



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Tuesday evening, December 6, 2016

Day 58

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

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

**Party standings:**

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

**Officers and Officials of the Legislative Assembly**

Robert H. Reynolds, QC, Clerk	Aurelia Nicholls, Sessional Counsel	Brian G. Hodgson, Sergeant-at-Arms
Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Director of House Services	Philip Massolin, Manager of Research and Committee Services	Chris Caughell, Deputy Sergeant-at-Arms
Trafton Koenig, Parliamentary Counsel	Nancy Robert, Research Officer	Paul Link, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
Stephanie LeBlanc, Parliamentary Counsel and Legal Research Officer	Janet Schwegel, Managing Editor of <i>Alberta Hansard</i>	Gordon Munk, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms
		Gareth Scott, Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms

## **Executive Council**

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

STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

**Standing Committee on the Alberta Heritage Savings Trust Fund**

Chair: Mr. Coolahan  
Deputy Chair: Mrs. Schreiner

Cyr	McKitrick
Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
Horne	

**Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

Chair: Mr. Sucha  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Schneider

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

**Standing Committee on Families and Communities**

Chair: Ms Goehring  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Smith

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

**Standing Committee on Legislative Offices**

Chair: Mr. Shepherd  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Malkinson

Cooper	Littlewood
Ellis	Nixon
Horne	van Dijken
Jabbour	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

**Special Standing Committee on Members' Services**

Chair: Mr. Wanner  
Deputy Chair: Cortes-Vargas

Cooper	McIver
Dang	Nixon
Fildebrandt	Piquette
Jabbour	Schreiner
Luff	

**Standing Committee on Private Bills**

Chair: Ms McPherson  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Connolly

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

**Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing**

Chair: Ms Fitzpatrick  
Deputy Chair: Ms Babcock

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

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts**

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

Barnes	Luff
Cyr	Malkinson
Dach	Miller
Fraser	Renaud
Goehring	Turner
Gotfried	Westhead
Hunter	

**Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship**

Chair: Loyola  
Deputy Chair: Mr. Loewen

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

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, December 6, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

**The Speaker:** Good evening. Please be seated.

### Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

#### Bill 37

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

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

**Mr. Ceci:** I appreciate that, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to move second reading of Bill 37, the Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016 (No. 2).

The supplementary amount provided by this bill is required for support to the Legislative Assembly to fund the work of the Electoral Boundaries Commission.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Anyone wish to speak to the motion? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's just my honour to state that this is the first time the Minister of Finance has ever tabled a bill that I'll be voting for. Mike drop.

[Motion carried; Bill 37 read a second time]

#### Bill 35

#### Fair Elections Financing Act

Dr. Starke moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 35, Fair Elections Financing Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after "that" and substituting the following:

Bill 35, Fair Elections Financing Act, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Families and Communities in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

[Debate adjourned on the amendment December 6]

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wanted to stand and speak to the motion to refer the bill. Of course, what we did for the last year was that we struck the committee to deal with a number of pressing issues that, really, are still before Alberta.

**The Speaker:** Hon. member, to clarify, you're speaking to the amendment?

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Yeah, to the notice of amendment to Bill 35.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you.

Bill 1 was passed last year to take corporate and union money out of political campaigning in this province. There was much work to be done, and a lot of that work was part of what we campaigned on, to have electoral reform. In this part we are talking about election financing. Really, why are we doing this now? Why was the committee struck last year, and why was it given a year to get that

work done? Well, the answer, Mr. Speaker, is that Albertans want this work to be done now, and the committee undertook to do that.

The committee met, admittedly, you know, a couple of handfuls of times by the time that March rolled around, but that was because the committee was doing the work of putting four acts out to the public to get consultation and submissions back from stakeholders such as Public Interest Alberta and universities and the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, who wanted to have input into Alberta's financing of how we conduct our politics here in the province. That took a fair amount of time. I don't think anyone wanted that part of the process to be rushed. So that piece was done.

Then, of course, I was asked to chair that committee back in April. We were waiting to get the reports back from the Legislative Assembly Office. They did great work. They gave us summarizations of what Albertans had to say about election financing and the Election Act and the whistle-blower act and the Conflicts of Interest Act as legislation in Alberta. I think that to minimize that part of the process actually does a disservice to the Albertans that took the time to actually engage in that part.

At any rate, the committee came together and did a lot of work, really put their noses to the grindstone from April to September. It's because Albertans want to see the power of their democracy and the political process put back in the hands of Albertans, not in the hands of special interests, not in deep pockets, where it currently is, where you can donate \$105,000 to a political party over the course of four years, Mr. Speaker. What we have before us now is a set of recommendations. I guess you could say, you know, that there is a synthesis of government direction as well as committee direction into what the bill is, which is what the government is supposed to do.

The idea that we would have spent something like 25 hours talking in the committee about contribution limits and coming to no agreement at the table in committee and then to send it back to a committee I think does a huge disservice to Albertans. They want to see this change now. They do not want to wait. I had a number of conversations with people who called me because I was chair – they saw my name connected with the committee – to ask me questions. I was able to share with them what the committee was doing. There were things that they did not like. Some of them did not support the idea of having public financing in Alberta. However, there were ideas that they did like that some of the opposition members did not want. They wanted things like having spending caps on parties during elections.

So I told that person, you know, that was referred to me by the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, that the idea of having spending caps came from NDP members. He said that good ideas can come from all sides of the table, and I think that that's a good thing. I told him that perhaps when the election finance legislation was finally tabled, maybe the people that opposed it would finally see the light. You know, after hearing all of the conversation and debate around the table, as I was able to as chair, I see that there are things that are a difference of opinion and a difference of ideals, of how different political parties conduct themselves.

Then there are things that I have found that I believe are just wrong. The things that are just wrong are the things that Albertans wholeheartedly agree with: lowering contribution limits, putting spending caps on campaigns. Their ears get bombarded and their eyes get bombarded during election campaigns when there are no reins put on what political parties can do during campaigns. So I think that what's really important to remember is that those are the things that Albertans want to see fixed. They see that as being a problem. It's not something that is just: we're adjusting. It's something that has not seen huge change for a long, long time because you had one political direction in this province for 44 years.

When you have one political direction for almost four and a half decades, you end up with your legislation looking one way.

7:40

So it behooves us, coming in as new members and as part of a different caucus, to look at things from a fresh perspective. I am so proud that I could be part of this and that I get to represent the constituents of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, who want to see these things amended and fixed. There are things that are, quite simply, not working, and that is why I stand to speak against this amendment. Albertans want us to get to work. They want us to get on with it, and that is why I am speaking against the amendment.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Calgary-Elbow under 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. Clark:** Yes, please, Mr. Speaker. I'll be brief. Yes, Albertans do want change. They do want contribution limits. They do want spending limits. They do want to get big money out of politics. Those are things that we all agreed on in the committee.

I have an observation and a question for the hon. member. Part of the challenge with this committee is the very quick change from it being a genuinely open, all-party committee to one that certainly gave the perception that the NDP was simply driving through whatever it was they wanted to drive through.

I have to say that it is ironic that it is the committee chair who, in her capacity as MLA for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville, is absolutely within her rights to stand in this Assembly and talk about anything she wants to.

**Cortes-Vargas:** She absolutely is.

**Mr. Clark:** She absolutely is. However, when you are the chair of a committee, you are meant to be seen as being an objective observer of the proceedings. Certainly, that was an issue that came to a head within the committee, and I think that it just continues that perception. It's very difficult.

If we were to switch spots and you were to ask me, "Can you make a case as to why the NDP ought to be able to be given a pass on this bill? It's okay," well, the first thing that I would probably do is say: "Let's not have the chair of the committee speak to the bill. Let's have someone else speak to the bill, because that's an unfortunate perception that is reinforced by the fact that we have people who were apparently objective not being objective on this."

The reason it needs to go back to committee is that that's the only option that we have. We in the opposition are very limited in what we can actually do, and we agree that it's important that we get election financing right. We believe so strongly in it that we want to get it right.

So I would just ask the member: do you recall exactly how many meetings it was that we spent talking about the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act in total? Over the course of the year at how many meetings did we actually talk about it?

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks for the question. You know, I did my level best to get five parties around the table to make sure that everybody's voices were heard. There were many, many meetings that were spent on the election finance act, and you would know because you were there. And do you want to know why the Member for Calgary-Elbow was there? Because I ensured he was there. As the chair I ensured that I polled, through the committee clerk, to make sure that all of the parties were represented and part of the conversation.

**Cortes-Vargas:** And rescheduled most of them.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Absolutely. I rescheduled meetings to accommodate schedules. There were retreats that I changed meetings for for the Wildrose Party. There were conversations that I knew that members of the Progressive Conservative Party wanted to be a part of, so I ensured that when we picked our time to take lunch, we took lunch at a time that would allow members to be a part of it, because I believed in all of the parties having the ability to have their voices heard at that committee. I'm not going to apologize for that.

