



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Second Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday evening, December 5, 2016

Day 57

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 29th Legislature

Second Session

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

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Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)	Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)
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Party standings:

New Democrat: 55 Wildrose: 22 Progressive Conservative: 8 Alberta Liberal: 1 Alberta Party: 1

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Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Monday, December 5, 2016

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Please be seated.

Committee of Supply

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

The Chair: I'd like to call the Committee of Supply to order. Hon. members, before we begin this evening's consideration of supplementary supply, I would just like to review briefly the standing orders governing the speaking rotation. As provided for in Standing Order 59.02, the rotation in Standing Order 59.01(6) is deemed to apply, which is as follows:

- (a) the Minister, or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may make opening comments not to exceed 10 minutes,
- (b) for the hour that follows, members of the Official Opposition and the Minister, or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak,
- (c) for the next 20 minutes, the members of the third party, if any, and the Minister or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak,
- (d.1) for the next 20 minutes, the members of any other party represented in the Assembly or any independent Members and the Minister, or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak,
- (e) for the next 20 minutes, private members of the Government caucus and the Minister or the member of the Executive Council acting on the Minister's behalf, may speak, and
- (f) for the time remaining, to the extent possible, the rotation outlined in clauses (b) to (e) shall apply with the speaking times set at 5 minutes as provided in Standing Order 59.02(1)(c).

During the first rotation speaking times are limited to 10 minutes. Once the first rotation is complete, speaking times are reduced to five minutes. Provided that the chair has been notified, a minister and a private member may combine their speaking times, with both taking and yielding the floor during the combined period.

Finally, as provided for in Government Motion 28, approved by the Assembly on December 1, 2016, the time allotted for consideration is three hours.

Supplementary Supply Estimates 2016-17 General Revenue Fund

The Chair: I will now recognize the hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance to move the estimates.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I would like to move the 2016-17 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund. When passed, these estimates will authorize a single funding request of \$1,451,000 to support the Legislative Assembly to provide administrative and other support for the activity of the Electoral Boundaries Commission. This is the amount requested by the Speaker as recommended by the Standing Committee on Members' Services at its meeting on September 26, 2016.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Madam Chair. If it's okay with you, I'll combine my time with the minister. I'd just like to rise briefly. As a member of the Members' Services Committee we had some very good discussions around this while, at the end of the day, I think it may have been advantageous to wait for the Electoral Boundaries Commission until the following election given the close proximity that we've had in a couple of elections being a little bit closer to each other. We had some discussion around that particular issue, among others, the very fact that the committee has recommended that we move forward on the commission and that the commission has been now appointed.

I might just add that I think it speaks to the quality of the folks in the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills that the government saw fit to appoint a member of the community in Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills as well as did the Leader of the Official Opposition in consultation with the third party and through the Speaker, another member to the commission.

Given that that is well and truly on its way and that the Members' Services Committee has recommended this to the Assembly – and, Madam Chair, you'll know that I have a passion for respecting committees of this Assembly – as such, I'll look forward to supporting the estimates.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak? I'll recognize the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Dr. Starke: Well, thank you, Madam Chair, very much. I'd like to thank the hon. Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board for bringing this forward. I do have a few questions, though, as relate to the amount that was presented, and perhaps he could expand upon it a little bit. I am somewhat concerned or at least require some additional explanation as to the amount that has been allocated, some \$1.451 million dollars, for the work of the boundaries commission. There is no question that the work the boundaries commission will be doing is extremely important. It's part of our democratic process. I think that it's also important to note – and I'm sure that the minister is aware of this – that these activities are causing some concern and are certainly causing some nervousness, especially in areas of rural Alberta, where population growth has not been as robust as it has been in urban Alberta or, more specifically, in some of the suburban areas of Alberta.

Indeed, Madam Chair, some of the greatest degree of population growth in our province has occurred on the outskirts of our larger urban centres, to the extent that some of our existing constituencies in those areas have a population that is, in some cases, 30 or 40 per cent greater than the arithmetic mean of the average number of electors. Of course, we know that the Electoral Boundaries Commission will have to take these differences into account.

The other end of the scale is also a very great concern, and that is that we do have some of our constituencies that are relatively sparsely populated, whose populations are not growing to the same extent and for whom representation is indeed a real challenge. Madam Chair, I mean, I know that, for example, the constituency of Peace River, that you represent, is one of those constituencies that has a huge geographic area to cover, many, many communities that you need to interact with, and that's not unlike a lot of other communities in rural Alberta whose populations are not growing. So, you know, there is concern, and I'm sure that the minister is aware of that. I'm sure that the Minister of Justice is aware of it as is the minister responsible for democratic renewal. These are portfolios that will all interact with the Electoral Boundaries Commission.

I would appreciate, perhaps, some additional information from the Minister of Finance and President of Treasury Board as to how the \$1.451 million was arrived at. How does this compare to the allocation for previous Electoral Boundaries Commissions?

I guess part of the reason why I ask that question is that not too long ago, about two years ago, I was involved in another cross-Alberta committee, that functioned for about six months' time and was conducting the rural health services review. We had seven committee members that travelled across the province. We also had administrative secretariat support from the Department of Health. We met with over 100 municipalities as we travelled across the province. We advertised our meetings. We had a considerable amount of conversation and discussion. I know that the total price tag of doing that process was approximately \$200,000. That's certainly a large sum of money, but I think it was money that was well spent, especially if the recommendations are acted upon, you know, as we go forward.

So I am very interested in hearing from the Finance minister on how the \$1.451 million was arrived at and if he could perhaps give additional information to the Chamber as to how that compares to the allocation for previous Electoral Boundaries Commissions.

Thank you.

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

7:40

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you, Chair. It's just an honour to rise as the deputy chair of Members' Services to provide some information on the questions of the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster. As he noted, there is a difference between the cost of the previous commission, which was actually \$1.2 million. I'm just going to provide a little bit of the information as to what led to that, of course, noting that the previous Electoral Boundaries Commission was in 2009-10, so there is an increase. There are several things that have contributed to this. One, the number of households in Alberta has increased; therefore, the number of houses to reach through advertising has also increased. The householder document providing information on the commission is generally sent to each Alberta home. The postage costs have also substantially increased from 2009. The cost of advertising has also increased considerably since 2009-10.

This one brings a different part, which is that the commission must also purchase two new maps plotters to do its work, so there are some technical purchases that need to be made.

In addition, the commission has traditionally travelled to a number of communities in Alberta to hold public meetings. This is something that they're going to continue doing, and one of the things that reduced their costs in that was the charter planes as well. Adding those travel costs has also increased their overall costs. In certain situations they need to fly into communities to complete the work more expeditiously, and this does increase that. Those charter air services costs didn't happen in 2009-10, so there's a discrepancy in travel costs there.

That provides a little bit of an overview of the changes between the last one and this current one. I'm happy to answer any more questions if you have any.

The Chair: Any other comments, questions?

Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

Mr. Orr: Thank you, Madam Chair. Yeah. Just to follow up a little bit on the previous line of questioning, I was thinking in the same direction. Maybe if you could just add a tiny bit for us there. Was

the \$1.2 million budgeted last time adequate? Was it all spent, or was there excess?

And I guess my second question would be: could you give us an indication, maybe, of the top three expenses that will make up the \$1.451 million?

Thank you.

The Chair: Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you. I don't have that information at my fingertips, but, you know, what we do know is that there is the increase, and those increases are mainly due to the costs of charters and postage.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

Dr. Starke: Yes, Madam Chair. You know, forgive me. I'm not trying to belabour the point a little bit, but just something the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park said sort of stuck out to me, and that is that you mentioned that there was a purchase of two additional map plotters for the work of the committee. I have no doubt that the committee will absolutely be plotting out maps and be requiring that, but I guess I'm puzzled as to whether, for something that is going to be a very finite period of time, perhaps six months to a year that this commission is actually going to be in effect, in fact, purchasing new pieces of equipment that after a year – I question where that equipment then goes. By the next time the Electoral Boundaries Commission is constituted, for the next set of electoral boundaries, I'm going to assume that plotter technology will be such that the plotters that are purchased for this round will probably be obsolete and will have to be replaced again.

I guess there are two questions that I would have. First of all, what is the cost of these two plotters? Secondly, was it looked into in terms of either renting or perhaps leasing these plotters from a firm that has them in regular usage and could perhaps spare them? I would suggest – if I'm not correct, I'd be surprised – that there are a lot of surveying firms around the province that are currently less busy than they typically have been in the past, and they may well have exactly the equipment that the boundaries commission is needing and looking for and would be happy to make those plotters available to the Electoral Boundaries Commission.

I'm just questioning: is this the best way of, you know, keeping an eye on things? I recognize that everything else that you mentioned – with regard to an increase in postage, absolutely, that's gone up. Increased number of households: yes, that, too. I'm going to assume – I could be wrong on this – that there is also going to be a robust effort to reach out to Albertans using platforms other than direct mail, which, as we know, is something that we become more and more reliant upon as we do communications out there, although I certainly hope it doesn't turn into a 4 and a half million dollar exercise.

But I would like to ask specifically with regard to these two pieces of capital purchase that you mentioned because it just strikes me that, you know, perhaps that's an area – and maybe it's a very small amount of funds. That could be. I've never bought a map plotter in my life, so I really don't know what these things are worth, but I can imagine that they aren't cheap. Perhaps we could just have more information as to what these plotters cost and why they're being purchased. Was leasing considered, and if it was, why was that option rejected?

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

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to provide a little bit more information, I did mention the map plotters. In fact, they did have one from the previous commission. Of course, they use them quite a bit, and because they are aged, they are looking to replace them, and some of them are failing. The cost for the two new plotters is \$54,000. They would be able to use them in the next one as well.

In addition to that, some of the other questions of the figures that we are wanting, too: actually, those figures were presented during Members' Services Committee when this went through Members' Services. Again, I almost want to say that some of the discussion on how we are approving the budget was actually discussed within the Members' Services Committee. That's why this is being brought forward after having been approved through Members' Services.

That being said, I just wanted to make sure that the number was out there, that the map plotters do cost about \$54,000. I don't have the information on the lease, if that was looked into as an option, but I know that this information was presented to Members' Services as a line item that is increasing.

The Chair: I should just point out that the process we're following for this supplementary supply is a little bit unique in that the request is coming from the Legislative Assembly to the House, which is why the Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park is a designate on behalf of the Members' Services Committee, and it's a fairly straightforward, single request. The timing is a little bit more fluid, and I've been, in who I'm recognizing, just a little more generous.

Any other members wishing to speak?

Then I shall put the following question.

Vote on Supplementary Supply Estimates 2016-17 General Revenue Fund

Agreed to:

Support to the Legislative Assembly

Expense \$1,451,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

The Committee of Supply shall now rise and report.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Ms Sweet: Madam Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again. The following resolution related to the 2016-17 supplementary supply estimates for the general revenue fund for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2017, has been approved.

Support to the Legislative Assembly: expense, \$1,451,000.

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

I did want to alert hon. members that Standing Order 61(3) provides that immediately upon concurring on the report of the Committee of Supply, we do revert to Introduction of Bills.

7:50

Introduction of Bills

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Bill 37

Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016 (No. 2)

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 37, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016 (No. 2). Thank you to the members opposite for their questions to clarify the substance of the act and what it'll be spent on. This being a money bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to this Assembly.

Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 37 read a first time]

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

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

Bill 32

Credit Union Amendment Act, 2016

The Chair: Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill?

Dr. Starke: Madam Chair, I'd just like to declare that I have a pecuniary interest or at least that my spouse does as she sits on the board of directors of a major credit union here in the province and therefore request that I may recuse myself from discussion and have that recorded in the Orders of the Day.

The Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I rise to speak to the Credit Union Amendment Act, 2016. As I've mentioned before, the credit union system is a vital part of the Alberta economy; \$24 billion in assets are under management across the system. It is incredible, then, that this act has not been renewed, reviewed in at least 20 years and possibly 30 years. This bill is about modernization. It's about bringing the credit union system into the 21st century. It is about cutting red tape from the system and making it easier to do business. The legislation will modernize the system by providing additional business powers to credit unions and clarifying membership rules, which will make it easier for credit unions to lend to small and medium-sized enterprises.

The changes to the act have been well received by the credit unions themselves, who have been waiting for a long time for many of these changes. Graham Wetter, the CEO of Credit Union Central of Alberta, stated in a letter received by our government, quote, I would like to take this opportunity to express our industry's support for Bill 32. End quote. Further, he goes on to say, "Bill 32 . . . will serve to further enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of Alberta credit unions, which in turn will provide further benefits to Albertans . . . and the provincial economy." Mr. Wetter praises the government for engaging with and consulting credit unions when developing this proposed legislation.

I am proud of this work and firmly believe that it ensures the resilience and viability of the credit union system and that of Alberta families and businesses as a result. Credit unions are an important part of our communities. They are local-minded and play leading roles at the local level. They are innovative and develop

many key products that would never be dreamed of by the banking system.

One that sticks out for me is the partnership between First Calgary Financial and the Calgary nonprofit Momentum, which provides an alternative product to the payday loans that many people get involved with. First Calgary's product provides access to credit at well below the triple digits charged by payday lending companies. This allows First Calgary members to access credit quickly and easily without the fear of spiralling into unending cycles of debt. This is innovative.

I ask that all members stand with the credit unions and their endorsement and provide their support for this bill.

At this time, Madam Chair, I'd like to propose an amendment. I propose a minor amendment to the bill as follows: section 3 is struck out, and the following is substituted:

Section 37 is amended by adding the following after subsection

(6):

(6.1) Where a bylaw under section 45(4)(j) does not provide for access to the list of members, or does not provide for reasonable access to it as referred to in subsection (3), the Lieutenant Governor in Council may make regulations

- (a) establishing the right of a member to direct the credit union to distribute to all members the information specified by that member and to direct the method of distribution, and
- (b) with respect to any such direction, establishing the rights and obligations of the credit union, including the right to impose on the member a reasonable charge for distribution.

Madam Chair, I'd consider this a clarifying amendment. It simply seeks to clarify the authority which a credit union has to recover reasonable costs from a member. It clarifies the purview government has to regulate the distribution of credit union member lists and how credit unions distribute information at the request of the member.

At this time I'd like to move this amendment and encourage my colleagues to support this amendment as well as the whole bill. Thank you, Madam Chair.

I have two copies of the amendment.

The Chair: This will be known as amendment A1. We're going to take a moment to give members a chance to have a copy of it, have it circulated.

I believe we're ready to continue. Did you have any further comments, hon. Minister of Finance?

