from a forestry-intensive part of Alberta, a member of this House that's been around long enough and with a rural background, someone that actually is well suited, well situated to give solid advice, which is why when it comes time to vote, I'm going to vote to receive that solid, helpful advice and recommend that all Members of the Legislative Assembly do the same thing.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other speakers to the amendment?

Seeing none, we'll call the vote.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:32 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Drysdale	MacIntyre	Rodney
Fildebrandt	McIver	Schneider
Hanson	Nixon	Taylor
Hunter	Orr	Yao
Loewen	Pitt	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Gray	McPherson
Bilous	Hinkley	Miller
Carson	Horne	Miranda
Connolly	Kazim	Nielsen
Coolahan	Kleinstauber	Phillips
Cortes-Vargas	Larivee	Piquette
Dach	Loyola	Sabir
Dang	Luff	Schmidt
Drever	Malkinson	Schreiner
Eggen	Mason	Shepherd
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Sweet
Ganley	McKitrick	Westhead
Goehring	McLean	

Totals: For – 14 Against – 38

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

The Chair: We're back on the main bill. Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Actually, I would like to introduce an amendment. I can wait for you to get a copy before I speak to it.

5:50

The Chair: This will be known as amendment A2. Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Orr moved that Bill 24, Forest and Prairie Protection Amendment Act, 2016, be amended in section 23 by striking out the proposed section 40.1.

First of all, I really would like to thank all of the firefighters and first responders who did help in the Fort McMurray fire and those who fight lesser fires across our province. They really do put their lives on the line for all of us. Quite frankly, it's still amazing to me how everyday Albertans helped out neighbours and strangers alike during the evacuation that happened at that particular time. There were a lot of unsung heroes, quite truthfully, and we celebrate them. Even though they may not necessarily receive medals, they certainly are deserving of them.

Legislative changes that would increase the safety of firefighting are a welcome sight, especially after, of course, this last fire season. We should always be looking for ways that we can make changes that will ensure the safety of Albertans during the crisis of major fires. There is one point in this bill that I do think is helpful: "Section 17(1) is amended by striking out 'April 1' and substituting 'March 1'." Extending the fire season will allow companies and the government to be more prepared for the fire season. The Fort McMurray fire caught the people, quite frankly, and the government off guard. We know this by some of the discussion around reducing the funding for fires. We've heard issues about the unpreparedness of the water bombers and the contract that's

associated with that. Extending the timeline for the fire season, starting it, actually, when there might even still be snow on the ground, will give much-needed time for everybody to prepare for the inevitable fire season that comes to us in the spring.

The companies that work in this area need firm deadlines as to when the fire season starts, when they need to be thinking about gearing up. Obviously, we can't actually control the fire, but we certainly understand that there is a certain time of the year when the risk escalates dramatically. It's not reasonable for businesses to just start and stop on a dime. They need some predictability. They need to know when their work starts and when it should end. So I think that this will actually help, and I hope that the government, with respect to the timelines and regulations in the legislation, will also find that helpful. Companies need this stability. As I said, firefighting is not a predictable business. While a fire could start at any time and be out of control before we know it, the legislation that we have before us will hopefully bring a bit more predictability to it and help us to be prepared for the beginning of the season.

There is a part of this legislation, though, that I do have a particular issue with. I'm thankful that the government is open to suggestions, at least in some legislation, and I trust that they will be in this one because I really am not here just to sort of make political points or to picket things. I think that there are opportunities to make really good legislation in our province, and I'm glad that we have a system of governance where we're allowed to participate in that. Multiple viewpoints will improve the legislation that will affect the lives of Albertans and our democracy. I do value that.

I'd like to draw our attention, though, to section 23, starting at the bottom of page 9 and following onto page 10, the new part, which reads:

40.1 No action lies and no proceeding may be brought against the Crown, the Minister, a director or a forest officer, or any person acting under the direction of the Crown, the Minister, a director or a forest officer, for damages resulting from any order or decision under this Act or the regulations made in good faith by the Crown, the Minister, the director, the forest officer or the person.

This section is new to the Forest and Prairie Protection Act. It's not a change of wording. Instead, it's an entirely new piece that the minister wants to add. Now, a quick search of *Hansard* discovered that sections like this were previously implemented in legislation and by previous governments over the objections, I might add, of the then current opposition.

My argument against this section is not about precedents. It's not that it's not been done before. My argument against this addition is that it should not be done. Right now we are participating in a democratic exercise to determine if this legislation is in the best interests of all Albertans. I would hope that this government would not say that this has been done before and that, therefore, we need to do it again just because. We need to look at everything from a fresh viewpoint. Quite frankly, that's what Albertans were hoping for from this government, a fresh viewpoint and a fresh way to look at things, not accepting something just because that's the way it was done before and, therefore, we should do it again. In fact, I think Albertans were hoping that this government wouldn't be like the last government, which is why they threw them out. If it turns out that something is the best course of action, then, yes, we adopt it.

The Chair: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing Order 4(3) the committee will now rise and report progress.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Mr. S. Anderson: Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 24. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

Thanks.

The Deputy Speaker: Does the Assembly concur in the report? Say aye.

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Any opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I move that we adjourn until 9 tomorrow morning.

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

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