The Member for Calgary-Elbow is asking for me to apologize for ensuring that everybody was around the table and that everybody was heard around the table, and I did that. I don't have to actually stand here with any sort of idea that I didn't. The idea that a member would not be able to be a part of something outside of this Chamber and then not be able to stand up and speak in the House about it is incredible. You know, does that mean that I shouldn't speak about health care because I was a nursing attendant? Does that mean that if I were a hunter that was owning a business that I shouldn't be speaking about the need for helmets on off-highway vehicles? No. I am saying that everyone that is a member of this Assembly should be able to speak.

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

You're speaking to the amendment?

**Mr. Nixon:** To the referral amendment. Yes, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Yes. Thank you.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I really wish I had a chance to ask the last speaker a question, but unfortunately we ran out of time, so instead I will speak to the referral motion, the motion that's before this Assembly. I thank the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster for bringing forward the referral.

I think the point that the last government speaker tried to raise on why this should not go to committee, Mr. Speaker, I think, quite frankly, is ridiculous. The evidence clearly shows that the committee was not allowed to complete its work. The evidence clearly shows that the good work from the committee that was done, that was agreed to by all members from all parties at the time of that committee, has not been included in the bill.

We've just had a government member, Mr. Speaker, rise in this Assembly and say that the opposition tried not to bring in contribution limits.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** No, I didn't.

**Mr. Nixon:** Yes, she did, Mr. Speaker. The record is clear in the committee that not only did we support bringing in contribution limits – in fact, we fought for that longer than this party on this other side even thought about fighting for it. Not only did we do that; we brought in lower limits than they did. We wanted to bring in lower limits than they did.

Instead, Mr. Speaker, while we were fighting to make limits lower for Albertans, that member, the chair of the committee – this is why it should go to committee again, because clearly it didn't get done – was over and over and over breaking tie votes to bring in a taxpayer-funded subsidy for her campaign and her party's campaign. That's what she was doing. She wants to rise in the House and say that we didn't want to lower contribution limits? We did. In fact, we even tried to lower them.

**Mrs. Littlewood:** I didn't say that. I said spending limits.

**Mr. Nixon:** Now, let's talk about spending limits because I hear the member raising spending limits. Every party agreed during that process on the spending limit amount compromise. Some had different ideas on both sides of the aisle. The committee came up with a compromise that would fit and agreed to cap spending limits. Total opposite of what that member just accused us of. Those are the facts.

Now, while we were doing that, the process was being derailed by government members who were trying to bring forward amendments to – get this, Mr. Speaker, it's shocking – make taxpayers pay for their political campaigns, to make taxpayers pay for their expenses. At a time when over 100,000 people in our province are out of work, when people inside my constituency are losing their houses, their businesses, their jobs, these members on that side of the House spent their summer trying to pass motions getting those same people to pay for their political expenses. That's what happened inside that committee.

7:50

That's why this needs to go back to committee, because the work could not be done because the government members of that committee spent their whole summer trying to make my constituents pay for their political campaign expenses. That's what happened. That's what derailed the process. [interjections] They get frustrated by that because they somehow now magically want to forget what they spent their summer doing. Now, Mr. Speaker, if I spent my summer doing that, I'd want to forget it, too. But there's this cool thing called *Hansard*, as you know, and it's on the record.

The cool thing about this committee, Mr. Speaker, is that we called division on all those votes. We roll-called them all, and that member over and over broke the tie over and over, trying to get campaign expenses paid for by my constituents and by the people of Alberta. That's the record that happened in this committee, and that's what every government member who participated in that committee spent their summer doing. Now, is that good work for the committee? I don't think so.

Then at the time they'd get up and say: "Oh, no. The opposition, Mr. Speaker, they're derailing the process. They're arguing with us." Darn right, I was arguing with them when they're going to ask Albertans to pay for the campaign expenses. Darn right, I was arguing with them. I argued with them every day, and in the end they agreed with us, so I guess our arguments were effective. Maybe if they had spent a little less time trying to make Albertans pay for their campaign expenses, there would have been more work done in the committee. They want to forget that. They want to stand up and forget that. That is their legacy on this committee.

Now, the reason that this should go back to committee right now on the referral is – again here I'm going to give you one right now. A member of the NDP said in that committee:

I'm a little discouraged when we sit here and we see amendments brought forward and arbitrary amounts thrown out that don't appear to come from anywhere but someone's imagination. We never . . . got an answer that actually told us someone was sitting down and thinking these things through, so I find that discouraging.

That was the Member for Calgary-West. She sat in that committee with the rest of us. Now, to her credit, she voted against her colleagues who were trying to bring in campaign subsidy by taxpayers.

**An Hon. Member:** Calgary-West?

**Mr. Nixon:** Calgary-North West. Sorry, Mr. Speaker.

That's what this committee was doing. Their own member is questioning what the committee was up to, that they were

imaginarily picking numbers out of the sky. Should it not go back to committee? Albertans expect us to get this right, and the government just wants to come and say: "Oh, look. We're going to totally change the way political parties operate. We're going to manipulate the new law to make it really an advantage to the governing party. You know, basically, the act to re-elect the incumbent government. We're going to attack every opposition party, and we really would like you guys just to come to committee and sit there and agree with everything we say.

Well, we don't, and the people that I work for, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, didn't send me here to agree with everything that you say. They sent me here to defend them. What you spent your summer doing and what he spent his summer doing, Mr. Speaker, through you, is passing motions and fighting over and over and over to try to make the people of Alberta pay for his campaign expenses. I kind of wish that he would run against me in Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre because I'd sure love to talk about that on the debate floor during an election. It's crazy.

To say that the committee completed its work is not true, in my mind. To say that the opposition stopped the process and the reason that we haven't finished the work on this important bill is because the opposition was stopping the process: no. The reason we never got worked done on this act, in particular, though it was almost done, was because the government members spent their summer wasting our time trying to pass stuff to make sure that their campaigns could be paid for, something that every opposition party in this Assembly was concerned about.

Now, what's most interesting, Mr. Speaker, is I think the number one reason – the number one reason – why this should go to committee is . . .

**Loyola:** You lack integrity, sir.

**Mr. Nixon:** I heard the hon. member say that I lack integrity. No. When you asked Albertans to pay for your campaign expenses, you lacked integrity, sir.

Now, Mr. Speaker, every member of the committee voted unanimously – unanimously – to ask the Legislature to return this committee to do its work. Every member, including government members. Only after it was out, they all of a sudden started to say all of this weird stuff that nobody could understand exactly what they were talking about. The record will show that that is just not what happened during the summer. That is just not what happened.

Instead, the facts are that government members continue to use their majority through the chair, who broke tie after tie after tie to try to force things through that would cause taxpayers to have to pay for their campaign expenses, that would cause trouble for every other party's constituency associations, all that under the guise of trying to lower contribution limits, something that everybody had already agreed to and passed. We were already through that. The government couldn't just take the win and say: "Yup. You know what? Every party agreed we should lower that." We compromised on the amounts. It could have been a great win.

Instead, the focus became: how do we get the NDP and the NDP candidates' campaign expenses paid for? The opposition did its job, which, in the end, the government agreed with and did the right thing. The question, of course, Mr. Speaker, becomes: during that committee why did the members spend so much time trying to get their campaign expenses paid for? I don't know. I'd be interested to hear that.

This just shows why this should go back to committee because, clearly, the focus that was happening from the government members on this act and that committee was on something that they now agree was wrong. So why would we not refer something like

this to committee? Why would we not get this right for the people of Alberta? It's about our democracy. An extra little bit of time before the act comes – we're well away from an election – would not have made a difference, a drastic difference in the process. It would have made sure that we got it right. It would make sure that Albertans got the best deal possible for their election system.

We don't want to mess up the election system for any party. The idea of using a majority to try to make things harder for the opposition is fundamentally wrong to democracy, and the fact is that you forget that this party, Mr. Speaker, that sits across from me right now used to be in opposition and more than likely one day will be in opposition again. In fact, if you're going to spend your summers trying to get Albertans to pay for your expenses, you're probably going to be back in opposition a lot sooner than you think, which is probably why you decided to pull that ridiculous idea from the table. I thank the government again for that.

I think that instead of rising in this Assembly and blaming us for doing our job and saving you from a terrible mistake, for saving the government, Mr. Speaker, from a terrible mistake, they should rise and recognize that the opposition was right to fight for that, was right to fight for Albertans, and should then stand up and say: yeah; let's get this committee, and let's get this fixed for the people of Alberta.