Go ahead, hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's a pleasure to rise and speak to amendment A1. I'd like to thank the member for bringing it. I always have some reservations when it comes to the government putting itself in a situation where it needs to amend its own legislation. Previously and even mere moments ago the Minister of Finance stood up and praised the completeness and the awesomeness of the bill, you know, went on record with the letter that he spoke about. In fact, I had the opportunity to receive the same letter.

8:00

Last week I rose in the House and spoke at some length about the great work that the Mountain View Credit Union does in the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills and also expressed their support that they'd provided in the form of their chief officer and their discussion around the bill.

It sometimes is concerning that the government would need to amend its own legislation a mere three or four days after

introduction, particularly when the government has said such glowing things about their own legislation. I have read through the amendment now, but I'm wondering if the Minister of Finance might just provide some context as to what happened, why it was that, you know, they introduced the bill and now they believe that they need some clarification with respect to this amendment. Like, I get what it's going to do, but how did we wind up here? Is this the only amendment that he's anticipating needing for this particular bill?

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much for the questions. Yes, it is, with regard to the number of amendments. This is all I'm contemplating. If you look at 3, section 37 in terms of the original in the bill and then look at this amendment, the amendment is more expetive. [interjections] No. That's not the right word – explanatory in terms of the kinds of direction that we're taking, working with credit unions, recognizing that many credit unions already have provisions in their bylaws. Those provisions in their bylaws we are acknowledging, but we are also indicating to members who wish to utilize this provision in any credit union that they're a member of that they have to underwrite these costs.

We're being more explanatory, we're being clearer with regard to who bears the costs of this engagement with members of credit unions, and we're recognizing that the bylaws in place, where they're reasonable, where they're already taking place for members in credit unions, that those would be of course acceptable. The previous unamended part that was in the original bill took too heavy a hand at trying to address these things. The amendment is more about working together with credit unions, and that's probably the way credit unions work best: they work for their members, and we're trying to work with the credit unions.

The Chair: Any other questions or comments with respect to amendment A1?

Seeing none, I'll call the vote.

[Motion on amendment A1 carried]

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 Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am proud to have a credit union within two of my communities, the Lakeland Credit Union. It's a credit union that I actually served on the board of until I was elected. I sat as the finance chair, and I actually have a humorous story to share.

An Hon. Member: From accountants?

Mr. Cyr: I know. I know. I had two committees that I could be a part of – actually all of the committees, but two of them that I was interested in. One was the audit committee, and one was the finance committee. I was like: "Well, you know what? I do audits all the time. I think I want to move on to something a little different, so I am going to join the finance committee." It makes sense. [interjections] Right. So I went in, and I find out that my duty on the finance committee is to be in charge of the audit, so what they meant was governance, more or less, with the audit committee. In the end, I ended up doing a lot of the finance and working very closely with Shirley, Pierre, Garth, Amber, and Ronda.

You know, the fact is that the staff at the Lakeland Credit Union are wonderful. They're people that I got to know very well, as well as the board members, and I'd like to get them recognized because what we need to understand is that credit unions are member driven,

very similar to political parties – very similar to political parties – and it is decisions that are being made by the members at AGMs that actually influence the direction of a credit union. I'd like to say that in my case here, working with Charmaine, Judy, Mitch, Wayne, Kelsey – I didn't work with Chantal, and I didn't work with Lionel or Dean or Denis, but I did work with a few others that I really did enjoy working with.

You know what? The fact is that when it comes to credit unions, at the time when I decided that becoming a director was something that I had some interest in because in the end I wanted to be a part of my community, and what better way to be a part of your community than joining as a director to hear exactly how to help? The one thing I will say about our local credit union: what it's well known for is its contributions back to the community, its donations back to the community, giving back to the community, volunteering with the community. That is something that attracted me to the credit union.

Now, here it is that I sat on the finance committee. I was able to work with the staff and work out what the dividends should be along with the board, and, you know, through that I had a really good understanding of exactly how credit unions work.

I also will say that the one thing about credit unions is that they actually have their own training program. You go through CUDA training – I don't remember what the acronym stands for off the top of my head, but I'm sure I can probably guess what it is – and here it is that they put you through a series of courses to prepare you for running a credit union.

Now, why is this important? Credit unions were started in our community because they just couldn't get financing or be able to build up within our community. On January 25, 1940, for instance, is where they actually did their creating of the Lakeland Credit Union. It wasn't called that way back then, but it is now. We actually had our 75th anniversary, which was quite remarkable, and I'll tell you that it gives me great pride.

Now, I will tell you that when I first started as a businessman in Cold Lake, it comes down to that when you're starting to work with some of the larger banks, it is more difficult to get a loan so that you can get a building and get going. In my case it was the credit union that was the only one that was willing to take a chance, and the members were able to put their consideration behind me, which is why it is so important that we move something forward that adds to the ability for credit unions to be able to compete on a provincial level. We need to make sure they're competitive because if they lose that I guess not competitive advantage but being able to compete at a provincial level, this is bad for all of us.

Now, I will tell you that when it comes to our local credit union, I went and I reached out to our CEO right now, and I said, "What do you think about this specific act that's being brought forward?" My CEO said, "This is something that we can get behind." You know what? Just because the two largest credit unions say that this is good doesn't necessarily mean that it's good for all credit unions.

8:10

Now, he was able to go forward and say: "Scott, you know what? This is good for us. This is something that I believe is good for our credit union and good for our communities." And you know what? It's that stakeholder outreach. I had heard our Finance minister doing the same thing with credit unions. We actually had them up in the gallery and at first reading, coming forward. That's something, I've got to say, that is good to hear, that we actually have some stakeholder outreach when it comes to our credit unions because they're such an important part of our finance system.

Now, to get back to our story here, where I was going through and trying to find a loan but wasn't able to with the major banks. I

was looking to start a business. We didn't quite fit that one little narrow gap that they have. You know what? I'm not putting the banks down or the ATB. I will tell you that our banks in Bonnyville-Cold Lake are all wonderful. ATB: wonderful. But in the end, it was the member-driven credit union that was able to give me the flexibility I needed to get that loan and start my small business. This is something that is important to recognize: small businesses are what employ Albertans. So giving them the ability to compete is good for all of us, and I commend the Finance minister for moving this forward.

The fact that we have a piece of legislation that is helpful for the credit unions and has done the stakeholder outreach is a positive thing, in my books. We have seen in the past where this government hasn't done its due diligence when it comes to stakeholder outreach, and that truly is a shame. I will say that when it comes to being able to work with the stakeholders and being able to create a piece of legislation that everybody can agree on, that truly is a piece of legislation that will be good for all Albertans. We need to reinforce that this, as far as I'm concerned – and I've read through this legislation – is good for Albertans. We need to reinforce this.

I encourage everybody to move this legislation forward to make sure that in the end we are reinforcing all businesses within Alberta, and I would like to encourage everybody to support this bill. Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to make comments or questions or amendments with respect to Bill 32? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Chair. This will be brief. I'm going to agree with the former speaker's comments, but I'm going to come at it from a slightly different way. I had the opportunity to talk to a couple of people I know that are in the banking business about whether they had any complaints about this – and I mean the chartered banks – and they didn't seem to have any particular concerns. So while this is in accord with what the previous speaker says, it comes at it from a different angle, not whether the credit unions liked it but whether the noncredit unions hated it. I didn't hear a lot of hate. There has been no hate from the banks on this. I don't speak for all the banks and would never pretend to, but a couple of people that I know that are in that business that I talked to didn't express any strong dislike for the legislation.

I suppose the people who are the biggest competitors and I think clearly aware of it are not jumping up and down. There's a reasonable chance that the legislation is good. Consequently, I think there's a pretty good chance that I'll be supporting it. We've heard from previous speakers that the credit unions think it's good, and we haven't heard anybody stand up in this House and say that anybody from the banks have said that it's bad. So when you add that together, maybe you've got something good here.

The Chair: Any other speakers to the bill? The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Yeah. I wanted to, first of all, thank the members opposite who spoke in support of credit unions, especially the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, who really emphasized that the power of credit unions is that they are owned locally by members, with members' involvement, and they benefit that community. I think that's a very important part of who credit unions are and why the act needed to be modernized to actually make credit unions even more of a force in the community.

I think the bill, with the amendment that has just been introduced by the Finance minister, is really going to encourage member involvement through governance because they'll be able to access

the membership for a fee, as was pointed out in the amendment. Very often what happens in the credit union system is that to keep the credit union system truly as member owned, then you really need to make sure that members have a chance to get involved in the governance and really feel the participation. So I think the amendment is going to clarify how information can be shared to members, and I think that is important.

I also think this bill is really going to be important to our communities and will support communities, as was so well explained by the Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake, because it's going to give credit unions more choice to have businesses as members and to serve those businesses and to also provide options around having insurance brokers in separate facilities.

I think the support for this bill by members throughout the House is really good news for our communities, and also, for me, it's good news for the locally owned credit union system, where all the profits and all the benefits stay within Alberta to strengthen our communities.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Chair: Any other speakers to the bill?
Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 32 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Bill 36

An Act to Enhance Off-highway Vehicle Safety

The Chair: Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak on Bill 36, An Act to Enhance Off-highway Vehicle Safety. This bill is very much a compromise that the NDP and the Minister of Transportation have come forward with in order to find the right balance for Alberta, for all of Alberta.

For the most part, I think the hon. minister has gotten this right. Rural Albertans who like the quiet enjoyment of their property will continue to enjoy that right. It also recognizes that fish and wildlife officers, Alberta sheriffs, and the RCMP would have much difficulty coming onto a private property to issue a ticket or an enforcement action for not wearing a helmet.

Bill 36 also recognizes the right to self-government for First Nations and Métis settlements, and I do hope local laws within those jurisdictions will be updated on the reserves and settlements to adopt this new standard. It is very much about protection of all people throughout Alberta.

Madam Chair, Bill 36 will allow the minister to make regulations to allow exceptions to the law. That being said, with considerations given to rural Alberta already in the bill, I do believe that one group was missed in this bill. Hunting and trapping are a vibrant part of rural life. Hunting and trapping allow people, including nonreserve indigenous people, to exercise traditional land-use rights. Some hunters and trappers have mobility issues and require the use of off-highway vehicles to check their trapline and track and hunt animals. When engaged in hunting and trapping, hunters and trappers travel at relatively slow speeds. They are not travelling at very high speeds

when they're engaged in tracking animals. The wearing of a helmet while hunting will affect the hearing and the sightlines as hunters and trappers try and track their animals. It dulls the senses and makes the activity more difficult, and I would suggest it also makes it less enjoyable.

8:20

When an animal is identified, the added time to remove a helmet can spook that game animal, and therefore the hunt resumes, frustrating and trying the patience of the hunter. If a hunter is trying to use a hunting rifle or a crossbow while wearing a helmet, the sights will not be correct, disproportionately affecting the targeting, aim, and accuracy.

I would let the House know that the province of Manitoba has an exemption for the wearing of helmets for hunters and trappers in their provincial law. We have an active outdoorsmen community here in Alberta and even members of this Assembly like the Member for Fort McMurray-Conklin, the Leader of the Official Opposition, who has a trapline that he is engaged with.

On that note, I wish to move an amendment, and I have copies here, Madam Chair.

The Chair: This will be known as amendment A1.

Go ahead, hon. member.

Mr. van Dijken: I didn't keep one for myself, Madam Chair, so I'll wait till I get one so that I can read it into the record. Sorry about that.

I move that Bill 36, An Act to Enhance Off-highway Vehicle Safety, be amended in section 3, in the proposed section 128.1, by adding the following after subsection (4):

(5) Subsection (2) does not apply to a person travelling to engage in hunting or trapping within the meaning of the Wildlife Act.

I think it's important, Madam Chair, to recognize that hunters and trappers are most often travelling at very slow speeds when tracking animals and that a helmet can affect their ability to properly track and to properly take down their game. With the added time to take off the helmet and possibly spook the animal away, if they try and use their firearm while wearing a helmet, it can quite often result in injured game rather than actually properly taking down the game.

So I encourage the House to consider this. We see in the province of Manitoba that this has become an exemption there, and I would suggest that it is quite reasonable and very easy to encompass within our bill here.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Any members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would just like to respond to the four justifications given by the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock. One of the justifications for this amendment was that hunters and trappers would be travelling at a slow speed when tracking animals. That may be true, that there would be some moments of slow travel, but there's no research to indicate that it would always be slow. It may be slow, but there could just as likely be times when they're going fast, and speed is a factor here. We would not say that going slow could be guaranteed at all times. Therefore, that justification is not valid. Also, under the Wildlife Act, section 33, a person is not allowed to carry a loaded firearm or to discharge a weapon from an OHV or any other vehicle. They would have to get off the vehicle, so it's irrelevant whether they're travelling to that point fast or slow.

The second justification was that hearing and sightlines would be a problem in tracking animals, but both the CSA and DOT standards for helmets do exist, and they can be purchased. So the consumer actually has a choice in the kind of helmet that they have, and that choice could be for hunting, and the visibility could be adjusted for that specific need.

The third justification is that there may be a spooking of the game by removing the helmet. But how did they get there? They got there by an ATV or a quad or something that's probably much noisier than removing a helmet, so it is unlikely that the time that a person would have to take to remove the helmet would spook the game any more than they've already been spooked by the arrival of the hunter. I guess, just to go on, the OHVs are intrusive by their size, by their noise, and the hunters have to get there. If they're walking, of course, they wouldn't need a helmet, but if they're on the OHV, not important.

Then the fourth justification: targeting, aiming, and accuracy. Well, again, I'll refer back to the Wildlife Act, section 33. The person is not allowed to carry a loaded firearm or discharge from the vehicle. So they would have to be off anyway, and that leads me to believe that the helmet requirement should be there on the vehicle. They should not use that as an excuse for taking it off and riding without it.

Now, it is important to note that any exemption would only apply to those recreational hunting or trapping. Currently in Alberta workers employed by provincially regulated commercial hunting, fishing, and trapping organizations, the professional hunters, are required already to wear an OHV helmet under the Alberta occupational health and safety laws. It already exists for the hunters, and we should not make that exemption.

Now, I do appreciate the Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock looking at this important legislation. Safety for Albertans remains the minister's primary concern, and we believe that the proposed amendment does not improve safety for OHV users. Bill 36 has taken into account extensive consultation with the public, and that public did include hunters, trappers, and the industry shareholders.

At this point I would like to simply say that we are not supporting the amendment. Thank you.

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

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just speaking to the first item that I outlined earlier, with regard to hunters and trappers travelling at relatively slow speeds, the member opposite brought forward that there's no real documentation to suggest that they will be.

One thing: we were unable to find if there was any documentation that there were injuries happening within the recreational hunting and trapping industry. I'm not sure if he was able to come across any statistics that would suggest that there are incidents of injury to hunters and trappers that we need to be concerned with. We did ask that of the library in Transportation, and we could not get any definitive answer that there were any registered injuries for those types of individuals. So if the member opposite could allude to whether or not they were able to find any documentation with regard to those people.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Hinkley: Yes. Just to respond to that, no, we do not have any research either indicating what the average speed would be. However, it could be fast. So because it could be fast or it could be slow, regardless of the research we are saying no to the exemption.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Well, thanks, Madam Chair. I'll be brief. This is really about establishing a culture of safety. Whether or not older people, including hunters and trappers, are fine operating their vehicles, we're setting a standard for kids, for young people.

8:30

A culture of safety starts with adults modelling behaviour that says: my head, my body, my machine; the people around me matter, and I'm going to do everything I can to prevent injury and death and cost to the health system. A minor inconvenience or a minor cost like a helmet or even age restrictions would be, to me, no-brainers, if I can use that term, if we're really trying to establish a culture of health and safety and model it for our kids. That's precisely what needs to happen if we're actually going to get to less injuries.

There's been a 30 per cent increase in injury rates from ATVs over the last 10 years. That's just involving children. I'm most concerned about children. A 30 per cent increase over 10 years in children's injury rates associated with ATVs suggests that we need to do more. My view would be similar to that across the building here, to say, "Let's do everything we can to set standards that are not the worst in Canada," which they are in Alberta today. The Canadian Paediatric Society has rated Alberta the very lowest standards of ATV safety anywhere in the country, and it's reflected in some of the statistics.

It may not be specifically statistically relevant to say that hunters and trappers are not injured any more frequently whether they wear helmets or not, because they're going slower or faster. We don't know the data. That's the fact of the matter. What we do know is that a culture of safety is established by the adults in a society, what's important is visible, and when children see adults taking care of themselves, taking care of their vehicles, taking care of their speeds, acting responsibly, wearing helmets, children grow with that culture.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you. I appreciate the comments from the previous speaker. While I agree with his comments, I'm not sure they necessarily apply very directly to this particular amendment because children of a young age I don't think are allowed to hunt, certainly not by themselves.

You know what? This amendment actually deals with an interesting choice, in my view, Madam Chair. At the point of somebody getting off their ATV because they see an animal, which is the greater risk? Is the greater risk from what they do on their ATV, or is the greater risk from using their firearm a little bit faster because they have to take a helmet off as compared to if they didn't?

Of course, they're going to say: well, you should never hurry. I think that's a fair comment, but in the real world lots of times when people are hunting, they're out sometimes for hours or days, and then they see an animal that they legally have a tag for, that they're allowed to take. Of course, if they've been out for hours and they haven't seen that animal until now and the animal may be headed for the bush where they can't see it anymore, they're in a hurry. That's not an excuse ever to not be safe, and I'm not going to make an excuse for anybody to not be safe. But the fact is that what this amendment weighs, in my view, is the safety difference between the risk from being on the ATV as compared to the risk in handling your firearm just a little bit faster because you've got to get a helmet off.

I think it's a reasonable amendment. I understand some of the other arguments. The only one I probably didn't understand is on fast and slow because I don't think legally there's really a definition of fast or slow. What's fast for me might be slow for you, Madam Chair, or slow for other members of this House or vice versa. I'm not sure that any fast or slow argument particularly carries a lot of weight but, rather, what's safer. I think that's what we're really talking about here, and I think it's a legitimate thing for us to think about, whether the risk is greater from riding the ATV without a helmet or the risk is greater from having to be that little bit faster with your firearm because you're taking the helmet off. I think that's something that members of the House could legitimately think about before they vote on this.

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

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to rise and speak about this because I have talked to a number of different hunters and members of fish and game associations in my constituency. There are different arguments to be made when it comes to wearing a helmet, whether they think it's just best practice or they think that it's something that should actually be instituted as legislation in the province. I think that we do need to remember that Alberta is the last to bring in this sort of legislation, so we are lagging behind.

It is an important conversation to have to see, you know, what should be left up to the individual and what responsibility and leadership the province should be taking. Really, I mean, all of the different validators on this piece of legislation – it's not the province that's taking the leadership; it's people like the woman who actually suffered the brain injury that support this. It's different, incredibly important stakeholders that see the importance. You know, they're waiting for the province to do something. They're waiting for us to get onboard to make this change.

I can table this later, but there is an article from *Field & Stream* magazine from 2012. *Field & Stream* magazine recommends using a helmet because it reduces the risk of fatality. Their quote is that helmets “reduce the risk of fatalities . . . by 42 percent” and that it reduces the risk of “non-fatal head injury by 64 percent.”

When we're talking about taking care of Albertans, as legislators in this House we need to think about what the costs are to society when people are hurt or injured or, even worse, tragically killed. We bear the costs not just as all Albertans but as communities. If we have someone that is injured and can't work anymore, we bear that cost as a society. We bear those health costs. If we have someone that is lost that is the breadwinner in a family, we all bear that cost. While it is always tragic to lose a person for any reason, in any circumstance, the thing that we can do that can substantially protect the public good and protect public safety I think is something that is of import to each one of us in this House.

I understand that there is a question of personal choice, and I think that that's been left in this piece of legislation where the minister is not asking for this to be applied to private lands. However, we all need to take responsibility for each other when we are out on public property, and this is a means of doing so through the use of helmets. That's why I am rising to speak against the amendment.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

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

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to compliment the government on the way that they have constructed this bill. I think that they got it about right. Please don't take that as a half-hearted compliment. It's a sincere one. It seems on the one hand a straightforward issue, but on the other hand there is more than one thing to think about.

I know that the Member for Calgary-Mountain View harassed me incessantly on this issue when I was Transportation minister, and I know that he was sincere and honest when he was harassing me. I think he knows that I was sincere when I said: “You know what? We're talking to the folks from the Alberta associations of off-road vehicles, the responsible groups, on doing this.” Of course, as time went on, my colleague from Grande Prairie was the Transportation minister, and I think that had things gone differently for us in the election last year, he may have brought forward a piece of legislation that's pretty similar to what's before us today.

So I am in favour of it, Madam Chair, but my concern or my caution, if you will, is that no one should think that this is going to solve all the problems and prevent all the deaths. If you look at the statistics that are available on ATV deaths today, there is a good percentage of them from head injuries, but in a good percentage of those the riders were wearing helmets, and that didn't keep them alive. There's a good percentage of those. There's no doubt that there will be a lot of circumstances, a lot of places where it either saves an injury or saves a life, and that's a positive thing, but I wouldn't want anybody to think that it will be a cure-all.

8:40

I say this advisedly. I'm a motorcycle rider, which I understand isn't the same as an ATV. I've been down to the States, riding in states where you're not required to wear a helmet, and I always wear mine. My personal bias has always been that anybody that doesn't wear a helmet on a motorcycle doesn't actually need one. [interjections] It took a minute, didn't it? I know. That's why I choose to do that. It's just a risk that I choose not to take. Other people choose to take it; I choose not to.

The other issue that this bill doesn't address – and that's not really a shortcoming in the bill but, rather, something to be considered down the way – is that a lot of those deaths on ATVs, whether it's from a head injury or not, whether the person killed or injured dies or not, whether they were wearing a helmet or not, what's not addressed in this bill and probably shouldn't be in this bill but is something that we ought to think about is how many people killed and injured on ATVs were impaired, a serious consideration because, obviously, someone who's impaired, whether they're wearing a helmet or not, is more likely to have a mishap or a crash, whatever you want to call it. I don't call it an accident because if you're impaired, it's not an accident. You took an unreasonable risk, and you paid for it. As one member across the way says, that's true, but society in many cases pays for that risk, too. When somebody needs long-term care and a family is without a breadwinner and a child is without a mother or a father, then those are other concerns as well.

While I think the government has done a good job of putting together this piece of legislation, the one issue that really hangs out there with red flashing lights for me is the issue of the impaired operation of ATVs. I'm not sure what legislatively I'd recommend on that, but that's something worthy of our thoughts as we go forward because a large percentage of the deaths and injuries, helmet or not, head injury or not, are attached to people operating

these machines that ought not be because of their state of impairment.

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

Seeing none, are you ready for the question? Oh, in that corner, Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Hinkley: Yeah. Sorry I'm so far away.

Madam Chair, I'd just like to summarize. I will be short, just four or five minutes. I rise in support of Bill 36, An Act to Enhance Off-highway Vehicle Safety. First, I would personally like to express my condolences to the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti and his family. On behalf of all my colleagues and everybody in the Assembly our sincerest sympathies. Even though a helmet was worn in that tragic fatality and as much fun as off-highway vehicling might be, it was a severe reminder that it can be risky and dangerous. We must participate with safety in mind. Helmets, even though they don't eliminate all, do reduce the risk of injury.

There is a history of need for this legislation and a history of desire to amend and update the Traffic Safety Act. In my previous career over the last two decades various school groups would come in and talk about safety to the students for all-terrain vehicles, quads, snowmobiles, and they would also come in with petitions for the adults to sign to promote and advocate for changes in the law. They would tell us stories of injury and death, and they would indicate that they are advocating for updated legislation.

Possibly members in this Assembly personally know people who have been severely injured or affected by off-highway vehicle mishaps and deaths, or they've read newspaper articles of the carnage that can happen when there are accidents. But, then again, you may have read the article last week where the heading was Alberta Government Deserves Credit for Taking Action on Helmets. It's been a long time in coming. As a result, there have been calls for the government to require helmets for people who ride off-highway vehicles. Up to this point municipalities have been responsible, and they could choose to create laws if they wanted. The result was that some municipalities did, and some did not. Laws from municipalities were varied and inconsistent. Now the provincial government, we, have the chance for a standard approach on helmets on public lands province-wide.

Why do people want helmet laws, and why do we need safety regulations? As the members for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock and Calgary-Currie have stated – and I want to reiterate this for the record and for emphasis – approximately 19 people are killed while operating off-highway vehicles every year. Seventy-four of 185 people between 2002 and 2013 died from head injuries sustained while riding ATVs, one form of OHVs. Eighty per cent of those head injuries involved individuals that were not wearing helmets. Nearly 6,000 off-highway vehicle related visits to the emergency room occur every year. Just last year, 2015, more than 1,000 children were injured as a result of off-highway vehicle activities.

With these medical and safety concerns it is incumbent upon us to investigate and consult Albertans. Public and stakeholder engagements were held in September of this year. The result was that Albertans clearly supported safety. Albertans clearly support and recommend change. The Minister of Transportation has positively responded to that data and consultations, and now we have before us Bill 36. It respects the values and Alberta tradition of off-highway vehicle use, it respects individual choice for use on private property, and it respects choice during farm and ranch operations by a farmer or farm worker on private property.

It adds Alberta to the list of the rest of Canada as one of the jurisdictions with some type of OHV helmet law. I was always

curious as to why we had to be the last. It takes action to keep Albertans safe, and it will save health care costs, reduce injuries and deaths. In fact, the costs per year tally about \$50 million, but that \$50 million is nothing compared to the grief that individuals and families have when there's a death.

Therefore, I'd like to close in supporting this legislation, and I call upon all members to support this bill. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Dr. Swann: I'm assuming that we haven't closed or adjourned at this time.

Well, I'm pleased to speak in support of what I've heard across the floor. This is a first step in what I hope we could extend further around age limits. About 18 per cent of the deaths from ATVs are under the age of 16. There's good physiological and psychological and other cultural data in the country to show that children under the age of 16 aren't physically or psychologically able to handle the power and the weight that is associated with an all-terrain vehicle. Almost all other provinces in Canada have age 16 as the limit for driving an ATV. In fact, 14 is the age limit in many provinces for being a passenger on an ATV. So I'm hopeful that we could also consider some of these age limits if we're really serious about trying to reduce injuries and deaths in children.

A thousand injuries in children in a year: I mean, that's phenomenal. Or was it a thousand in a year that you quoted? I didn't have that data. But our own injury control and prevention centre has some data up until 2013. I've been pushing them to give me more data since 2013, but suffice it to say that the rate has increased by 31 per cent in Canada between 2001 and 2010. A 30 per cent increase: surely, we need to look at some ways to reduce that carnage.

8:50

I know that there are other measures being taken, including licensing. Why would we allow people to drive a motorized vehicle at significant speeds without a licence, without proof of training, without some sense that they know what they're doing? We don't do that with motorbikes. We don't do that with motor vehicles.

Again, it may seem like overkill to some, but what is our culture about if not moving towards higher levels of safety and prevention? Part of the criticism I've had of our health care system for many years is that we spend 3 per cent of our budget, almost \$20 billion, on prevention. No wonder our hospitals are overflowing. No wonder that in our emergency rooms you have to wait six to eight to 10 hours to get seen. It's because so many opportunities for prevention are being ignored, and this is one of them.

We need to develop a stronger culture of prevention in this province. It's perhaps the last vestige of frontierism and free enterprise, I guess, and free will and individual choice. We were the last ones, I think, in Canada to bring in seat belts, and that was a fight. But now I think we've all accepted that there is something besides individual freedom that's also important, and that's social responsibility, the cost to society.

Those two areas, I think, I wanted to highlight. I would still hope to be able to bring forward a couple of amendments tomorrow, one on age restrictions and one on licensing and requirements for training.

So I'll adjourn debate, with your permission, Madam Chair.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Chair: The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that the committee rise and report Bill 32 and rise and report progress on Bill 36.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Ms Sweet: Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill with some amendments: Bill 32. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 36. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed, say no. So ordered.

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 34 Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you. I am pleased tonight to rise to move second reading of Bill 34, the Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016.

Over the last two weeks our government has taken bold steps to modernize Alberta's electricity system, a modernization that was long overdue. We announced a series of measures that will ensure reliable electricity in Alberta and stable prices for consumers. We have announced, first, a four-year, 6.8 cent per kilowatt hour cap on electricity rates for consumers on the regulated rate option. Second is a plan to transition to a capacity market which offers a tried and tested solution to the energy price spikes that were built into the energy-only market we inherited. Third, we've come to agreements with companies to phase out coal by 2030 and also to settle the PPA disputes. We've also announced a ban on the door-to-door sale of energy products.

As you can see, it has been a busy fortnight for this government on the electricity file and an important two weeks for protecting electricity consumers. Taken together, these actions will address the price volatility that has been a symbol of our electricity system past but not future. These changes set the stage for a more reliable system and one that is more attractive to investors. What's more, they will provide consumers with steady, more reasonable electricity costs, and most importantly it puts consumers first. Bill 34, the Electric Utilities Amendment Act, is the next step in our package of efforts to protect consumers. It would allow the Balancing Pool to borrow money in order to manage its funding obligations.