Instead, Mr. Speaker, what we see is the continued behaviour, the continued pattern of behaviour that we see from the NDP government, that the people, certainly where I live in Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, are extremely frustrated with and have had enough with, and that is political games. All that this has been, over and over, are political games, which is why you send this to committee. You let the parties work on a compromise, many of which passed with votes from everybody from every side of the House – many of which passed – and in fact the majority passed with the support of members from every party trying to make our democracy better. But the process derailed again when the hon. members for the government who were on that committee tried to do something so ridiculous, to try to get taxpayers to pay for their expenses. That's where the problem is.

Now, how do we get this right? There are serious problems with this. You're dealing with third-party advertisement, third-party advertisement, Mr. Speaker, right now. That work certainly wasn't complete, and it's pretty serious. I know. I sat on the committee. You see the reports that we've seen from elsewhere in the country. There's some pretty serious stuff that happened with PACs that we had to get right, but we're just going to move on. How do I know, unlike what the Member for Calgary-North West says, that it looks like all the numbers are just being picked out of the air? How do we know that's not still happening if we don't go to committee?

There were many things that were raised by the Chief Electoral Officer that are not covered in this legislation, many concerns that he raised in all this stuff that are not being dealt with, again, because the process got derailed so that you could fight to try to get your campaign paid for at the same time as a hundred thousand or more people are out of work, at the same time that Albertans are seeing unprecedented suffering all across our province. This government's focus all summer was to get their campaign expenses paid for.

Well, shame on them, Mr. Speaker. It's not acceptable to the people of Alberta, and it's not acceptable for them to continue to rise in this House and try to justify their behaviour this summer and try to ram through legislation. It is completely ridiculous, and they should hang their heads in shame.

**The Speaker:** Calgary-Hays, 29(2)(a)?

**Mr. McIver:** Yes. I appreciate the debate from my colleague from the Official Opposition, and I'd like to get his perspective on why the committee chair stepped down and what were the circumstances around that because I think that might give us some good perspective on what happened this summer. I'd like to also have him highlight, if he's able, some of the decisions that the committee agreed on, including the government members, that aren't included in this bill because it might help shine the light for this House and all Albertans both on why some people want to support this referral and others do not.

8:00

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

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thanks, Mr. Speaker and, through you, to the hon. member for the question. I think the biggest thing that is glaring that everybody agreed to during that committee was the fact to continue the committee. Every member voted to continue the committee to complete the work.

**Mr. Rodney:** Every member.

**Mr. Nixon:** Every member from the NDP and from every other opposition party voted to continue the work, showing that, yes, there were some difficult conversations – there should be; we were talking about something serious. But most of the stuff coming out – and you can check. I mean, as you know, Mr. Speaker, through you to the hon. member, *Hansard* is tracking . . .

**The Speaker:** Hon. member.

**Mr. Nixon:** Through you, of course, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** I'd like you to look at me occasionally.

**Mr. Nixon:** Okay. I'm happy to look at you, Mr. Speaker, of course.

*Hansard* is tracking the votes. They know what happened. It's on the record. It is clear, without a doubt, that most things were being done co-operatively. The biggest things besides the vote to continue the work of the committee were around how much we thought people should be allowed to donate. There was a tremendous amount of compromise and agreement in the end about where the cap on the donations should be. There were also amendments to the government's ideas on how much campaigns could spend, and there was a compromise done on that. In the end, all parties agreed on those two major issues, which is what the government wants to hang their hat on, but the fact is, Mr. Speaker, that we're already in agreement on all that.

So then the question is: why couldn't we finish the rest of work? Why couldn't we get the rest of the stuff done? Well, there were some problems. Of course, there was the point of privilege against the chair. I'm not going to get into that, but the hon. member is correct about that. That derailed the process, and there were some accusations made, which have never been properly answered by the chair, but we'll leave it at that.

In the end, the focus, which I think I've made very clear, of the members from the NDP that were on that committee was on getting Albertans to pay for their political expenses. What happened is that every opposition party – the Alberta Party, the Liberal Party, my friends in the PC Party, and the Wildrose Party – were fundamentally in disagreement about that because it's not an ideological issue. It is just plain wrong to go to the people of Alberta and say: you have to pay for my political expenses. Over and over and over we warned them how wrong that was. If you go back and



read *Hansard* – I did this morning because I was curious – it is ridiculous the arguments that they were putting forward to us to try to justify their decision to try to make our constituents pay for their political expenses.

I can tell you right now, Mr. Speaker, that I have never met anybody in Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre that wants to pay for their political expenses. There are a couple of people that voted NDP there, but even those ones don't want to pay for their political expenses. Certainly, the people that support my party don't want to pay for the NDP's political expenses, and I assume that the people that support the NDP don't want to pay for our political expenses. That would make sense. That would make complete sense, I think.

Anyway, to the hon. member through you, Mr. Speaker, there were many great things agreed on, but in the end the committee broke down because of the hon. NDP members' decision at the time to try to make Albertans pay for their campaign expenses. That derailed the entire process. They like to stand up and say to us that, like, we did something wrong. I can tell you that I am proud that we stood up against you trying to take Albertans' money for your campaign expenses. I don't feel any shame for that.

I go back to my constituency now, Mr. Speaker, just like you, and I see people that are hurting, families right now at Christmastime. I was talking to the Santas Anonymous people in Sundre, and they can't keep up already. People are hurting. My colleagues and I had to come up here all summer. We were happy to be here and fight against the government of this province, who was trying to take their money to pay for their campaign expenses. And they wonder why their committee didn't finish its work.

They also ignore, I think, to the hon. member's point, all the good work that the committee did. The committee completed the work on one act – large agreement across the board on that act. It was almost done the work on the elections finance legislation except for the big arguments primarily around them trying to have their campaign expenses paid for.

Then there were two other acts that were very, very serious, that a lot of people from across Alberta submitted things on, took the time to submit and to participate in the process, and this government totally disregarded what they had to say and moved on with it. Again, Mr. Speaker, they should hang their heads in shame.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to rise and speak to the amendment to refer this bill on election campaign financing to the committee. I have to say that I was a little astounded to hear the former committee chair stand up here and explain to this House that she granted the Member for Calgary-Elbow his democratic rights, that she allowed him to be on the committee, that she allowed him to speak for his constituents, that she allowed him to take a lunch break. I had no idea that the chair of a committee actually has the right to allow a member of this House to live up to their democratic rights that they were elected for or to take them away. But we heard here tonight that that committee chair personally – personally – had more authority than the people that voted for the Member for Calgary-Elbow and granted him his democratic rights.

I'm sure he is just dying to send a thank-you note across the aisle for that tremendous gift provided by the committee chair when this was being discussed, and I'm sure he will be forever grateful because of the fact that that decision, that carried more weight apparently than those people that elected the hon. member, was granted. For my part I will add my thank you, too, because I think

that all members of this House deserve to be able to stand up and speak for the people that elected them in the constituency that they came from.

Certainly, the people of Calgary-Hays: I hope they know that they're my bosses, they're the ones I work for, and they'll always be the ones I work for. I always try to make it clear that I am not confused about who I work for. I'm sure, Mr. Speaker, that many other hon. members in this House feel the same way. The only ones, I guess, that we have to wonder about are the ones that think they can grant those rights to other members of this House.

Now, what I find interesting, unlike the previous speaker, my colleague from the Official Opposition – and I thank him and all members that were on the committee, including government members, including our Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster and our former Member for Calgary-North West, who spent a lot of their summer on this committee. I think we can all agree that there are other things you can do in the summer. We can think of those, right? You can go to barbecues and talk to your constituents. You can have them in your office and find out what's important to them. You can meet them at the coffee shops. Mr. Speaker, members of the House could go for the odd bicycle ride, maybe take a vacation, maybe sit on the patio and put their feet up talking to constituents. These are all things that are pretty popular to do during the summer.

But, you know what? This summer 15 members of this House spent a lot of their summer on this issue, and I thank all of them, government and opposition – all of them – because, Mr. Speaker, that was sometimes two, three times a week that they were up here talking about election campaign financing rules. For them to take that much of the summer away from their home constituency, that much of the summer away from their families, that much of the summer away from opportunities for vacation and the personal time that we don't get when we're up here, I think that they all deserve a thank you from all members of this House and, frankly, from all Albertans. That was a big commitment, I have to say.

I wouldn't be surprised if members of this House that were not on that committee were thinking to themselves, as I did a few times: man, I'm glad I'm not on that committee because there are other things than that to do this summer. So I think all members deserve our gratitude. I really do. I do thank them personally for the commitment that they put in during times of the year when they could have been doing so many other things.

Having kept track of the comings and goings from my viewpoint and both from media accounts and from listening to my colleagues in caucus and from reading some of the *Hansard* of the discussions, I'm left with a few questions that, frankly, leave me thinking that the amendment before this House is a good one and one that should be supported by all members. I have to say that I'm just a little taken aback that many of the decisions that the committee made – the recommendations, pardon me. Committees make recommendations; this House makes decisions. I'm happy to correct myself on that. Of the recommendations that the committee made, several were unanimously accepted by all members, yet those decisions supported by members of the government and every one of the opposition members are not reflected in this piece of legislation.