Before I outline the specifics of our action, let me provide a refresher to members of the House about the Balancing Pool and the financial situation it faces. This context is important to understand why I'm proposing this legislation. The Balancing Pool was created in 1999 to deal with the government's deregulation experiment; specifically, government's relinquishing of the public's interest in stable, contracted electricity rates.

As we all know too well, the PPAs were created with sweetheart provisions that the buyers could use to get out of all losses, even those caused by volatility of the energy market that deregulation brought us. This was, after all, the deregulation craze of the Enron era that Alberta's government was only too happy to jump on board with, taking Alberta consumers along for the bumpy ride. But the government failed to provide the necessary tools for the Balancing Pool to manage the potential losses from this roller coaster. Its primary duties were to manage the PPAs it holds in a commercial manner. This worked fine so long as power prices

kept spiking every few months, as was built into the design of the energy market.

The return of the PPAs by the companies that held them has increased the amount of generation capacity that the Balancing Pool is responsible for. But with our prolonged period of low prices and the return of the PPAs, the Balancing Pool cannot sell the electricity generated by these assets for enough money to cover its expenses. As with all our efforts, we chose to draw a line in the sand between this old system and our new approach. In the face of raucous opposition from across the aisle we chose to stand up for consumers.

Some others would have us continue on a system that no longer works for consumers or investors. They would have us incur the PPA costs and pass them on to consumers. But we chose to take action to defend consumers. As a result, we have protected Albertans by getting PPA buyers to shoulder more of the PPA business losses than they first wanted to. We are doing this by entering into reasonable settlement agreements with PPA buyers, something we have accomplished already with three of the four PPA buyers. These are agreements that strike a sensible balance to protect consumers while moving forward with our electricity transition.

Given the low market prices the Balancing Pool still faces deficits. This is a problem as the Balancing Pool was not designed to turn a profit or a loss. It is required to ensure that its accounts net to zero over its life cycle, returning the money in times of surplus and charging money in times of deficit. It was intended to do this by setting an annual consumer allocation of costs or surpluses to consumers.

When the Balancing Pool was running a surplus under the off-high prices of the energy-only market system, it made sense for it to manage these costs, but the tools provided to the Balancing Pool when it was established are no longer sufficient for it to properly manage the impact on consumers now, certainly not when the costs required to meet their financial obligations are at today's levels. One reason for this is that the life cycle of the Balancing Pool was not clear. While the PPAs all expire in 2020, the period over which any remaining costs could be recovered from consumers was never set. Some assumed that the end date would be December 31, 2020, when the PPAs end.

9:00

The bottom line is that without any changes to the Balancing Pool's rules, consumers were facing a large and abrupt change to pay these obligations off by 2020. This is not fair to Albertans and not consistent with our commitment of a stable and affordable electricity system.

Our government, with this proposed legislation and supporting regulations, is now providing the Balancing Pool with the flexibility and tools it needs to cover its financial obligations in a way that does not adversely affect consumers. Without legislation and policy changes, the Balancing Pool would have to apply a substantial monthly consumer charge to residential and industrial bills to cover its costs through to 2020. Bill 34, however, would allow the Balancing Pool to borrow money from the province or a lender to manage its funding obligations. In conjunction with amendments to the Balancing Pool regulations, this provides the tools to minimize costs to consumers. Together these changes would allow the Balancing Pool to smooth the price volatility, helping to ensure that consumers' electricity costs are reasonable and stable.

An important change to the regulations is clarifying the end date for the Balancing Pool. Providing a clear end date of 2030 provides a longer period of time over which consumer costs can be spread. This allows for the impact on consumers to be better managed.

Currently the average residential consumer receives a Balancing Pool credit of \$1.95 on their monthly bill. Without this legislation, the Balancing Pool would not only have to remove that credit but apply a charge of \$8.40 per month beginning January 1, 2017. This works out to \$100 per average consumer. Similar charges would apply annually until the end of 2020. Bill 34, along with the supporting regulations, would reduce this charge to just 67 cents for the average consumer. Savings for heavy industrial users would be even more significant.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

As members can see, our government is committed to protecting Alberta's electricity consumers. Madam Speaker, this plan, which involves providing a loan for the Balancing Pool, extending the operations of the Balancing Pool, and setting the initial consumer charge of 67 cents per month, is a structured plan that puts Albertans first. It follows the two-step approach that we are taking to protect consumers on this file, first, by defending consumers against undue costs by entering into reasonable settlements with PPA buyers and, second, by taking action here to provide the tools to the Balancing Pool to manage their finances under the current market conditions. It provides stability and reasonable costs to consumers while allowing the Balancing Pool to meet its obligations. This is why I encourage all members to support Bill 34.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak to this bill, a critically important bill not only for us but for our children, I would say. This is a bill that arose as a result of the out-of-court settlements that the government has reached with some of the power purchase agreement companies. Settlements with TransCanada, for example, and AltaGas are tentative, and the government apparently is still negotiating with one of the parties, Enmax.

Under the terms of those settlements the companies will each pay the Balancing Pool an agreed-upon sum of about \$39 million in the case of capital, and in exchange they will be permitted to return their money-losing electricity contracts to the Balancing Pool. As a result of that, we have all recognized, I think, that this will result in all of us paying the true cost of electricity. I guess one of the philosophical questions that we're wrestling with here is whether we allow people to experience the true costs of electricity or whether we protect them from the true costs by capping the costs and giving the false impression that we are paying our way rather than passing on what could be up to \$500 million to our children and our grandchildren to pay for the way we're making decisions today.

I guess I have some practical and some very philosophical resistance to this. Maybe it's because I'm not opposed to market signals, to cost signals, and that the public, you and I, should really see the true cost of our electricity and adjust our lives accordingly, either try to find ways to reduce our use or find ways of developing new technologies, investing in new technologies.

I'll have another recommendation in relation to another bill, that perhaps an innovative way for all of us to participate would be a public offering on renewables, that we could all invest, as citizens of Alberta, in renewable energy in this province. We could all share in the risks or the benefits and move our province forward and be part of the solution instead of waiting for the big investors to come

in when it may not be the right time for many of them. They may not see the opportunities that we as Albertans must start to take hold of and must start to take responsibility for, I guess.

So I have some real difficulty in simply hiding the true price of electricity from consumers. It is going to cost more, and I for one have difficulty suggesting that we should allow the Balancing Pool to borrow whatever it needs to protect, I guess you'd say, consumers from the true price. I would call it paternalism at its worst, to decide for the people of Alberta: "You can't handle the price of electricity, so we're going to give you some kind of a Santa Claus approach to the costs. And oh, yes, eventually you'll have to pay for it, but it'll be much more in terms of interest payments by the time 2030 comes around."

If we're not there yet, then it'll again be falling more and more on future generations, when we're already asking future generations to take on a heck of a lot of debt and other expenses related to environmental concerns, obviously, some of the social deficits, some of the infrastructure. And, to be fair, the infrastructure investments that we're taking on, I support fully.

But the idea of giving the Balancing Pool the power to do all of this simply to give the impression and to protect people – if there are people that are vulnerable and can't pay their power bills, let's give them rebates. Let's give them the supports they need to keep the lights on. There's no question that some people will not be able to handle increased rates, but keeping it to 67 cents extra in a month: that's a false kind of message, to me, to be giving to all of us, that everything is cool; electricity isn't changing much; don't be concerned about the carbon levy, which I support; don't be concerned about the new charges, the borrowing that's going into the Balancing Pool; we're going to cover it for you. As if we as government can cover anything that isn't paid for by taxes.

The irony, of course, is that the government itself triggered the return of these unprofitable power purchase agreements to the Balancing Pool by announcing the changes without being fully aware of what the impact might be as a result of the contracts that were there and that, it's my understanding, a full level of research would have shown to be a problem and a potential out for the power people. The fact that we're now settling out of court kind of confirms that, that the government realizes it's not going to win and has gone back and paid these folks with out-of-court settlements.

I guess I would question the notion that we can't have clear market signals for people and that we have to hide the true cost from people, and I would question the right of this government to pass along even more debt to future generations and to take on more interest payments simply because we can, because you're in a majority position and you can make that decision. I don't think that's in our current best interests, and I don't think it's in our future generations' interests to not start to pay our way as we go.

9:10

The government has taken a number of steps to ensure low prices and system stability. This is all in the name of system stability. Well, at what cost, I guess I have to ask. Stable prices at what cost? It looks a lot like political opportunism when you look at it in that light, if you're not really thinking about the longer term and the importance of market signals for all of us. We all make decisions on the basis of price. Well, if the price is being hidden from us, we stop using common sense and we stop making longer term, better decisions in our own personal lives.

I think those are the main issues, that have been said before by others, but I needed to say them as well. While the aim of Bill 34 is laudable on one level, the reality is that there is no free lunch. There is no free lunch. Eventually we're all – and I'm particularly

concerned about our children – going to have to pay it. For that reason, I'll be voting against this bill.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. MacIntyre: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. I must say in response to the hon. minister's narrative that we just heard that it was an amusing work of fiction. I think it's called historical reconstructionism.

Anyway, I rise today, Madam Speaker, to outline my concerns regarding Bill 34, the Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016. The bill before the House is as short as it is irresponsible. This bill outlines that "the President of Treasury Board, Minister of Finance may, on the recommendation of the Minister of Energy, make loans to the Balancing Pool and guarantee the obligations of the Balancing Pool." No checks, no accountability, no public forum required to explain the minister's request for the funding, just a blank cheque to the Balancing Pool for an undisclosed and unlimited amount of money thus far.

Now, let's be clear. The Balancing Pool already has built-in mechanisms to cover their losses. They can put a rate rider for Balancing Pool allocations on consumers' bills. Now, for the benefit of the Energy minister, who, unsurprisingly, doesn't understand all the existing options in the electricity market, rate riders are temporary charges or refunds that apply when the actual costs incurred by a regulated transmission or distribution utility differ from the rates that were approved based on cost forecasts. These riders must be approved by the appropriate regulatory authority. Rate riders are designed to collect or reimburse a specific amount over a period of time, and consumers see them as credits or debits on their monthly bills.

Now, the Balancing Pool allocation rider is value owed to consumers from the regulated generating assets covered by power purchase agreements. I should make a note here that Albertans were paid something in the order of \$2 billion in the initial PPA offerings and another billion since that time on these rate riders, so something in the order of \$3 billion has come back to us. Customers, the consumers, have benefited by receiving this allocation but remain responsible for any outstanding risks associated with these generating plants, and for convenience the Balancing Pool allocations are flowed through to consumers as part of the provincial transmission tariff.

Let's have a little review for clarity. Rate riders must be approved by the appropriate regulatory authority. That would be a check on the system. That means that experts in the electricity market, a market that the minister has demonstrated some lack of aptitude for, are the ones tasked with reviewing or approving rate riders. That means that these are consumer expenses that are needed, not just in the opinion of the Balancing Pool, a formerly independent body that has recently seen its board members resign en masse amongst allegations of an unacceptable level of political interference by this government, but that these are expenses needed, in the opinion of experts outside the Balancing Pool, who must review this request. With this legislation in place, offering a blank cheque to the Balancing Pool, and with the pending replacement of Balancing Pool members, certain to be filled by NDP cronies, in my opinion, we have no doubt that any mindfulness for the bottom lines of Alberta families and businesses will soon be lost by the Balancing Pool. That is why I will stand up again and again defending the interests of Albertans, interests that do not now or ever include writing a blank cheque with taxpayers' money.

Here is another great part about rate riders. Customers see them as credits or debits on their monthly bills. That is what transparency looks like, Madam Speaker. As the hon. member previous mentioned, it is important that our customers, or our ratepayers, understand the full cost of electricity. Now, I know it's been a long time since the NDP were concerned with the requirements of running a transparent government, but during the election that provided them with their current mandate, that was a big issue for Albertans. It was one of the reasons that the third party was reduced to a handful of seats. It was the reason for the overwhelming swing in votes in the last election. This issue of transparency is huge to Albertans, and since this government was elected, it seems like they've almost forgotten how to spell the word. We don't see a lot of transparency.

The government has made a huge mistake due to either gross ineptitude or what some would call misleading Albertans. Now, your internal estimates for the mistake put the estimated monthly rate rider at less than \$1, but independent estimates put together by Dr. Andrew Leach and PhD candidate in economics Trevor Tombe put these costs just above \$2 per consumer per month. Given that the option to put forward the rate rider already exists and that all available estimates place the costs of this rate rider at just a few dollars, Albertans are left wondering: why are we passing this bill? It's entirely unnecessary.

The Balancing Pool has a mechanism for recovering these costs already, and now instead of following through with the system put in place for events just like this, we are being asked to remove some needed checks and balances that protect Albertans, one of them being transparency and understanding the true cost of government policies. What is the government hiding when we're only talking about a few dollars a month here? There is no sensible reason not to proceed with the existing mechanism at the pool's disposal, especially given that it's going to place the cost to consumers at just a few dollars. What is being planned in the future that would require such a wide-sweeping, irresponsible change that doesn't have a limit on the amount of money the government can backstop the Balancing Pool for? What is the government really afraid of here? This government has a terrible track record on the electricity file, and the one thing that is clear to Albertans is that they cannot be trusted.

Another important point of review is that customers benefit by receiving this allocation but remain responsible for any outstanding risks associated with these generating plants. Now, this is probably the most significant fact that the NDP prefer to ignore when talking about the PPA mess they've made, the debacle that they created that put us in the position where the NDP is asking this House to pass this senseless bill today. For years Albertans have been the benefactors of low electricity costs from our energy-only market, and more importantly Albertans received, as I mentioned, \$3 billion in credits from the Balancing Pool after the transition to our deregulated market over 15 years ago. Now, that \$3 billion in rate rider credits greatly exceeds the estimated losses for the Balancing Pool today over this PPA mess they've made, and estimates so far have come in around that \$500 million or \$600 million range.

The truth is, Madam Speaker, that our energy-only market was working just fine until the NDP got their fingers in it in July 2015. It was working in the best interests of consumers. The AESO was an arm's-length, independent body. The Balancing Pool was an arm's-length, independent body. The Market Surveillance Administrator was doing its job just fine as the electricity police, policing all of the participants in the system and catching them when they were doing wrong, as we have seen repeatedly from the MSA.

9:20

In other words, the system really wasn't broken. Did it need some fine-tuning? Absolutely, it did. Was it really that volatile? For the consumers it was not volatile, Madam Speaker. Consumers all the way along could have locked down their electricity rates simply by getting a contract with any of the many retail providers across this province, completely eliminating the volatility that this government claims was so bad that they had to take step after step after step to bring our deregulated energy market into a fully regulated, government-run, government-controlled market.