**8:10**

Well, Mr. Speaker, if the elected people that were on the committee representing the people that sent them to this Legislative Assembly are not the ones that made the decisions that are reflected in the legislation that's before us, one is left to wonder, as I do: who actually made those decisions that are in the legislation? If not elected people, then who? If someone's decisions are overriding the decisions of elected people, I think that's unsettling in itself. That's

very unsettling in itself. Only the people, I suppose, on the government side that authored the legislation can answer that question. I'm asking it because that, I believe, under the circumstances is a very fair question. If somebody other than the elected people are making the decisions that appear in the legislation, one really needs to ask: who are those people who are pulling the strings? There are so many questions.

I will say that in terms of the title of the legislation, taking the big money out of – hang on. Let me get this right.

**Mr. Clark:** Saving kittens and puppies.

**Mr. McIver:** It's not saving kittens. Sorry, hon. member. It's about campaign financing.

**Mr. Clark:** Fair elections financing.

**Mr. McIver:** Fair elections financing. As the government members are so fond of saying, taking big money out of elections.

Well, Mr. Speaker, what the big print giveth, it appears to me the small print taketh away when it comes to this bill. There are many things, I think, left hanging out there that the committee should probably talk about. The committee should probably talk about the lack of limits on government spending leading up to and during election campaigns. The committee should probably talk about the lack of adequate limits on third-party spending leading up to and during campaigns. The committee ought to talk about the limits on public-sector union spending leading up to and during election campaigns.

You know what? They should probably talk about what the right number is for the spending limits. I think it's been well established here that the government and all opposition parties agreed that donation limits to campaigns need to be reduced. I think the committee ought to look at the recommendations that they all agreed to when the committee was meeting that don't appear in the legislation and talk about where they went. I think that the spending caps in the legislation for elections don't match what the committee agreed on, including the government side. So what happened? Why did that change? The committee talked about it. They hashed it around. They came up with some agreement, yet the numbers in the legislation don't match what the committee said.

One of the biggest reasons to go back to the committee is to respect the members of the committee and not disrespect them, which the legislation does. When you've got 15 members of a committee, the majority from the government side, and they bring – I don't know whether the government members brought the opposition members onside or the opposition members brought the government members onside or whether there was just a mind-meld of some kind, where everybody said that this is a good idea. The fact is that the idea that they all agreed on isn't actually represented in the legislation. I think that is something that I'm concerned about and that Albertans who look at this process could legitimately be concerned about. If it's not the elected people making the decisions, then who is? [interjections]

Mr. Speaker, I can see by the fact that I'm hearing from other people that they're feeling tender about this question. They're feeling so tender that they can't be quiet about it. [interjections] Again, we've got ministers of the Crown that can't keep quiet. I think they're feeling very tender about this question. [interjections] Consequently, they can't seem to give the time to me to talk about it, and they feel like they have to talk over me right now because, I believe, they're feeling very tender about the answer to the question of who's making the decisions if not the elected people on the committee.

I believe that Albertans should be asking the same question, too, and demanding the answer. The best way to get it is to put the 15 people on the committee in the room and have them continue the work that they started, that, let me say, for the most part good was work with probably – not probably but definitely – the notable exception, that the hon. member from the Official Opposition raised, about who's going to pay for the election. That was not good work when a committee tries to decide that the taxpayers should pay.

Look, Mr. Speaker. Let's be clear. They're trying to get the taxpayers to pay for me to get elected. I don't want the taxpayers to pay for me to get elected. If I can't go out and talk to people and say, "I'm going to do a good job for you; I'm going to represent your interests, and I'm going to take your interests to Edmonton and not Edmonton's interests to you," then they shouldn't vote for me or they shouldn't give me money. But to actually force it out of people's wallets, hard-working Alberta families – some can afford it, and some can't – to actually force it out of the wallets of the poorest people in Alberta to pay to re-elect any of us in this House is disgraceful, shameful, beyond the pale. Anybody – and I appreciate it was the government's side – should be ashamed. It's actually too bad because it's a real black eye on the government members that, as far as I can tell, in so many other areas did good work on this committee. Yet they chose to go down this shameful road for reasons that I can't explain.

So far I haven't heard any of them pop up and try to explain why they think it's a good idea. I'd love to actually hear them at some point in this debate stand up in this House and explain why they thought in the committee, on *Hansard* – so it's not even like it's a matter of debate; it's record. I'm sure everybody here is too smart to suggest that the government members didn't try to push that through because it's right there in black and white and completely undeniable. But I would love to see them pop up in this Legislature and explain to you, Mr. Speaker, and to all members of the House through you, of course, because we only speak through you, that it's a good idea to have hard-working Alberta families and individuals, rich and poor, pay to get us elected. I'm of the opinion that they would find themselves wanting if they think that they can actually make the case to Albertans in such a fashion that Albertans would accept that they think it's a good idea to have hard-working Albertans pay for their re-election.

So, Mr. Speaker, that one is hanging out there, and I guess I'll leave it to the government members to explain why they gave themselves a black eye by asking Albertans to pay for their election.

The other question that I'm interested in hearing from the members of the committee and particularly government members on is why the committee chair chose to remove the chair herself from the proceedings. It's particularly interesting when it's a committee with a majority of government members on it, including the chair from the government side, and the chair is removed. I think there is probably a public explanation that needs to be given there, and I would be very interested to hear any of the government members pop up to talk about how that situation arose.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, outside of the notable black eye of the government members trying to make hard-working Albertans pay for their own elections, there was good work done there, work that was not completed, work that as I understand it – and I'm prepared to be corrected on this – the committee was prepared to come back and complete. We should let them. We should let them because, for the most part, opposition members did a great job and, for the most part, government members did a great job. Why not let them continue the great job that they began? Why not even let them correct any mistakes that they think they might have made?

8:20

**The Speaker:** Any questions under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Calgary-Hays? The hon. Minister of Labour.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I really appreciated hearing the comments from the member who has spoken and all members who have spoken to the amendment for referral up to this point. To the member who was just speaking, we've been talking quite a bit about the work of the committee and the results of that committee and the engagement from Albertans and the work of that committee being the basis of the bill that we have before us today, which ensures that there are no more loopholes or backroom deals that can be allowed for well-connected friends or insiders, something that is going to implement a transparent and level playing field for all parties, to make sure that through things like contribution limits, which I heard the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre speak to earlier – that we'll lower the contribution limits.

Today someone can donate \$15,000. Today someone can make that donation and be able to contribute a significant amount of money to a single political party. In an election year, under the current rules, someone can contribute \$30,000. In this piece of legislation that we have put forward, that limit, that cap, has been lowered to a much more reasonable \$4,000, which is much more in line with other jurisdictions. The significant change of that item: I'm curious to know what the speaker who was just speaking thinks of that.

As well, there's the spending limits change, which is going to make sure that there are reasonable amounts that allow parties to communicate during an election to get their message out to all constituents, to run a full and proper campaign, Mr. Speaker, making sure that there's a \$2 million cap for parties, a \$50,000 cap for constituencies, with that constituency cap allowing for variations so that in a large rural riding, for example, travel costs are exempt, or in a very small, dense urban riding the parking that a volunteer may have to pay in downtown Calgary or Edmonton is something that can be exempt from those spending limits.

I'm curious to know what the previous speaker might think of these things as well as the changes to third-party advertising, which this legislation that we've brought forward really focuses in on, making sure that Albertans are able to identify who is speaking to them, who is trying to influence their opinions during an election. Knowing who is trying to sway them may have an impact. I think that giving people that information in a time when, federally speaking, we saw a five-times increase in third-party advertising just between the previous election and the one before is really important.

We are looking at a bill that will allow ideas and not donations to really determine the success or failure of political parties. So in the speaker's discussion about the potential to refer this to committee, I'm interested in knowing, through the Committee of the Whole, that we have available to us here, through the process of discussing this bill, seeing the work that was previously put in, the input that Albertans have given us, the number of people who said to us that they wanted to make sure that the elections were fair, that wanted to make sure that big money was taken out of politics, and the urgency that we heard about that because of the impact of a \$15,000 donation each year. We are just towards the end of a fiscal year, Mr. Speaker, so any delay – the impact that could have in the amount that parties are able to raise, because \$15,000 is a lot of money, and for someone who is able to donate \$15,000 to a political party: I think most Albertans would call that big money. I know that when the committee was getting input from not only the other parties but

from Albertans themselves, there was a great deal of agreement on that.

We are looking at that sunshine list for political donations as well as for third-party advertising so that we can make sure that we have an election system that we can all believe in and that we know is going to be reasonable, making sure that that process can be discussed fully in this House.

Thank you.