Now, Madam Speaker, we have as a reality that the volatility that the government claims was on the backs of retailers was actually on the wholesale side of things. The volatility was in the Balancing Pool. It wasn't on the retail side at all. The volatility that the government is throwing up as some sort of a big, bad, scary thing and that that's why they had to get their fingers involved was on the wholesale side. That was not for the retailers' sake. That was for a few corporations' sake who didn't like the low prices. So for whatever reason we have an NDP government climbing in the sack with corporations, probably for the first time ever in socialist history. I don't know. But, you know, as they say, politics makes very strange bedfellows, and we're seeing some of those shenanigans going on here in this bill.

Low power prices are the cornerstone of economic growth in Alberta; 78 per cent of our grid is used to serve industrial and commercial purposes. That means that power prices are key – they are absolutely key – input for our job creators.

We have an Energy minister standing up in the House on puffball questions and telling us that no investment has been made since 2009. One, that is absolutely not true. Enmax, the company this government is suing, presumably because the coal phase-out didn't do enough to create uncertainty in the electric markets for the NDP's liking, broke ground on Shepard in 2013. They didn't make any meaningful financial commitment to Shepard until well after 2010, long after the economic downturn this minister claims was the reason for stuff.

Two, Alberta has a huge reserve margin. No new investment has been needed because of that large reserve margin. It's approximately 31 per cent. You cannot create an artificial need for renewables investment and then sue power generators, phase out coal, and then blame the market for not supplying you with the energy that you need.

Three, we have companies citing regulatory uncertainty caused by this government as the reason why they have pulled planned investments into Sundance 7 and Genesee 4 and 5, two projects planned well after the 2008 financial collapse. So this claim on the part of the government telling us that no investment has been made since 2009: I can't use the L word, so I will say that they've been economical with the truth. How's that? Acceptable.

It is unreasonable, absolutely unreasonable, for this government to create uncertainty to the extent that it has and then call out the market, as if the lack of money for their renewables scheme is in any way the fault of the free market. Try being less radical, and that investment will come.

Madam Speaker, I have grandchildren, and I fully intend to use my time as a legislator to make sure that they are left better off and not worse. This bill does not accomplish that, and it will never accomplish that. Not only this bill, but it appears to me that bill after bill after bill, especially money bills put forward by this socialist government, are impacting not only us and our children but our grandchildren. Generational theft, I believe, is the appropriate description.

This government is borrowing to keep the lights on, literally borrowing to keep the lights on in this province, and you want me

to vote in favour of proving it with an unneeded blank cheque? I cannot do that. I will not do that. I will stand against this Bill 34 and bills like it for the sake of children, grandchildren, and the future of our province.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? Questions or comments? No?

All right. Seeing no one under 29(2)(a), I will recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I've been listening to the brief debate and the couple of speakers who have gone before me, and I continue to be partly baffled and, I have to say, disappointed in the rhetoric from both sides. You know, the minister stands up and talks about the risky deregulation experiment; the sweetheart provisions, which, by the way, are still up before the courts with at least one of the lawsuits that the government has filed against PPA holders; deregulation through the, quote, Enron craze – craze; we don't want crazes; my goodness, that's pretty scary – and talking about borrowing money to fund operations. Well, that sounds benign. Who wouldn't want to fund one's operations? That sounds pretty good.

I understand and have been told from those who've been in the House somewhat longer than me that occasionally politics has been known to break out in this place. It's a sad truth, and I've learned it. I've learned it not just here tonight, but I've learned it at other times. You know, that part I find profoundly frustrating because, really, what we're talking about here is pretty important stuff. What we're talking about is a government that is again asking this House to approve literally a blank cheque. That is the kind of deal that I would love to get in my personal or business life. That would be great, being backstopped by the powerhouse Alberta government.

The massive changes that have been wrought by this government in the past 10 days or so to the electricity market make your head spin. You know, I've endeavoured to follow along as best I can, and I'm sure most of the members of this House, I'll assume, have been reading this stuff as closely as I have as well. It's complex stuff, but what it comes down to is a government that is committed to a minimum of \$7 billion in costs to Albertans. One way or the other, Albertans pay those costs. Seven billion dollars. My goodness, it could be more than that. It could be a lot more than that.

All right. My first question to the government is: of that \$7 billion, where does the money come from? The answer to that question seems to be: don't worry; it comes from the carbon tax on large emitters, the specified gas emitters regulation. Okay. Let's unpack that a bit. Where does the SGER payment come from? Well, that comes from big companies. Problem solved. That's great. Big companies pay the carbon tax on large emitters because they're large emitters. No big deal. Who pays the big companies? Uh-oh. Madam Speaker, we pay the big companies. Albertans. Ultimately, all of this money flows from Albertans through our power bills, through the gas pump to those companies, which then remit a portion of that in either the specified gas emitters regulation or carbon tax payments.

So this money is not an unlimited pool of money. This is a mistake that I see this government making over and over again, overreaching, taking what is a pretty good idea – I've been on the record previously and I will get on the record again supporting the principle of renewable energy and bringing that onto the grid, supporting the principle of expanding gas-fired power in this

province, of getting the province of Alberta off coal-fired electricity for a number of reasons. We want a cleaner environment. We want cleaner air, less NOx and SOx in our environment. We want to reduce our carbon emissions. I think that we have a connection between pipeline approvals and our action on climate change, and I think that's a good thing. We want those things.

9:30

But you've taken a good idea, and you've taken it way too far and made massive, massive changes that so few people in this province actually understand. It's so complex and so technical and so interconnected that it's very difficult to get your head around all of the things that are happening here. This bill comes across – perhaps this is the record for the shortest government bill in the history of government bills. I don't know. Certainly, as we're dealing with one of the largest bills, if not the largest, Bill 21, the municipal government amendment act, and Bill 34 in the same session, perhaps that's some sort of record in terms of range of size of legislation.

It feels like an afterthought. This bill feels like: "Oh, right. We've kind of bankrupted the Balancing Pool, so does anyone have any ideas? Oh, right. Well, what we'll do is that we'll just authorize some borrowing from the Balancing Pool. How much? How much borrowing should we authorize from the Balancing Pool? We don't know. We have no idea. What we'll do is go to the House, create a money bill, and we'll just ask for unlimited backstop." Right? To answer the question from the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View, it's not a good idea. No. No. It's a terrible idea, in fact, so I've got some real concerns.

Now, why is the Balancing Pool out of money in the first place? Well, it's part of this raft of massive policy change that's been brought by this government. One of the most fundamental mistakes this government made right at the outset was not understanding the "or more unprofitable" clause, not doing the homework to know it was there in the first place, not listening to administration, who clearly told them that it was there, and then, once they knew about it, blindly proceeding anyway.

Once that happened, they were committed, and then they doubled down on a, frankly, dumb idea. I don't know if that's unparliamentary; if it is, I withdraw it, and if not, I keep it in the record. They doubled down on this idea, and instead of accepting back the PPAs – what would have happened had they done that? Well, the Balancing Pool would have been able to run them as economically as possible, and by some analyses that would be, at the absolute worst, a \$600 million cost, which sounds like a lot of money, and it is. I'm not denying that that's a lot of money. But if they were allowed to run those PPAs economically, then there's a good chance that that number could have come down.

The other thing that would have happened is that at least two of those PPAs would have been cancelled. Then what would have happened? Then the generators would have said: "You know what? There's no market for our generation facility." Those coal-fired plants very likely would have been taken offline. Guess what would have happened then? Alberta's carbon emissions would have dropped; NOx and SOx emissions would have dropped.

This government tells us constantly that they are trying to get Alberta off coal. Why, my friends, would they have not done that in the immediate term? Because they need the money. They need the money. That's this government's dirty little secret. They need the money from all those coal-fired plants, all the way through 2020 at least, to generate money into the carbon levy, if that's what you'd like to call it, to fund all of the changes that they want to bring to the system. It's scandalous, actually, because it is fundamentally

environmentally irresponsible. This government has kept coal-fired plants humming to fund their electricity plan.

I do just want to correct the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake. I hesitate to do this, but I think you'll like the correction. I think you referenced \$2 billion and then another additional billion that the PPAs had returned to Albertans. It is, in fact, \$4.4 billion that power purchase agreements have returned to Albertans. So the debate and the discussion around the energy-only versus capacity market is not a simple debate and discussion. There is something to be said for the fact that Alberta is one of only a couple of energy-only jurisdictions in North America, if not the world, and that maybe some changes were needed there. But, frankly, there's so much change going on all at once that it's very difficult to get your head around that. So again we're being asked to approve unlimited borrowing to no end. The questions I have are: how deep is that hole? How big is this debt going to get? Where is the money going to come from? What's that going to cost Albertans? How many more hundreds of thousands, millions, tens of millions of dollars is that going to cost in debt servicing?

The biggest issue of all, I think, is that this government has not done an adequate job of explaining to Albertans why all of this is necessary. Now, I believe climate change is real and human caused. I believe we ought to do something about it. I believe we need more wind power and solar and geothermal and hydro and biomass and renewables of all kinds. I believe those things because I think they're fundamentally the right things to do. But this government, sadly, has not done a good enough job of explaining to Albertans what's in it for them to go down this path. As a result and as we see in the polling numbers, Albertans are not happy with the carbon tax, and Albertans are not happy with the changes in renewable electricity. That's something that has got to be a big concern to this government. You've not done a good enough job, and then turning around and asking for literally a blank cheque to backstop your changes, changes you brought about through some grand plan, which is still unclear to me how it all hangs together, you're causing even greater anxiety amongst Albertans.

So I would really, in the best interests of this government and ultimately in the best interests of this province, ask you to please take it back about a half-step, think really hard about the what's-in-it-for-me question for Albertans. I would really encourage the Minister of Energy to work with her staff in however we pull together our talking points and to tone down the rhetoric. I think that'll help all sides of the House tone down our rhetoric, and we can hopefully have a thoughtful conversation about how we're going to manage Alberta's electricity sector going forward.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you hon. member.

Are there any hon. members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Madam Speaker, after hearing the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake and the Member for Calgary-Elbow, for the first time ever in my life I'm so scared now. They're talking about billions and billions of dollars. What we're hearing here is that this government is addicted to tax and spend, and they could justify anything, so they're asking us to write blank cheques. What is next? Are they going to ask us to let them print money so then there is no limit on anything? I think it won't be too long before we see that, that they want us to let them print money so they can spend endlessly and irresponsibly.

Bill 34 is just another in a long list of bills that the NDP have brought forward tinkering, meddling, interfering, and messing with Alberta's electrical system. The NDP have a reputation, Madam

Speaker, of sticking their finger where it doesn't belong. Sooner or later they'll be like that little boy who tries to stick a fork in an electrical socket. We all did that when we were young.

Mr. Yao: But the NDP are notorious for that.

Mr. Panda: Yeah. So they're going to get shocked soon. They're really going to get shocked. They have to wake up before they get an electric shock.

When 4 out of 5 members of the board of directors of the Balancing Pool resign, you know that the NDP is doing something wrong here. There are many, many advance warnings for them to tell that they are making a lot of mistakes, but they're not getting the message. The Balancing Pool was independent. It was at arm's length from the government of the day. The minister did not get involved with the day-to-day decision-making.

The Balancing Pool was established in 1999 by the government of Alberta to help manage the transition to competition in Alberta's electric industry. I'm just going to talk about the responsibilities and the current obligations in the Electric Utilities Act and the Balancing Pool regulations that are gone. I'm not going to go into the statistics because the Member for Calgary-Elbow has already tried to educate us on that risky path we're on.

9:40

Let me talk about these legislative duties as per the Electric Utilities Act and Balancing Pool regulations:

- To manage generation assets in a commercial manner, specifically any Power Purchase Arrangements . . . held by the Balancing Pool that include the right to exchange electric energy and ancillary services, and any arrangements or agreements derived from these assets;
- To hold the Hydro PPA and manage associated payments;
- To forecast revenues and expenses (incorporating estimates of Pool price and potential expenses related to risk backstop activities) and allocate the forecast surplus or deficiency to consumers through a Consumer Allocation or charge;
- To participate in appropriate regulatory, dispute resolution and other proceedings and processes to protect the interests of the Balancing Pool and the value of its assets; and
- To manage risks prudently in all aspects of its operations.

Those are the obligations and responsibilities under the original Electric Utilities Act and Balancing Pool regulations.

Bill 27, the Renewable Electricity Act, along with the other misguided government policy have together wreaked havoc on our electricity market and damaged the Balancing Pool. This pool of money, used to pay the PPAs, was in balance and had enough coming in and enough going out. Now that the PPAs have been cancelled and lawsuits from companies like Enmax endure, the Balancing Pool is not bringing in enough money and will run out of the \$700 million surplus it had unless this Bill 34, another money bill, is passed. That's the actual purpose of this Bill 34.

At the rate the Balancing Pool burns through money now, it will be broke and unable to pay its obligations in the new year. Bill 34 is a backdoor way to funnel government of Alberta money, which is ultimately taxpayers' money. Like the Member for Calgary-Elbow explained, it's all taxpayers' money or taxpayers' debt because the government is in deficit now. They'll funnel government money into the pool to help it meet its payment obligations. That sounds like a nice idea, only the truth is that Bill 34 is to paper over and cover up the mistakes and hide the true cost of the electricity from people's monthly electricity bills.

Bill 34 will ensure that there is no consumer allocation, which is a line on people's electricity bills. The NDP is out there pulling the wool over the eyes of Albertans. They are just trying to, you know,

mislead people and hide the actual costs on their electricity bills. As long as Albertans do not see the power prices going up, the NDP believes that all is well, that there won't be any rallies on the steps of the Legislature. That's what they're trying to avoid. The taxpayer will pay for it with mounting debt. One way or another taxpayers are going to pay, Madam Speaker.

I can tell you that the bankers loaning Alberta billions of dollars are looking at this province and counting their profits already. They think that the NDP is a good partner for them because they can make tons of money out of Alberta as long as the NDP is the government. Money, money everywhere, Madam Speaker, and it will all end in higher taxes in the long run to pay for it. Somehow we have to pay for it. Those higher taxes to cover the interest payments, they could have gone to building schools and hospitals and other social services. Also, we could have used that to build infrastructure, pave roads, and keep waste water out of rivers. But now we won't be using that money for any development projects or anything. We'll be using that money to pay higher taxes because of this government's irresponsible governance.

Really, the most disappointing element of all of this is that it is an unforeseen error. It's one thing to borrow for operational spending, as the NDP has us doing today – it's the first time in the history of Alberta that we are borrowing money to pay for operational costs, and that is unsustainable and damaging enough to our future. Madam Speaker, my colleague from Innisfail-Sylvan Lake mentioned that future generations will be mortgaged by this government. However, it is even worse when we are putting our future in jeopardy to pay for the mistakes of this NDP government.

Today we are discussing writing a blank cheque, that future generations will have to pay back, to cover totally unnecessary mistakes. This is not acceptable. Worst of all, Madam Speaker, there will be no limit on the amount of debt the Balancing Pool can borrow off our falling double-A credit rating in this province. We have seen many credit downgrades, and it's not helping because the borrowing rate will go up, and we'll end up paying higher interest, to infinity and beyond, as Buzz Lightyear would say. I sure hope we're not going into infinite debt. I'm hoping.

Connolly: Infinity and beyond.

Mr. Panda: Yeah. I'm hoping.

Now, I'm told that the Balancing Pool will have 14 years to pay back the money, but we don't know if they can. Whether 14 years is enough or not, we don't even know. We don't know if electricity prices will rebound so that the Balancing Pool can make the money back to pay off the debt.

The NDP needs to end their tinkering and toying with Alberta's electricity system. It needs to stop now. I call on all those backbenchers that were heckling to make a difference by voting down Bill 34. One mistake begets another which begets another, and it's the taxpayers being soaked all the way, Madam Speaker.

I ask all of us to act responsibly and stop the debt accumulation for the sake of future generations, our children and their children. Stop the higher taxes to pay the debt interest. They make one mistake, and they bring in another bill to pay for the mistake of the other bill, and it goes on and on and on. Stop the dishonest billing.

Madam Speaker, I implore all members of this House to vote against the bill. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak to 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Yes. Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I always listen with great interest when the Member for Calgary-Foothills

speaks. I do have a question for the member. Given your long history in business, you know, in many different levels of business, I imagine you've gone through negotiations, perhaps even been involved in a lawsuit or two. One of the real concerns that I have is that this government has overplayed its hand or perhaps not played its hand tremendously well by coming to settlements with some of the defendants in the lawsuit but not coming to settlements with all of them at the same time. So I guess the question is: in your experience does this leave the province of Alberta and, by extension, the people of Alberta at more risk or less? Is the province of Alberta now, in the PPA lawsuit with Enmax, in a stronger bargaining position or a weaker bargaining position? And are we potentially at even greater risk than we would have been prior? I'd be really interested in your insights on that.

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

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thank you to the Member for Calgary-Elbow. Yeah, he's right. In my long career in the energy industry we had a few lawsuits, that I had to deal with, but not this kind of lawsuit. Here the questions are basically about the sanctity of the contract. Will we be in a strong position to negotiate with Enmax? I don't think so. You know, some of Enmax's power plants have a good environmental record and all, and they're owned by a set of Albertans, Calgarians, who own Enmax. Enmax has been very accountable to the taxpayers in Calgary, where I and the Member for Calgary-Elbow live. They have very sound management, so they have their ducks in a row. They know how to fight this lawsuit.

9:50

I don't think the government is in a position to win that unless they really arm-twist other levels of government and make some behind-the-scenes deals. I don't know how that works. It could work, potentially, because they are a senior level of government and Enmax is owned by a junior level of government, so there are ways to deal with that. But it's not fair, and it's going to send the wrong signals to other investors in Alberta.

I mean, today the ministers were saying, actually, that international investors are looking at Alberta, to invest here, after their announcement about the petrochemical diversification program results. They were pumped up, and they were saying that investors from all across the world are coming here to invest. That's not really so because they are scared about these tactics, you know, of taking those businesses to court and disregarding the written contracts. A written contract is a contract. From my past experience it's the sanctity of the contract. No one should tinker with that. That will be dangerous, and that creates lots of uncertainty in the minds of the businesses.

Coming back to the question that the hon. member asked, like him, I also like renewables and all that, but this is not the way to implement it. You know, it's not just this bill. Bill 34 is necessitated because of the other mistakes they made, so they are trying to now cover up those by bringing in Bill 34. That's why I said before: what is coming next? Are they going to just procure a money-printing machine and start printing money here? I don't know.

But my take on this whole thing is that government should negotiate with the people who had these PPAs signed before. I mean, they can talk about an Enron clause and all that, so they're looking backwards, but now we have to look forward and make sure that we negotiate with them in good faith and settle those lawsuits in an amicable way and in a way that we don't scare other investors.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Before I recognize any other members to speak, just a reminder that we are in second reading, not Committee of the Whole, so if we could please not switch chairs and not move around House, that would be appreciated. Thank you.

The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Well, this is a surprise. The aspect of the blank cheque is concerning, to say the least. This utilities act – since taking power in 2015, the government has done a whole lot to make mistake after mistake on this file. Just weeks, actually, after being elected, the NDP made the expensive and poorly informed change in law – change in law – to raise the SGERs levy without checking for the legal implications, without determining if this would negatively impact their existing contractual obligations to the electricity generators. By raising the SGERs levy, the NDP set off a series of events that would result in a mass return of the PPAs. We've heard all of this before, a mass return of the PPAs to the Balancing Pool.

You know, the reason that we are here debating this is because it is an irresponsible piece of legislation. There is so much evidence – it's significant – pointing to the fact that this government knew. They knew about the risk of the mass PPA cancellations, and the NDP claimed to not know about the risks of the PPA terminations until mid-March of 2016. Some would say that that's patently untrue. Despite ample warning, including public submissions to the climate action panel by Capital Power and TransCanada, that the minister claimed inside this House to have read, the NDP is still claiming that they didn't know until March 2016. It is way too late to go back now.

There have been extensive FOIPs obtained and released by the Wildrose clearly showing that in November 2015 a briefing was prepared, and it outlined the potential impacts on Alberta's coal-powered companies. Because of the NDP government's climate change policies, a document explicitly mentioned PPAs. Again, the NDP are still claiming that they didn't know until March 2016. Again I say that it's way too late to go back now. Despite extensive lobbying on behalf of Enmax and other power companies involved in this PPA debacle, the NDP are still claiming that they didn't know until March 2016. It's repeated again that it's too late to go back now.

Now, Madam Speaker, Albertans are starting to see the pattern that this government is falling into: deny, deny, deny, then legislate; cover it up. The pattern certainly does not fit with any level of accountability that this government was elected on.

On the 9th of December 2015 Enmax notified senior bureaucrats and political staff that they were considering terminating the Battle River 5 PPA under article 4.3(j). We've heard that a few times. Enmax alleges that they directly informed Grant Sprague, Deputy Minister of Energy; James E. Allen, the assistant deputy minister of electricity and sustainable energy; and Allison Hansen, senior policy adviser to the Minister of Energy. An e-mail was sent from the Minister of Energy's chief of staff to an issues manager in the Premier's office stating, "Attached is a draft briefing note that has yet to be finalized but I believe provides the context that you need for question period . . . Should something arise."

The thing that no one seems to understand and that, quite frankly, no one in Alberta believes is that a minister made responsible for the energy file could read their electricity 101 briefing and see that PPAs could be terminated if made unprofitable and not ask any questions even without the word "more" in front of unprofitable. If anything – if anything – the absence of the term "more," Madam Speaker, makes the ability of these companies to terminate their PPAs due to contractual violations way broader. Had the minister

asked one question, just one – we know through FOIP that the minister's staff had already been briefed by Enmax and knew all about just how much trouble this government was getting us into. And I mean us, all of Alberta. Congratulations. This is nothing short of gross incompetence, at best, and, some would say, misleading Albertans, at worst. The reality is that the minister responsible for that file and the Premier have issues managers that watch for evolving situations in the energy industry.

I have here an interesting article published on January 18, 2016: Enmax Terminates “Unprofitable” Coal-fired Electricity Contract. This is from Darcy Henton.

City-owned Enmax has terminated its contract to buy electricity from the coal-fired Battle River power plant, saying historically low . . . prices and . . .

Well, isn't this interesting.

. . . the NDP hike in the carbon tax for heavy carbon emitters has made the deal unprofitable.

Very interesting, isn't it?

10:00

Madam Speaker, Darcy Henton goes on to say:

With low power prices in the wholesale market and changes to the Specified Gas Emitters Regulation announced in June 2015, the Battle River PPA (Power Purchase Arrangement) became unprofitable for Enmax . . .

Based on these market conditions, Enmax made the business decision to exercise its right under the PPA to terminate the agreement, effective Jan. 1.

It goes on to say:

The contract will be returned to Alberta's Balancing Pool – a government-created agency which sells power from electrical generation contracts that were not sold at auctions when the province deregulated the electricity market 15 years ago.

It continues, explaining that

profits and losses in the Balancing Pool are allocated to power consumers on their monthly power bills.

It's very transparent.

Since 2006, it has refunded consumers more than \$2 billion,

As the hon. member mentioned, it's \$4.4 billion.

The article goes on to say:

Enmax said the Balancing Pool will make decisions on the future of the PPA, but in the interim the utility has agreed to continue to dispatch power from the facility.

Hmm.

The Alberta Utilities Commission said the transfer did not require regulatory approval.

Alberta Energy spokesman Chris Bourdeau said the Balancing Pool may hold the PPA, resell it or terminate it. But if it opts for termination, it must consult –

consult –

with consumer representatives and the energy minister about the reasonableness of the termination.

Now, it goes on. It becomes even more interesting.

The Balancing Pool must also give the owner of the Battle River facility, ATCO Power, six months' notice of its intention to terminate and pay ATCO “an amount equal to the remaining closing net book value of the generating unit.”

It continues on to say that

if the agency terminates the PPA, ATCO would then make a business decision to operate the unit or decommission it.

Industry watchers said in this article that

it's [extremely] difficult to assess how the move will impact consumers,

something that this government has not taken into consideration, the consumers. They keep saying that they have the consumers' backs. This proves otherwise.

You know, Jim Wachowich of the Alberta Consumers Coalition said that he doesn't know what it means in the grand scheme of things. They've never seen anything like this before.

Then

electricity consultant David Gray, formerly executive director of the Utilities Consumer Advocate, said the transfer of the agreement to the Balancing Pool means the money sitting in the pool to be allocated to consumers . . .

So that's the money for consumers.

. . . “will be drained” if it continues an unprofitable contract.

That's consumers' dollars, just to restate.

“It will be unprofitable if power prices stay low,” he said.

To be clear,

“The proposed carbon tax will exacerbate that.”

Pembina Institute's Ben Thibault was also fearful Enmax's move could ultimately cost consumers.

“The Balancing Pool will be picking up a liability,” he said.

“If the market price is lower than the contract price, then in theory, at least,

at the very least,

this would impact on consumers.”

However, another electricity consultant, Rick Cowburn, who sat on Alberta's retail power market review in 2012, doesn't think there will be any major short-term ramifications from the move.

Interestingly, we know, of course, that this claim from Rick Cowburn is not the case. The Balancing Pool cannot cover this liability.

The Battle River Generating Station has been operating since 1956 about 200 kilometres southeast of Edmonton on the banks of the Battle River.

And this is published information.

Units 1 and 2 were retired and dismantled in 2000. PPAs for Unit 3, which went into service in 1969, and Unit 4, which went into service in 1975, expired in 2013. Under federal regulations, Unit 3 is slated for shutdown in 2019 and Unit 4 in 2025, according to a Pembina Institute report.

Unit 5, which went into service in 1981, has a PPA that expires in 2020 and is slated for shutdown in 2029 . . . But the province's existing \$15-per-tonne carbon levy on coal plants increased to \$20 a tonne this year, and rises to \$30 in 2017.

I mean, this article is very telling. That article was dated January 18, 2016, and quite clearly outlines Enmax's more unprofitable claim, but here we are today, and the NDP is still claiming that they didn't know until March of 2016 and it's too late to go back now. This is unfathomable to Albertans, that the Energy minister or any minister, for that matter, could have been that unaware of the PPA situation. It is unbelievable that stories like this, when published in a major newspaper last January, didn't strike enough of a nerve with the Energy minister that she felt it appropriate to go on and at least ask a few more questions.

It's also evident that her staff had already been briefed by Enmax and that they actually knew what was going on. That's worse actually. And the evidence is undeniable. The incompetence shown on our province's Energy file is unjustifiable. This government was elected on a mandate of increasing accountability and transparency. They have failed Albertans. The longer the NDP government continues down the road of changing the story and being less truthful about the facts surrounding PPAs, the more taxpayer dollars are going to be wasted on this mess. What the government is doing to Albertans in this House is appalling. But the best case alternative to what they're doing is just that the government is inept, and that, quite frankly, scares me. Our province is in the hands of leaders who refuse to do their homework before implementing their radical, ideological agenda, and now we have this bill.

Convention would have it that when an error like this is made in the Balancing Pool, they would be permitted to put on a rate rider. The Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake gave us a very good description about the rate rider, and this covers Albertans' losses. It is so interesting to me and the rest of my caucus and on the Opposition side here that we are here today passing a bill that is entirely unnecessary. The government is claiming that the rate rider would be minimal, just over \$1 a month actually. In fact, Andrew Leach put out a report estimating that this rate rider could be just over \$2.

So why is this bill needed? I would love somebody to explain this to me. It makes absolutely no sense. Of course, Andrew Leach was tasked with reviewing submissions that clearly outlined the risks of PPA cancellations, so maybe he's even wrong about the cost of this, for the rate rider. Anything is possible. But I would love somebody to explain this. Albertans are left wondering what this government is hiding in this unnecessary blank cheque to the Balancing Pool if the cost . . .

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), the hon Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

Mr. Barnes: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and thanks to my colleague from Chestermere-Rocky View for her impassioned words. One of the things that you said reminded me of something I heard a week or so ago. You said that, quite frankly, this scares me. I had breakfast a week or so ago with some oil and gas executives, and they said: quite frankly, this scares me, the fact that the Alberta government would back out of binding contracts, would break and sue their own people. And they said in response, partly because electricity is a bigger component of their operations than the cost of labour is, that what they've decided to do is stay out of Alberta. When they have an opportunity to buy an oil or gas field that straddles Alberta and Saskatchewan or straddles Alberta and B.C., they ensure that they sell the Alberta side off before they start.

10:10

So I'd like to hear your thoughts on what this type of thing has done to destroy business confidence, has done to raise the costs of our wealth providers, and has done to drive opportunity out of Alberta. On another side, while you're at it, you know, quite frankly, this scares me for the next generation. This government in their inability to control spending is already billions of dollars over. Debt repayment and interest are going to greatly reduce services in the future. My goodness, our children are going to have huge repayments.

If you could touch on those two, I would appreciate it.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. member.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker, and thank you for the comments. I think one of the things that we've been talking about in this House extensively is what it looks like to any investors coming into our province. We can go back to so many parts of not only this bill but other bills right now as well with regard not only to torn-up contracts but the nature by which these contracts were torn up and how the government is actually blaming companies that have set prices that made us much more competitive for companies to come in and produce here.