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

Anyone who wishes to speak to the amendment? Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm just going to speak briefly to the referral amendment, and I want to encourage the government members to take advantage of this opportunity to send this bill away because we're going to get many more opportunities over the next couple of days to speak to this in Committee of the Whole and third reading and to possibly have some amendments. I think this a great opportunity for the government to just take a step back and refer this bill to committee, where it belongs.

As I said before when I was talking on 29(2)(a), I had the privilege of sitting in on one of the committee meetings over the summer for the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. As I said, you know, a two-hour drive in, spend the day in the city, and then a two-hour drive home: it's all good, sir. You know, it's part of the job. But when you get into a committee meeting and the government members literally get backed into a corner and fall off of their talking points, then pull back – and the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie on at least two occasions in that meeting adjourned debate right in the middle of a conversation. He just: oh, adjourn debate; adjourn debate.

On two occasions that day when we voted on those adjourn motions, we called for a counted vote. Twice that day the vote was tied. Now, rather than the committee chair doing what a committee chair is supposed to do, which is to encourage debate, she actually voted with the government members to adjourn debate and stall debate on those issues both times, Mr. Speaker. This happened twice that day. I was very disappointed, to the point where I myself and the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster actually called a point of order on the chair that day. That's all in *Hansard*. It's all on record.

You know, we've heard from every member that's gotten up on this side and talked about the proceedings of that committee. It's almost an embarrassment. This is an opportunity for this government to do something right. Vote for this referral amendment. Get this out of the House because I guarantee you that in the next two days and a couple of days next week that when we get opportunities for the Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre to stand up and give his speech again, he's going to do it. How much abuse do you want heaped on you? This is a perfect opportunity for you to vote for this referral motion, get this bill out of the House, get it back to committee, where it belongs. Let's get it right.

There are a few things that were done correctly when it comes to setting limits. Everybody agreed on that. We did have some really good agreement from the committee there. But this is an opportunity to send it back, get it off the debate floor here today and tomorrow and Monday and Tuesday and Thursday of next week. I just think that this a great opportunity.

Personally, when I look at my constituency, I don't think I've got anybody that donates \$4,000 a year. We count on \$100 here, \$250 there. On the recommendation of the Member for Drumheller-

Stettler we actually had a pie sale. It went very well. We actually sold a pie for \$600, sir. It's a wonderful way to raise money.

**Mr. Sucha:** Was it apple?

**Mr. Hanson:** No, it was actually cherry. It was very, very nice.

**An Hon. Member:** Was it your wife's?

**Mr. Hanson:** It wasn't my wife's, no. Actually, I made two apple pies for that very sale, Dutch apple with a crumble top. Delicious.

Anyway, our constituencies, especially out in rural areas – you know, it's small. People that are devoted to our cause are contributing to our campaigns.

8:30

They say that they want to get big money out of elections. Well, I've looked at the last election's finances. There were ridings in this province where one party spent \$83,000, and the party that won only spent \$2,000. Getting big money out of politics? I don't think it's big money that wins elections. I think it's hard work, and I think that's what we need to do in our constituencies. I'm very proud. My CA is fourth in the province up to this point for fundraising this year.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Who's number one?

**Mr. Hanson:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. Who's number one?

Anyway, it's part of the grassroots movement in the province. It's people donating \$20 here and a hundred dollars there that gets us to where we have to be, to get to that \$25,000 or \$30,000 that we need to run our campaigns.

I will end with this, Mr. Speaker. This government has an opportunity right now to get the debate on this bill off the floor. All they have to do is vote for this referral motion.

Thank you, sir.

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a), the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank the hon. member for his comments. I think they were well thought out and well organized and something that all members of this House should take under consideration. But I have some questions that I'm hoping that the hon. member will address here. I want to ask him his opinion on the minister for electoral reform's comments just before him, where the minister refused to answer questions or chose not to answer questions about, for example, whether the committee chair could give people their democratic rights to speak in the committee, refused to answer questions about who's making the decisions that are in the legislation that are contrary to what the committee agreed on, of course leading to the obvious concern that Albertans could reasonably and rightly have, that if the elected people aren't making the decisions, who really is?

I would like his opinion on the adjournments that he talked about. During the committee there were a whole bunch of places where issues were adjourned when the government-side MLAs were essentially losing the argument. Rather than continue the argument, they, using the majority on the committee, essentially adjourned debate on those issues because they were losing the argument.

**An Hon. Member:** Twenty-three times.

**Mr. McIver:** I wasn't there, but a rumour that I heard is that that occurred 23 times.

When that occurs, Mr. Speaker, 23 times, I'm interested in asking the hon. member what he thinks about the fact that 23 times, when the government-side members were essentially losing an argument because they were potentially on the wrong side of it, they chose, rather than to continue with the reasoned debate – why does he think that they chose to adjourn debate on those issues and withhold the conclusion to a reasoned debate from Albertans? I think Albertans would be happy to hear those things.

I will say that the minister of electoral reform made mention of limits on third parties, but I'd like to ask the hon. member what he thinks about the fact that now there could be an unlimited number of third parties jumping into an election, each with \$100,000 or \$150,000, and for the public to try to keep track of that. You know, the argument was made: now we'll know where the money is coming from. I want to ask the hon. member whether the hon. member agrees: when you've got an unlimited number of third parties, each able to spend \$150,000, is it reasonable in any way, shape, or form for Albertans to know where all that money came from and to be able to keep track of it?

Since, as the government likes to say, it's about taking big money out of politics, when you can actually have an unlimited number of third parties, each able to spend \$150,000, I want to ask the hon. member whether he really believes that that's taking the big money out of politics when, in fact, there is an unlimited amount of money that could be spent by third parties advertising, whether that's truly taking the big money out of politics. Since the hon. member did great work on that committee, I think his opinions on those things would be very interesting.

I would also be interested in whether the hon. member thinks that when there is an unlimited number of third parties that can each spend \$150,000, that will potentially drive donations underground or open up the temptation for people to try to influence the outcome of an election without actually making it clear who indeed is trying to affect the outcome of the election.

I want to ask the hon. member as well, Mr. Speaker – and I continue to direct questions to the hon. member, which I think is in order – whether he thinks this is more or less clear . . .

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

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to speak to the amendment to Bill 35, the Fair Elections Financing Act. You know, there are many reasons why we would take a bill and bring it back to committee. I can think of few that are more important than the bill that we're talking about right now and why it should go to committee.

I think one of the things that I still believe is that every member in this Legislature is a committed democrat. I believe that every member of this Legislature values the rights that we have to free speech, to run for different political ideologies and beliefs, to represent those values and those beliefs in an open forum, that democracy is a competition of ideas, that those ideas are to be considered carefully by the electorate, by the constituents that we represent, and that anything that stands in the way of that exercise is incredibly important for us to debate and to discuss and to consider with great seriousness.

I think we can see by the comments of the members that have spoken to this referral motion that there are some really important issues that are being discussed here. This bill sets limits on contributions to political parties. It sets limits on spending. It deals with election campaign finances, and that's an integral part of our democratic process. It's a very important part.

I would agree with the member from the government that stated that elections should be about ideas and not donations, and I think

that probably just about every member in this House would agree with that. I don't see any member in this House disagreeing with that. Of course, it's a complicated thing because often ideas need to be expressed, and they need to have a vehicle by which they can be expressed. That can be through advertising, and that can be through events, all of which come down to sometimes the size of your pocketbook.

8:40

When we think of this debate that we're having and whether we send this to committee, I think we need to take the time in this committee to have those conversations. I think there would be agreement, and I think we've already said that that Select Special Ethics and Accountability Committee agreed on many things. I think one of the things they all did agree on was that we need to reduce the influence of wealth and wealthy individuals in the democratic process. I think that Bill 1, that we spoke to at the very beginning of this government, taking donations from corporations and unions out of the process, was something we could all agree on. Anything that we talk about with regard to this referral amendment and with regard to this Fair Elections Financing Act is important because it strikes at the very heart of our democracy in this province of Alberta.

I will defend this parliamentary form of democracy and the way that we do things in this province because I've seen how it doesn't work in other countries that call themselves democracies. I have the privilege on occasion of travelling down to California, and I had a conversation with some individuals down in California. They were so disillusioned with their democratic system, and I think it all came down, after an hour-long or so conversation, to the fact that in the United States money has corrupted their democratic system.

I'm not a wealthy individual.

**An Hon. Member:** Agreed.

**Mr. Smith:** That is the truth. And with three kids in university, I think that maybe some of you can understand why.

**Ms Hoffman:** Good thing we froze tuition.

**Mr. Smith:** He had to go to Montreal, actually.

But one of the realities was this. One of the conversations, one of the points that they brought up was that in the last state election for Governor they said that the loser of that election spent over \$65 million trying to become the Governor of California. I think we can take a look at our neighbours to the south and see that money has corrupted that system, whereby the only people that can seem to be able to get elected in the American system are people that come from the economic elite of that society, and it is not healthy.

So please do not think that on this side of the House we do not understand the importance of controlling money in politics. We've stated very clearly that \$15,000 was too much to be able to donate to any provincial party. We would prefer to have a limit of \$1,000 rather than \$4,000 at the constituency-wide level.

But there are serious problems in this bill that need to be referred back to committee. I think we've seen even tonight from some of the conversations that the parties on this side, the opposition parties, function very differently in the way they operate their political parties than does the government. That's a reality. I'm not saying that one is right and one is wrong. I'm just saying that that's the way it works. This bill will seriously disadvantage how we choose to run our political parties and the way that we seek donations and the way that we fund ourselves. The state should not be intervening and deciding that we should adopt an NDP way of running our parties. That's wrong. If you choose to run your party that way,

that's fine, but our membership does not. You should not have the ability and the state should not have the ability to intervene in internal political matters.

A \$2 million cap on political parties, \$50,000 for constituency campaigns: we can have those conversations. They're reasonable conversations to have. We must shepherd and we must take care of this democratic system that we have. It's too important for this to become a partisan exercise, where amendments like this, a reasonable amendment that would take it to committee, are rejected simply for partisan reasons. This bill, this committee needs to look at advertising by the government.

Section 44.1 of this act exempts "advertising by the Government in any form" from the definition of election advertising and political advertising. The government's own definition of election and political advertising is an advertising message "that takes a position on an issue with which a registered party or registered candidate is associated."

Advertising by governments has been used in the past and I'm sure will be used again in very suspect ways to try to take an idea and give it credence by putting money behind it so that when we start looking at elections coming down the pipe, all of a sudden advertising dollars by the government on pet ideas and campaign promises that they're going to campaign on suddenly appear on the airwaves.

In the last little while the NDP has spent \$750,000 advertising their spring budget, \$4.4 million to advertise the carbon tax in 2016, and \$700,000 to advertise it in 2015. What's to stop the largest organization in this province, the government, with billions and billions and billions of dollars behind it, from abusing taxpayers' dollars to influence elections? And it's not in here.

You want to take big money out of elections? Let's start looking at governments and how they advertise leading up to elections. That should be discussed by a committee. If that doesn't distort our democratic system, then I think you'd better start thinking again.

Spending limits. All of us understand that there is probably some sort of a link between the spending of money and your ability, perhaps, to get elected. But it's not universal, and we all know that. Every single MLA in this Legislature understands that. I've been in too many elections where money has not been the primary reason for a person winning or losing the election as a candidate.

I spent \$22,000, more or less. I think I raised \$29,000, and I think I spent \$22,000. I believe there are some in this Legislature who won on less than \$1,000 or \$3,000. If money was the only reason for people winning elections, many of us wouldn't be here. Last election the Progressive Conservative Party reported that they spent \$4.3 million in campaign expenses while the NDP spent \$1.6 million. Money is an important issue to talk about, and donations and spending limits are important to talk about, but let's also understand that in a democracy ideas and personalities also play a huge, huge role.

8:50

I guess one of the things that I would like to have this committee study, Mr. Speaker, is: if we're going to have uniform spending restrictions, how does that acknowledge the realities of the differences in our constituencies? The members that come from urban constituencies face a very different kind of an election than somebody from Drayton Valley-Devon, and the things that they will need to spend their monies on and the things that I will need to spend my money on are very different. I had to have at least two campaign offices. When you're in a constituency of seven or eight or 10 square blocks, you don't need two.

**Ms Sweet:** Ten blocks?

**Mr. Smith:** Well, some of you guys have got very dense populations, okay?

**An Hon. Member:** Like New York.

**Mr. Smith:** Could be New York.

Okay. The reality is that sometimes a one-size-fits-all policy doesn't work. We need to consider the differences in our constituencies. A committee could look at that. Presently I think that's a flaw in this bill.

I've already said that there's no limit on government advertising leading up to elections. I think a committee needs to look at how they could restrict that.

I think that there's a problem – and we've seen other members talk about this in great detail – with the reporting practices for their CAs and how they now have to start reporting \$50 donations every quarter. We have to remember, Mr. Speaker, that the people that run mostly in our political parties don't do this for a living. They're volunteers. We have to ensure that the reporting practices, while holding political parties accountable . . .

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

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Under 29(2)(a).

**Mr. Nixon:** Of course, Mr. Speaker, under 29(2)(a). Thank you very much. I appreciate the hon. Member for Drayton Valley-Devon, my good friend and neighbour to the north. I know his constituency well. We share lots of similar areas. I do go to Drayton Valley often to visit with the member and, particularly, the school board that we share up there. I can tell you that Drayton Valley is a great place but a place that's going through a tough time.

With that in mind and given the hon. member's presentation, it brings three things that I would like to ask him about, Mr. Speaker, through you, of course. I think it was great that the hon. member brought up the situation regarding PACs as well as the situation regarding government advertisement and then, of course, his concerns about why this would need to go back to committee given the actions of the government when it was in committee previously.

First is PACs. Barely was the issue of PACs discussed at committee. Again, Mr. Speaker, as I was telling you earlier, the process was derailed because the government members were trying to rein in campaign subsidies, and that kind of slowed things down. But it hasn't been talked about. As the hon. member pointed out, our neighbours to the south – I think we can all agree that the spending that's happening in U.S. politics is ridiculous. There's some evidence about what's taken place with PACs inside Ontario that is alarming. So for the government to bring forward this bill with no evidence that they've been able to work through that particular issue, third-party advertisement, particularly the constitutional issues that surround that and those types of things that have happened in other jurisdictions – I'd like to hear a little bit more from the member on that.

I also appreciate that the hon. member brought up government advertisement. The government of the day right now just recently spent \$750,000, as he mentioned, Mr. Speaker, advertising the spring budget; \$700,000 advertising the carbon tax in 2015; and another \$4.4 million advertising the carbon tax in 2016. That sounds like an awful lot of big money in politics. In fact, this act that we're debating right now in section 44.1 exempts "advertising by the Government in any form" from the definition of election advertising and political advertising. Well, that's interesting. So I'd

like to hear what the hon. member thinks about, essentially, the government bringing forward legislation, after trying to get their campaign expenses paid for, that doesn't deal with the fact that they are the only big spender left in politics. The government is the only big spender left in politics. Everybody else won't be. That's great. So why aren't they dealing with that?

I mean, the hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler has brought forward a bill that there were some political games with, of course, as you know, Mr. Speaker, and it's still not been dealt with. It still hasn't been dealt with, and it died now at the committee that they haven't continued. So I'd like to hear a little more about his concerns about government advertising in politics and how we're going to make sure that we get big money out of politics that way.

Lastly, as a Member of the Legislative Assembly for the great riding of Drayton Valley-Devon, a place that has seen significant consequences because of the economic downturn – I mean, if you drive into Drayton Valley, you feel it just as you're driving in – how his constituents feel about the fact that the government used this committee to attempt to use their money to pay for their campaign expenses, and then when they got caught and got under political pressure, they forced it back to the Legislative Assembly without doing their job properly. How do his constituents of Drayton Valley-Devon feel and respond to that?

**The Speaker:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Smith:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre is absolutely correct when he says that my constituency has been hit very, very hard. When I look at the people in my constituency, they're very generous with their donations. They're very generous with their funds, but often those funds are set aside for people that are truly in need.

People, as a part of our democratic system, should have the choice as to whether or not they're going to donate to a political party. That should not be something that they are expected to have to pay towards. When you pay your taxes and when your taxes go toward funding a political party and to refunding them for their expenses, I don't believe that they have that choice any longer. The foundation of democracy is freedom, and freedom is about choices. At the most fundamental level in a democracy we should have the freedom of choice about which political parties we choose to support. That is a foundation of democracy.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Airdrie.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise to speak to the referral motion. From what I've been hearing and from what I understand, there seem to be multiple problems still with this act. In a reasonable world and with the ability to do so, it would make sense to refer this back to a committee. I think this is truly something that all members in this House want to see, to get this right. And as much wrong that's been done in the committee prior to, that appears to be not quite finished yet but brought into this House to be debated, I think it would be a really good, smart idea for all members of this Legislature to agree to put it back to committee to fix this bill, to clean it up. There are a lot of really great things in this that I think all members certainly agree on and that Albertans certainly agree on, but there are still some really contentious issues in this bill that need to be dealt with.

Let's just do something really good in here, that's really right. Send this back to committee so that we can do some cleanup work and do right by Albertans. At the end of the day, that's what we're here to do. I think we have that opportunity, and we're almost there. Like I said, there are a lot of really great things in here that are really going to do some good things for democracy here in Alberta.

However, there are some really damaging things in here for democracy here in Alberta. I have many concerns, as have been expressed by many members in this Legislature, and those need to be addressed.