As you said, we are energy intensive, so for companies to want to be able to produce here – and they had that ability to do that with our low costs for electricity. If you consider that along with the increasing rates of what's going to happen either with the carbon

tax or through the SGERs right now and then on top of that you add in the instability of not knowing whether or not, if you decided to have a contract here – will that be honoured? We don't know, and we can't even say on behalf of the government whether or not they would be able to do that because the justification is that they know better than we do. The justification is that they are going to make a decision to go to a capacity market that supposedly stabilizes electricity.

All the while the taxpayer now has another added component to that cost. So we have the ratepayer, and then on top of that they also become the taxpayer in this whole decision. So we don't even know what that's going to cost Albertans at the end of the day, Madam Speaker. We don't know, and that's why it's terrifying, because they don't know.

How is it that you attract investment when you can't guarantee that the contracts that you've set in stone, even for companies within Alberta – they don't matter. You're just willy-nilly able to tear them up because either you don't understand it, you didn't read the briefing, or you didn't do your outreach and consultation appropriately. So as an investor if you were looking to do this or if you're an oil and gas company now and you have the option of where to choose to do business, you're certainly going to look at jurisdictions that lay out very clearly for you what your responsibilities are as far as that goes. Quite frankly, nobody would know what they were walking into here at this point in time.

The puzzle pieces of these bills coming together are terrifying. It is not just one aspect; it's the cumulative aspect of all of these things coming together. Capping production, capping upgrading, keeping things in the ground and out of the pipeline, tearing up contracts: I mean, the list goes on and on and on. If I was one of those companies, I'd certainly be looking elsewhere as well, to be truthful, and it's a shame because we all love this province so much – everybody in this House does – and there is so much talent and tech here to be able to do all of the things that this government professes that it wants to do.

Thank you.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 34, the Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016. I find it interesting that the Minister of Energy in her opening statements identified several milestones of the last 18 months. These milestones clearly show the NDP's mishandling of the electricity file.

I can point to some of the things that the NDP government is downloading on this file onto the backs of Alberta taxpayers: the cost of an early shutdown of coal generation, \$1.36 billion onto the backs of the Alberta taxpayers; capping of the consumer cost of electricity with the balance of the actual price of the electricity being downloaded onto the backs of the Alberta taxpayer. Now, instead of letting the Balancing Pool function normally – the Balancing Pool does already have built-in mechanisms to cover their losses. They can put a rate rider in for Balancing Pool allocations on consumers' bills. It's very easily done and was designed to manage the system quite capably.

This government decides that now we are going to take on more debt, put more on the credit card and more onto the back of the Alberta taxpayer. I'm concerned that this is the path we're going down, and every time the NDP puts in policy that creates a consequence they never foresaw or they just arrogantly went forward in the way they're doing it, they try to hide it on the back of the Alberta taxpayer. I'm concerned that this is just the beginning

of what we will see more and more of, NDP mistakes and bad policy that drive up, in this case, electricity prices, and then they try to hide it from our power bills by shifting it onto the back of the Alberta taxpayers through taxpayer debt. We should all be concerned with the way this file is being handled and all the debt that's being racked up. Sooner or later the Alberta taxpayer gets stuck with that bill.

This is the latest and greatest in a long line of NDP bills making radical changes based on ideology – ideology – to the province's electricity system in the hopes of fighting climate change. Bill 34 is about covering the cost of the power purchase agreements debacle, that this government created when it raised the price of the specified gas emitters regulation levy only a few weeks into their mandate, and they did this without properly doing their homework on the consequences of such a decision. Raising the specified gas emitters regulation levy resulted in power purchase agreements across this province acting on their contractual right to return their assets to the Balancing Pool and, thus, the current debt that the Balancing Pool needs to be bailed out of. The fight over the power purchase agreements from Enmax, TransAlta, Capital Power, Canadian Utilities, and ATCO has resulted in these power producers deciding to take their ball and go home. The result: 4 out of 5 members of the board of the Balancing Pool have resigned.

The NDP are currently suing Alberta-owned companies because the NDP did not know their own laws, that have been publicly known for over 15 years. No one forced this government to make a rash change to the specified gas emitters regulation levy just weeks into gaining power. The NDP should have gone back on this change, but, no, the NDP are holding true to form and not turning around. It is full pedal to the metal on that electric car accelerator. Rather than launching a lawsuit to cover up the poor planning done to date by the NDP government on the electricity file, they should be sitting down with energy companies to find a collaborative pathway towards a sustainable electricity market that works for everyone. It's not unreasonable for Albertans to expect their government to work together with industry to find a sustainable solution.

This government cannot ignore the terms of a binding contract. This lawsuit shows the NDP government's blatant disregard for covenants, business sense, and a lack of respect for taxpayer dollars and knowledge of how our electricity system actually works. Investor confidence in the electricity sector is extremely important to Albertans. As this government continues to pursue their plan of phasing out coal and reaching 30 per cent renewables by 2030, goodness knows, we need investor confidence in order to actually accomplish those goals. We need to be able to attract companies here without having to attract them with unnecessary subsidization just to get them to invest.

10:20

The government is losing this case in the court of public opinion, and they are trying to divert attention from the consequences of their own ill-considered tax increases. The result is that Enmax, a Calgary-owned power company, possibly may never pay a dividend to the city of Calgary again. This also will be downloaded, in this case, onto the back of the Calgary taxpayer as higher property taxes. But the NDP government had to interfere with an arm's-length body, and it has resulted in disastrous consequences.

Bill 34 is entirely unnecessary as the Balancing Pool already has the power through the use of an approved rate rider to recover its losses. But in the NDP world view we are now capping everyone's electricity bill in order to prevent the Balancing Pool's consumer allocation charges from showing up on people's bills, a way to hide the actual costs of the mismanagement of this file right from the very beginning. These are \$1 to \$3 charges. They are negligible, and there is no reason to get rid of accountability and write a blank

cheque to the Balancing Pool. The Balancing Pool has the ability to charge a levy already.

It is entirely unclear why it is necessary to write a blank cheque to the Balancing Pool, but it is worrying. Albertans believe that the costs are far higher than the government is letting on. By writing a blank cheque, the debt that the Balancing Pool could take on is unlimited. There is no upper ceiling to this. It's just a matter of the minister deciding that there's a need to have a loan to the Balancing Pool and approaching the Finance minister: we'll get 'er done. No limits.

The debt that the Balancing Pool has to take on to keep the lights on literally is going to cause consequences to the province's balance sheet, more debt on the back of Alberta taxpayers. Meanwhile we also have Bill 27, which allows the minister to financially backstop the construction of renewable electrical generation of private-sector businesses: even more debt. The NDP plans to keep that debt on the public books in the name of ideology and not pass it on to consumers on their power bills, essentially putting it, again, on the back of the Alberta taxpayer. Economics do not matter to this government, it appears. In the NDP world view they are doing what they are doing to accomplish their goals, and all Albertans will be paying for it. This is the NDP showing another side of their antibusiness agenda.

I encourage all members to vote this down at second reading and prevent the government from racking up even more debt and putting this onto the back of the Alberta taxpayer.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak on the . . . [interjection] Oh, 29(2)(a). My apologies. Any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any members wishing to speak?

Mr. Cooper: Sorry. I was busy talking to the minister.

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure – a pleasure – to do one of my favourite things in this Assembly. I might as well just cut right to it. I know that members on the other side of the House are waiting with bated breath as to what might be coming next, procedural zigging and zagging, shall we say? I would like to propose an amendment. [interjections] Thank you. Thank you. It's nice that my mom has joined us in the Assembly this evening to cheer me on like that.

I move that the motion for second reading of Bill 34, Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016, be amended by deleting all the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 34, Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

I know that members are shocked and awed at such an unexpected turn of events, you might say, a little to-ing and fro-ing.

You know, this bill is not lengthy. This bill is unreasonable. The bill can be found in about – I haven't done the actual counting, but I think that it's about eight to 12 sentences, I believe. One might ask the question: well, the bill is so small; what could we possibly talk about in committee? Well, if there's one thing that I'm certain of . . . [interjections] The hour is late, and comments that are being made would give an indication that the hour might be late.

One thing I'm certain of is that there is a significant number of people that would like to be able to provide feedback on some of

the concerns around this particular piece of legislation. My colleagues this evening have outlined a wide range of challenges, a wide range of concerns, significant problems that this government has created. Now they're trying to find workarounds and other opportunities to fix a problem that, let's be clear, Madam Speaker, was created by this government.

What this particular amendment does: I know that you're very familiar with it, but for the thousands of people watching at home – and by thousands I mean dozens or maybe a handful. I am certain of this: they would like to have the bill referred to committee so that extensive discussion, including stakeholder feedback, including expert testimony – like, you know, at the end of the day it might be a positive for the Minister of Energy to be able to bring some of the officials that have provided her such guidance on Bill 34 so that they might be able to defend the position of the government, and Albertans would have a better understanding and a more robust grasp of exactly why we need to give a totally blank cheque to the Balancing Pool to potentially borrow hundreds of millions, billions, multiple billions of dollars, all on the back of what some day will wind up on the taxpayer.

I won't go on and on, much to the delight of the minister. I think that I have spoken about the need for referral motions, the need for government to utilize committees in a fashion that is helpful to the Assembly as well as helpful to Albertans as well as helpful to the legislative process. I know the minister of economic development has moved these very types of motions on numerous occasions in his very storied political career. So I can only imagine that he'll be rising in his place in just a few moments to support this, and we can move through this amendment quite quickly. But for now I will leave it at that and encourage all members of the Assembly to go ahead and support such a strong amendment.

10:30

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, would anybody like to speak to the referral? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's been an interesting evening. The words that come to mind are: petulance, envy, jealousy. I've been sitting here listening to this discussion, and I'm sorry, but that's the impression that I'm getting over here on this side. The other side is actually quite envious of the fact that this government, through its climate leadership action plan, has actually achieved two pipelines – two pipelines – that we would not have achieved without acquisition of social licence, a concept that is completely foreign to those folks on the other side. Social licence has been very positive for this province. Our Premier has been a leader, and she has demonstrated to the world that Albertans are capable of stewarding their resources, and we are finally getting credit for that.

I'm speaking against the referral motion. I'm speaking against it largely because the rest of the world expects that Alberta is going to get on with its climate leadership.

I mean, there's been a lot of quoting of various articles here, but one that came out just a few days ago says: Flipping the Switch to New Electricity System Makes Sense for Alberta. Makes sense. This was in the *Edmonton Journal*, and similar headlines were in the *Globe and Mail*, in the *Calgary Herald*, in the Vancouver papers, where we do need to get some social licence so that we can get the Kinder Morgan pipeline completed. You know, I'm also pleased that it's even made papers like the *New York Times* and the *Guardian* from London, England. Social licence is an important concept, and this bill is essential as part of the integrated work that

this Legislature has to do to achieve that social licence along with the renewables bill and other bills.

I was disappointed in the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake's comment that this was a senseless bill. Flipping the Switch to New Electricity System Makes Sense for Alberta: a direct contradiction to that member. He says that this is a senseless bill. We've got this great system that has been working so well. It's been working so well that our consumers in this province have been hit by massive changes in their month-to-month electricity bills. Those that hadn't basically bought into the contracts, which were actually costing consumers a lot of money, were subject to very massive changes in the regulated rate option.

I don't know if the members over there really care about consumers. It sounds from the discussion here tonight that they don't. Why wouldn't we protect farmers and residential owners and not-for-profits and make sure that they are going to know for the time being what the cap is on their rates?

There were other people quoted by the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View from stuff that was written about a year ago, including David Gray, who just last week said on Facebook that this change to a capacity market is the wisest thing that this province could have done. The Pembina Institute says that putting it all together is a good idea.

You know, I do want to quote from Flipping the Switch to New Electricity Makes Sense for Alberta. "The elephant in the room was Alberta's broken electricity market. The province had the most volatile electricity market in the world. Financiers were reluctant to lend money to Alberta projects." This is one of the things that we're going to fix with the capacity market. The capacity market is basically making sure that we Albertans have a stable supply of power, that companies are going to compete with each other to provide that. The companies are going to guarantee that, and we're basically going to benefit from that.

The Dominion Bond Rating Service – again, I think it's a fairly credible resource – says that we are not getting in bed with the corporations. In fact, companies like Capital Power and TransAlta and AltaGas are going to have to compete with each other. Dominion Bond Rating Service actually says that they're most likely to get into wind and renewables and will be adding to the resources that we've got in this province. The capacity market also ensures that we aren't going to be at the vagaries of economic withdrawal.

I'm surprised that the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake loves that system that allowed these corporate giants to basically shut off their power plants at will, jacking the price up well over the 15 cents, maybe sometimes to 99 cents a gigajoule. He's happy with that. He must love these corporate guys. Economic withdrawal is going to be impossible in the capacity market. The capacity market is what we're all excited about here, and it's the basis for the need of this bill.

You know, the other thing that the opposition, I think, forgets about is that this is 2016. By 2030 the federal government has mandated that we've got to be out of coal-fired electricity generation. What is their solution to that? They want to put their heads in the sand and say: well, we've got to basically maybe do a constitutional exemption then and not follow what the feds are telling us. Nonsense. Nonsense. There was also a comment about: well, this is like a nanny state. Why wouldn't we want to protect consumers? Why wouldn't we want to make sure that the individual homeowner, who does not have elastic demand for their electricity rates, is protected and put a cap on it? It doesn't say that we're going to be up at the cap, but they're not going to pay anything more than the 6.8 cents. [interjections] You know, they're chirping over there, Madam Speaker, and I think you really should put a stop to it.

Who is going to pay for it are the companies. We're going to make sure, through the capacity market, that the various private companies are the ones that are going to be bearing the burden of providing electricity to this province in a safe and reliable, efficient manner.

"Settling three of the four PPAs is just the cherry on top," is the quote from Flipping the Switch to New Electricity System Makes Sense for Alberta. "The government has (mostly) settled a thorny issue that could have potentially held up" the reform of the electricity market. "We're better off for it," is the final statement there.

So, Madam Speaker, I would implore all members of this House to reject the referral motion. Let's get on with this bill.

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

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

10:40 Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: I'd like to call the committee to order.

Bill 27 Renewable Electricity Act

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered in respect of this bill? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. MacIntyre: You're surprised. I know you're surprised that I would stand to speak to this bill.

Madam Chair, when we're talking about legislation, especially something that is as intrusive as this particular piece of legislation is – and I believe that we have at least begun to try to establish the very real need for some amendments to Bill 27. In its current form it is woefully inadequate and needs a tonne of help.