We have an opportunity to make some really poor choices with the passing of this legislation. But right now, with this amendment, we have an opportunity, and I think it's a great opportunity. I encourage all members of this House to support the amendment to send it back to committee, do some cleanup work. It's possible. It's probably not even going to take that much time.

I do have some concern about what happened in the previous committee. The motions that were voted on and agreed to by all parties, when presented in this Legislature, actually don't reflect the wishes of that committee. Perhaps it's just an oversight. This was a mistake, but we have an opportunity with this amendment to make it right.

9:00

When we try and take big money out of politics yet allow third-party advertisers to have such a large space in the political sphere, we need to pause there because there are some concerns, some serious concerns, in fact, creating an environment within politics that's sort of this shady, grey area. We need to go back and look at that.

When it comes to donation limits, I can't even imagine the amount of work that is required by Elections Alberta and by the volunteers within the constituency associations to keep track of all of the donations that are going here and there and everywhere. When we're trying to reach out to our members and engage them in the political process and we're having multiple events in our constituencies – you know, 20 bucks here, 50 bucks here, 75 bucks there; there are dinners; there are some items that are contributions, and there are some that are not – those create actually a bit of a nightmare to keep track of for the volunteers in our constituency associations. This isn't to mention the additional monies that are probably going to be needed just for the bureaucracy within Elections Alberta to track on their end as well.

These are reasonable concerns that I have and that the people of Airdrie have. These are reasonable concerns that have also been presented by other members of this Legislature. There is a wonderful place where we can talk about this, go back in, do the cleanup work, and then come back and pass a piece of legislation that everyone in this House can be proud of, because this isn't just for the people in this room, but this is for who may be in this room in 2019 and for subsequent election years afterwards. You may think that you're stacking it in your favour, and there are some ways in which it appears that that is being done, but the members in this House may change, and it would really be in everyone's best interests, in Alberta's interests, if we make this a clear, level playing field and it's fair across the board.

I don't have, you know, a couple of friends with \$4,000 sitting around in their bank accounts to finance my campaign. I don't know if other members in this Legislature do. I'm sure that is available. But when you allow only a couple of people to participate in the political process – where you can actually go out and engage a larger quantity of people to be involved, that's a good thing. That's a very good thing.

I implore this Legislature to take a sober second thought at this opportunity, with the amendment before us, to refer this to committee so that we can get this right. That's what this is about. Please, let's get this right. This is a win for all of us, to go back and just clean it up. Make this a good bill. That is my ask here today, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you very much for the time to express my concerns, certainly, on behalf of the people of Airdrie. I hope that all members of this House vote for the amendment.

**The Speaker:** Hon. members, are there any questions or comments under 29(2)(a) to the Member for Airdrie?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment REF1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:05 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	MacIntyre	Schneider
Clark	McIver	Smith
Fildebrandt	Nixon	Starke
Hanson	Pitt	Yao
Loewen	Rodney	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Gray	Nielsen
Babcock	Hinkley	Piquette
Bilous	Hoffman	Rosendahl
Carson	Horne	Sabir
Ceci	Kleinsteuber	Schmidt
Coolahan	Larivee	Schreiner
Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Shepherd
Dach	Loyola	Sigurdson
Dang	Luff	Sucha
Eggen	Malkinson	Westhead
Feehan	McKittrick	Woollard
Ganley	Miller	

Totals: For – 14 Against – 35

[Motion on amendment REF1 lost]

**The Acting Speaker:** We are back on the original bill. Are there any members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, the hon. Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal to close debate?

[Motion carried; Bill 35 read a second time]

### Bill 34

#### Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016

Mr. Cooper moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 34, Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016, be amended by deleting all of 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.

[Adjourned debate on the amendment December 5: Dr. Turner]

**The Acting Speaker:** Are there any members wishing to speak to the referral? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I know that this referral motion was late last night; it happened around 10:30. Maybe the government members were feeling tired, so I'd like to take us back to where we left off on Bill 34.

I must say that it is very difficult to have a productive conversation and debate when the other side can't be bothered to read the bill before commenting on a referral motion. This is exactly why this needs to go to committee. You know, there have been 16 bills brought to the Legislature that have been debated over five and a half weeks. That is approximately one bill every two days because we're only in the House for four days a week. Plus we had a constituency break. So believe me when I tell you that we on this side of the House are aware of the mountain of work and time and study that it takes to be able to come into this House and debate these bills. It would do us a tremendous courtesy to have the other side read the bill before coming into the House and having a debate with us.

To my point, last night the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud made it clear that he does not support our referral amendment. Madam Speaker, I think it's worth looking at why for all members of this House. Let me start by reading Bill 34 for you. It's only one line, so it won't take a whole lot of your time. "The President of Treasury Board, Minister of Finance may, on the recommendation of the Minister of Energy, makes loans to the Balancing Pool and guarantee the obligations of the Balancing Pool."

In response to the referral motion that we put forward to send this bill to committee – this bill, Bill 34 – the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud gave a speech that I would like to take a moment to review because I have a few corrections to make. We are talking about in this bill, Bill 34, an unchecked loan. Just in case the members on the other side are wondering, it's about a loan. The member, however, started with a tangent about pipelines, and that's fine, because if you ask what colour the sky is right now, the answer from the other side is going to be: two pipelines. There you go. But he said "that we would not have achieved [that] 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." These are the member's words.

Well, according to the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud this loan, the PPA lawsuit, the suing of Enmax, hiding the costs from Albertans of suing Enmax, which is what the bill is really for, got us two pipelines. Really? Okay. I don't recall the government's mismanagement of the PPA file receiving a shout-out from Trudeau. So that was interesting to learn. Apparently, in the NDP world view suing Enmax is the reason Alberta has been granted permission by the folks in Ottawa to repair line 3 and expand an existing pipeline. That is an interesting definition of social licence. Here I was thinking that the NEB did all the heavy lifting. Silly me. Well, hopefully, there are still power companies left around for us to sue the next time Alberta needs a pipeline.

At this point in the member's speech last night I was still, however, completely lost. Had the member bothered to read the 50-or-so-word bill before standing up to school the opposition last night, he would know, again, Madam Speaker, that this bill is about an unchecked loan.

The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud went on to say, and these are his words: "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." Oddly enough – and again maybe the member can point it out to me, and I apologize if I got this wrong – I do not recall reading, "Give blank cheque to Balancing Pool," in the climate leadership plan. Maybe you could point that out to me, or maybe that report received just a quick lookover as well.

Then the member went on to go after my colleague by saying:

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.

9:30

The government member doesn't support our referral amendment on Bill 34 because of the regulated rate option? This bill has nothing to do with the RRO, Madam Speaker. Again, did you read the bill? Fifty or so words. There's still time to read it now. This bill is giving a blank cheque to the Balancing Pool.

Madam Speaker, our problem with the bill is that the Balancing Pool can already cover its losses with a rate rider that does not compromise the principles of fiscally responsible governance. Fiscal responsibility is a thing where you actually care about the taxpayers, so you don't irrationally remove the checks that are in place to protect them. Then again, the government did remove "fair and responsible" and a whole bunch of checks and balances that would actually keep you accountable, things, I might add, that we have given ample opportunity to amend on your behalf for your credibility.

The member went on last night to say:

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?

Again if I could ask: did the member read the bill, Madam Speaker? It is not about the RRO. It's not about the regulated rate option.

I find it immensely amusing that a government currently in a lawsuit with a power company owned by Calgarians accused us of not caring. That is laughable.

You know, the regulated rate option was not an NDP invention. It's been around for a long, long time. The same person that pays an electricity bill: you know they pay taxes, right? It's just one of those things. You can't just shift a cost to a taxpayer and then wipe your hands of it and claim that somehow you've protected Albertans.

The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud didn't stop there. No, no, no. When he was finished talking about the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, then he went at me in a state of outrage, saying, "There were other people quoted by the Member for Chestermere-Rocky View from stuff that was written about a year ago." That's correct. You're absolutely right. And I think he said: why are you standing up, responding to a speech – oh, that's what it was. I was asking why the member would stand up, responding to a speech that he couldn't be bothered to listen to.

In my first speech on Bill 34 I was highlighting a timeline of the PPA lawsuit that was resulting in the Balancing Pool needing the funds that we are being asked to provide the Balancing Pool through Bill 34. The article that I read, Madam Speaker, was emphasizing the date that it was published in order to show that the government knew about the mass PPA cancellations before they claimed to or, at the very, very least, they should have. So the one and only response we've gotten so far on Bill 34 came from a member that didn't read the bill, didn't listen to our objections to the bill, and I really don't believe, with all my heart, that Albertans would be pleased.

Then because the member wasn't done going after the Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, we got this beauty of a line.

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.

Again, Madam Speaker, did the member read the bill? This bill is not about the capacity market.