I was somewhat amused by the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud's statements a little while ago regarding economic withholding. It's interesting to note, Madam Chair, that the economic withholding that the hon. member was talking about was caught by the MSA, the Market Surveillance Administrator. It is the very same administrator that Bill 27 is attempting to shut down when it comes to renewable projects. I thought it rather amusing that here we have the hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud extolling the virtues of the MSA in catching producers doing naughty things like economic withholding, and at the same time the hon. member is supporting a bill, Bill 27, that effectively denies the MSA the right to even consider complaints against renewable projects. I find it a significant inconsistency, hypocrisy, name it what you want, deception. I don't know quite what to call it, but it's skulduggery. That's what it is.

You can't have it both ways. You cannot extol the virtues of the MSA on one hand and then try to gut the MSA on the other. Either the MSA is a good organization that does good work and they should be investigating everything, or they shouldn't. The fact of the matter is that we need the MSA, and when it comes to renewables, we're going to need the MSA even more, especially given some of the nonsense that went on and is still going on in Ontario.

Secondly, the hon. member tried to tie suing Enmax to wining two pipelines, which is just really overreaching there. That's a stretch.

Further, we've got in this particular bill some places where we can attempt to make improvements if the government will consider making improvements. So at this moment in time I would like to introduce an amendment to Bill 27.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, I have to apologize. I believe that we're still on amendment A5, which was the amendment that you moved, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. MacIntyre: It's which?

The Deputy Chair: Amendment A5.

Mr. MacIntyre: Great. Then we will carry on because I'm still on topic. It's on the MSA.

The Deputy Chair: I apologize. It was my mistake for not reminding everyone that we are on A5.

Mr. MacIntyre: I certainly forgive you, Madam Chair. I realize it's late, and we're all getting older. That might be unparliamentary.

Okay. Here we are, Madam Chair. We're talking about the Market Surveillance Administrator and the value of that organization in policing. It is a reality that had the MSA not been doing their job, TransAlta would have gotten away with a \$56 million bit of skulduggery last year. That was only one of a series of such things, but it was the biggest. The other issues the MSA has caught have been in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. I believe that this was one of the larger bits of economic withholding and nonsense that went on. Of course, the MSA did their job and did it in a stellar fashion, and they protected Albertans.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud was talking about protecting Albertans and protecting consumers. Well, that is the function of the MSA. That is their job, to make sure that everybody is playing by the rules. Yet here we have the hon. member on the one hand extolling the virtues of the MSA and on the other hand in Bill 27 totally removing the MSA's ability to do their job when it comes to renewables. All the other parts of our utility system: yes, the MSA can still investigate. But when it comes to renewables, for some strange reason this government does not want the MSA poking their nose into the renewables situation.

That, of course, does not speak to transparency very well, something this government campaigned on. Neither does it speak to accountability, something this government campaigned on. On the transparency issue and on the accountability issue so far when it comes to the renewables world, this government gets a failing grade because the very agency that is mandated to protect Alberta consumers is being told: you can't do that when it comes to renewables. Somehow renewables are protected.

When this subject was brought up, the minister suggested that, well, there is going to be ministerial oversight. Well, guess what? That didn't bring a lot of comfort to the good people of Alberta because now we have a politician providing the policing and the ministerial oversight. The good people of Alberta just turfed a party out of power because of the political oversight of politicians who ended up not doing a very good job of policing themselves.

Now, here we are. An arm's-length agency, MSA, that is supposed to be devoid of political interference, is being interfered with. Then we also have the Balancing Pool, that was supposed to be arm's length. There wasn't supposed to be political interference there, yet the political interference has been so intense that we now have 4 out of 5 board members resigning. Then we have AESO, Alberta Electric System Operator, that is supposed to be at arm's length, nonpolitical, that exists and has a mandate to be dealing at arm's length and managing our electricity system at arm's length to

keep it free from political interference, and what do we see? Bill 27 and to some extent Bill 34 are getting right into the inner workings of what were supposed to be arm's-length agencies responsible for utilities in our province. Every single one of them is being interfered with.

I will submit to you, Madam Chair, that if there was ever a time when we needed the Market Surveillance Administrator, it is now. If there was ever an issue where we needed the Market Surveillance Administrator, it is on the subject of renewables. If there was ever a time when we needed the MSA to be looking into things, it is when this government, who has not demonstrated adequate understanding of our electricity system, is meddling with this. We need the MSA and what they can do. They are a market surveillance administrator. They are the watchdog, and we are going to need that watchdog.

10:50

We have already had situations here with regard to renewables where the minister told us that the renewables industry told her that they needed this and this and this in order to come to our province to invest, a shopping list, and it sounds like the minister has granted them their shopping list. Do we know that that was in the best interests of Albertans? No, we don't. We don't know because we have not been permitted to bring this bill to committee and invite those same people to come to a standing committee of this Legislature and explain their wish list, to invite all sides in this. We have not had that discussion, yet the minister seems just quite fine with doing things behind closed doors, talking to the renewables industry, the big multinational corporations who have a vested interest in making sure that this government ensures their profits regardless of the impact on Albertans.

Let's remember that this government can claim that they're going to be attracting 10 and a half billion dollars to \$20 billion worth of investment into this province, but that investment is going to come into this province, and we're ultimately going to be paying that money. It doesn't just come in here to us, and we get that money. That's not how that works. They're going to come, they're going to build renewables, and we're going to end up paying for it. Yet there are discussions taking place in the minister's office with renewables corporations who came here with a shopping list, and part of that shopping list is a guaranteed return on their investment, and the only way that's going to happen is that either our prices for electricity go up or this government forcibly keeps electricity prices low and hides what we're going to have to pay in debt and taxation.

Ultimately the taxpayer and ratepayer are going to be on the hook for whatever this government does. Though this government, strangely enough, was charging earlier this year that the PPA holders entered into some sort of nefarious deal with Enron, the fact of the matter is that what we've already seen is some very creative Enron accounting on the part of this government. Even in Bill 34 they're attempting to shift an expense column from one place to another place, and that was what Enron got taken to court for by the Securities and Exchange Commission, attempting to hide the real financial health of their corporation, just like this government is attempting to hide the real financial cost of their mismanagement of the electricity file.

They're attempting to cloud the eyes of Albertans to the fact that in July 2015 this government made their first mistake in increasing the carbon tax under the specified gas emitters regulation. Rather than admitting their mistake, they doubled down and sued Enmax when Enmax got permission from the Balancing Pool to return their PPA because of a change in law.

But that wasn't enough, no. The government had to double down again, Bill 27, and double down again, Bill 34. It's been one

mismanagement mistake after another: another crisis, crisis management, trying to solve this problem, creating another problem and solving that problem, they think, but creating another problem. It's been crisis management from the get-go, and this government hasn't had the humility to go back to the very first mistake they made, in July 2015, and start unwinding all of the things they did wrong. The interesting thing is, Madam Chair, that the industry was more than willing to sit down and find a solution that was amenable to all parties, and this government refused to sit down with them. Instead, they chose litigation. Then, on top of that, once this government realized their court case was an absolute sham, they decided: "Well, we will retroactively legislate the PPAs out of existence then. We'll go back 16 years and legislate it away and solve the problem."

The heavy-handedness with which this government has handled this file on account of their own mismanagement is astounding. It is absolutely, profoundly irresponsible. This government has been running roughshod over Albertans time and time again, and we're seeing it now. They're trying to hide their mistakes with things like Bill 34. They're trying to hide future mistakes by putting blinders on the Market Surveillance Administrator so the administrator cannot so much as entertain a complaint against a renewables project development. This government campaigned on transparency and accountability, but they are going the same route as we have seen with almost every socialist government around the world. They are less transparent, more secretive. They've been radical in their policies, dictatorial in their style of dealing with people. They do not accept sound amendments over and over again. Now we've got a situation where this government wants to blind the Market Surveillance Administrator, commonly known as the electricity police. The electricity police. This government doesn't want anyone to know what's really going on in the world of renewables, and that's why they're trying to blind the MSA.

An Hon. Member: Shame.

Mr. MacIntyre: It is shameful.

Now, I would hope that this government will reconsider. I hope that this government will seriously reconsider this amendment, that they will empower the MSA rather than pull the plug, so to speak, on the MSA. That's a good one, pulling the plug, yeah?

An Hon. Member: Ha, ha.

Mr. MacIntyre: Ha, ha.

So at the end of the day, Madam Chair, I think it's going to be very important, very important to Albertans, very important to the people in this Legislature that an organization like the MSA be given the power to surveil the system. We are begging for problems. We are begging for serious things to go amiss, just like we have seen in the past. We need the MSA very badly. I would hope that all members will support this amendment.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A5?

Seeing no other members, I will call the question.

[Motion on amendment A5 lost]

The Deputy Chair: We are now back on the original bill. Are there any members wishing to speak on the bill? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

Mr. MacIntyre: I know you're shocked that I . . .

An Hon. Member: You're organized now, is that right?

Mr. MacIntyre: Hey. We got it. We're ready to go.

Well, next up I would like to take this opportunity to give the House another opportunity to accept an amendment.

The Deputy Chair: This amendment will be referred to as A6. Please go ahead.

Mr. MacIntyre: Thank you, Madam Chair. This amendment is to move that Bill 27, Renewable Electricity Act, be amended in section 3(2) by striking out "may establish" and substituting "shall establish and make public".

11:00

Now, one of the things that I believe is very important for the government to do is to be very concrete in the things which pertain to our utility system by substituting "shall establish and make public," "shall" being a word that is a requirement. It's mandatory. We believe that it is important that the government establish and then make public these things. Again, it comes back to transparency, and it comes back to accountability. Being that we are a democracy, I believe that it is very valuable that we have a system in place where we are creating an environment of trust for the people of Alberta.

Now, when it comes to ministerial direction, objectives, criteria for programs and proposals, this is how it currently is worded in section 3(2) of the act.

The Minister may establish

- (a) renewable electricity program objectives that promote specific goals, including environmental, social or economic goals.

Now, the word "may" is not compulsory. In other words, the minister may or may not establish renewable electricity program objectives. Look, you cannot manage what you do not measure. I've said that before. We have a situation here where the minister is being given permission under this bill to maybe or maybe not establish program objectives. Well, if you don't set objectives, if you don't set goals, I guarantee you'll hit them. You will. If your goal is nothing, if your objective doesn't exist, you're going to get there. That's just a fact. It seems to me that it is only responsible of a responsible government that you do set program objectives. That's why the amendment reads that we want to strike out "may establish" and substitute "shall establish."

Now, it isn't good enough that the minister shall establish electricity program objectives that promote specific goals. I realize this government really doesn't like specific goals, including environmental goals. How about that for a novel idea, setting some specific environmental goals? How about some specific social goals? How about some specific economic goals? How about we make it so that the minister must do that, shall do that, and make it public? Not good enough to just create these goals. Make them public. Let the good people of Alberta know what the goal is. How on earth can we get somewhere when we don't even know what the goal is?

It makes no sense at all to have a bill before this House that's going to become law but the law says: the minister may or may not do such and such a thing. If they feel like it that day, they will. Well, that's not really good enough. We're talking about a multibillion-dollar ministry here, a multibillion-dollar renewables program, and the government says that the minister might or might not establish goals.

Then we have:

- (b) specific evaluation criteria to be used by the ISO in developing a proposal for a renewable electricity program and in implementing a renewable electricity program to meet the objectives,

except that the objectives that part (b) refers to are optional. So why in the world do we even have part (b) here? If the minister may or may not establish such goals, then part (b), to have specific evaluation criteria to be used by ISO in developing a proposal for a renewable electricity program and in implementing a renewable electricity program to meet the objectives, makes no sense whatsoever.

Now, it's interesting to note that renewable electricity programs are not going to be overseen by the Market Surveillance Administrator. I come right back to the MSA again. So the minister may or may not establish goals and objectives, but one thing we know that is certain, the one thing we do know out of Bill 27 that is absolutely certain because they just voted that down, is that they don't want the MSA watching. That, we know, is a certainty.

Mr. Cyr: And they're going to spend money.

Mr. MacIntyre: Yes. The other certainty is that it's going to cost us billions of dollars. Unless this amendment goes through, the other certainty, Madam Chair, is that the minister may or may not even establish specific environmental goals, specific social goals, specific economic goals, and specific program objectives. This is, frankly, lazy. It's just lazy that a minister of the Crown isn't going to have to create goals; hence this amendment.

This amendment makes sure that the minister has a very clear job description. I do remember a problem with this government and job descriptions before. That would have been Bill 1. Bill 1. I remember the job description Bill 1 problem the government had, that the minister had to be mandated to do his job. Now I'm simply following in that same vein, making sure that the minister knows what the job is, that the minister shall establish specific goals. This is a job description. Take it as a job description amendment. That ought to fit okay with the NDP world view.

Madam Chair, in short, this is another attempt to make an improvement to a really bad piece of legislation. I am hoping that every member in this House will agree with me that the minister needs to have clearly established program goals, fully fleshed out, with economic, with social, with environmental goals clearly, clearly fleshed out and stated and that they will be made public.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A6?

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Madam Chair. As fascinating as this amendment has been thus far, I will leave comments to another day and move that we rise and report progress.

[Motion carried]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Acting Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, and good evening, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 27. Madam Speaker, I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official record of the Assembly.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
Does the Assembly concur in the report?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.
The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I have a certain feeling, so I'm going to move a motion for unanimous consent for one-minute bells.

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I think that tonight there's been a great amount of robust debate and exchange of ideas. Seeing the time, I move we adjourn until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

[The voice vote indicated that motion to adjourn carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:10 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Ganley	Miller
Babcock	Goehring	Miranda
Bilous	Gray	Nielsen
Carlier	Hinkley	Phillips
Ceci	Horne	Piquette
Connolly	Jansen	Schmidt
Coolahan	Kazim	Schreiner
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinsteuber	Shepherd
Dach	Littlewood	Sigurdson
Dang	Malkinson	Sucha
Drever	McCuaig-Boyd	Turner
Fitzpatrick	McKittrick	

Against the motion:

Aheer	Cyr	Orr
Barnes	Loewen	van Dijken
Cooper	MacIntyre	Yao

Totals:	For – 35	Against – 9
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[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:15 p.m.]

Table of Contents

Committee of Supply	
Supplementary Supply Estimates 2016-17 General Revenue Fund.....	2293
Vote on Supplementary Supply Estimates 2016-17 General Revenue Fund.....	2295
Introduction of Bills	
Bill 37 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016 (No. 2).....	2295
Government Bills and Orders	
Committee of the Whole	
Bill 32 Credit Union Amendment Act, 2016.....	2295
Bill 36 An Act to Enhance Off-highway Vehicle Safety.....	2298
Bill 27 Renewable Electricity Act.....	2313
Division.....	2316
Second Reading	
Bill 34 Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016.....	2302

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