It's fascinating that we didn't get support from the member or any other government member when we actually asked to amend Bill 27 to protect the MSA's ability to investigate a said market from withholding on behalf of Albertans. That's what that one was about. I would have loved to have seen the member stand up on that; that would have been fantastic. What's even more fascinating is that our MSA amendment came up during the debate on Bill 27, not Bill 34. That is because, unlike Bill 34, that the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud rose to speak to, Bill 27 actually has something to do with the MSA.

Madam Speaker, the government owes it to stand up and address Albertans' actual concerns about Bill 34 because it's in the best interests of Albertans. I'm just going to outline my objections one more time just in case you didn't get them the first time.

All right. Bill 34 is about covering the cost of the PPA debacle that this government created when it raised the SGER levy only a few weeks into their mandate without doing their homework on the consequences. Raising the SGER levy resulted in PPAs across this province acting on their contractual right to return their assets to the Balancing Pool, thus the current debt that the Balancing Pool needs to be bailed out of.

Bill 34 is irresponsible. There are no checks, no accountability, no public forum required to explain the minister's request for the funding. Like we've said, a blank cheque to the Balancing Pool for an undisclosed amount of money: that's what this bill is about. This bill is entirely unnecessary as the Balancing Pool already has the power through the use of an approved rate rider to recover its losses. Madam Speaker, government estimates put the needed rate rider at just over a dollar per month per bill while independent estimates from Andrew Leach has estimated this cost to be under \$3 a month per bill. Whether the higher or lower estimated cost is correct, this low cost will in absolutely no way ever be able to justify the removal of important checks on government spending.

If we take a look at so many – I don't even know how many amendments, how many opportunities this side of the House has given the government side to be able to look at what they're doing, provide Albertans with the accountability that they so deserve, especially on things like this. A blank cheque? I mean, does the government not realize that these are not their dollars? We have an immense responsibility in this House to taxpayer dollars. As was pointed out in earlier debates, in other debates and other speeches, we are in a province that is suffering right now. We are in a province where families are unable to find work. My own family: I have family members right now that are leaving this province for other provinces.

We have people that are not investing in this province. We are seeing one thing after another. We are seeing investors leave. We are seeing caps on production, caps on upgrading, keeping it in the ground and out of the pipeline, and then, on top of that, to have members come in here to debate a bill and not understand that which we are talking about and, worse than that, to not even understand that what we're trying to do is actually – we're not even amending this. There is nothing to amend here. Never. This bill needs to go.

There will be no amendments from this side of the House, but let me also add that we are giving an opportunity . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

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

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise and speak in favour of this referral for a number of reasons that I would hope to make obvious. We have before us a bill, and for every bill that comes before this House, of course, there's always a reason in back of it. The government, I would hope, doesn't just bring legislation to this House for the sake of bringing legislation here. When we consider the background that led to the reasons for this bill, Bill 34, even coming before this House, we see that there are some reasons why the government would want this kind of a bill to come into play.

**9:40**

We had a government that came to power and immediately took it upon itself to start meddling in our electricity system, and it appeared as time went by that the meddling continued, that it was I will call it a plan to so break our system that they could at some point as part of their plan stand up and say: well, we're the saviour of this broken electricity system, and we are going to reregulate what was a deregulated, free-market system. I believe that, ideologically, this government doesn't really like a lot of things free market, not really, and I believe that when they came to power, there was definitely an agenda to do what they could to mess with a system that, albeit it needed some repair, certainly did not need to be destroyed, a system that needed repair but certainly did not have to have the government come and so destroy it that we are now talking daily in this place about billions of dollars, tens of billions of dollars. It's not just growing on trees around here. This is tens of billions of dollars that ultimately will have to come from the pockets of hard-working Albertans not just in this generation but in future generations.

We have before us right now another bill regarding money, bill after bill coming before this House regarding money in the billions, and coupled with the deficit, coupled with the provincial debt, which is all in billions, it's just adding up and mounting up. That's why I say that it's like generational theft. We have a situation where future generations are going to be paying for a very long time for the mistakes of this government.

What has baffled a lot of people in the magnificent riding of Innisfail-Sylvan Lake who have talked to me – they ask the question: why? Why doesn't the government just hit the pause button? Why don't they see that borrowing and borrowing and borrowing and borrowing isn't going to lead to prosperity? You can't borrow your way and you can't tax your way to prosperity for the people of Alberta. The people in my riding understand that very well. The moms and dads that are there that are out of work: they come to our constituency office. They are genuinely afraid. They're afraid for themselves, but they're very afraid for their children and their grandchildren because it appears to them that the government doesn't really grasp the overwhelming burden that their fiscal policies are going to have on our children and our grandchildren.

**Mr. Rodney:** Then you should hear this amendment I have.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** I'm looking forward to it.

We have a government in place that came into power with an agenda, and part of that agenda was, of course, to vilify coal, and immediately they attacked the carbon tax under the old specified gas emitters regulation. It was the first in a series of mistakes that just kept going and going and going. Rather than have the sense to stop, back up, admit their mistake, no, they pressed on, and they doubled down and tripled down and quadrupled down on mistake after mistake after mistake. I referred to it as Whac-A-Mole policy

because the unintended consequences just keep popping up. Sadly, Madam Speaker, some of the unintended consequences aren't going to be felt necessarily by our generation, but they shall definitely be felt by our children and our grandchildren.

History will not be kind to this government. History will not be kind to this government's legacy. If you look back through Alberta's history, there are a couple of Premiers that our province has had that stand out. They're in the history books, and their popularity and notoriety go far beyond the borders of our little province here. I'm talking about Premier Peter Lougheed and Premier Ralph Klein, and whether people on the other side of the House agree with their policies or not, the fact of the matter is that both were fiscally responsible Premiers. Both of them made transformational changes in the fiscal policies of our province, and whether you like how they accomplished it or not, there were governments all around the world that wanted to talk to them and ask them: "How did you do it? How did you do that?"

They wanted to know the process because many jurisdictions around the world are and were mired in debt, mired in politics that were continuing to mount up into debt to the degree that, of course, you know, since the mid-2000s we have had whole nations declare bankruptcy. Whole nations. Yet some of those nations, even having gone through what they've gone through – and those generations now of children are experiencing the mistakes made by their predecessors – still press on in the same way. Take Greece, for an example. The solution that was put forward by the Greeks, of course, was: let's borrow more money from the EU, and that'll solve our problem. Tragically, the EU agreed.

Bringing it back to our current situation, we have a government that has made a number of mistakes, and I'm going to give credit where credit is due. The hon. interim leader of the third party stood in this House one day. I remember it still. I think I will always remember it. It's Calgary-Hays, I believe, that the hon. member is from. He stood in this House and acknowledged the errors made by his government, apologized to the people of Alberta for the mistakes made by his government, acknowledged that they had received their just reward by the voters of this province, and, in humility, that member acknowledged all those mistakes.

I have a great deal of respect for a man that does that, a great deal of respect for that. It demonstrates humility, and humility is simply defined as having a right estimation of one's self. That hon. member stood and tried to make amends for what was done wrong and, furthermore, did not stop there but pleaded sincerely and, I believe, from his heart with this government. He said, and I hope I quote him right: learn from our mistakes. He said: learn from our mistakes; don't make those mistakes, because the voters will not be kind.

Madam Speaker, this government is going down the very same road that the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays tried to warn them about and that we in the Official Opposition have tried and tried and will continue to try to warn this government about.

It would be very beneficial for this government to have a dose of humility and go back to the very first error that was made under the specified gas emitters regulation and simply start unwinding all of the steps that have been taken from that point that lead us to this bill currently before the House. Part of the process of correcting the mistakes of the past is to acknowledge them, first of all. It would be helpful indeed for this government to take Bill 34 and refer it and allow Albertans to come and have a say. Albertans, who are the people who will be saddled with the debt: allow them to speak.

9:50

It is interesting to note that this government has a penchant for unlimited borrowing. Unlimited borrowing. This government came into power and changed the spending cap, then eliminated it

entirely, then eliminated the law on borrowing for operations. Now we have another bill, and the government is saying: "Well, Balancing Pool, you know what? We're not sure how big the damage is going to be to you from our mistakes, so we're just going to backstop you to however much you will ever need." Unlimited. Unchecked.

What's strange, Madam Speaker, is that estimates out there from independent analysts peg the amount of loss that the Balancing Pool may experience somewhere in that \$500 million to \$600 million range. What I don't quite understand here is that if that's so, why isn't there a cap on the amount of borrowing? Why is it open ended? What do we not know? What other kind of impact is this government going to bring on the Balancing Pool that could possibly have motivated them to bring a bill before the House with no limit on the amount the Balancing Pool can borrow from the government?

When you look at the numbers – and let's just take for a moment that the \$500 million or \$600 million is a reasonably accurate guesstimate from the independent analysts. All right. Divide that by four years or so, divide that by, you know, a million or so subscribers to the system, plus the commercial and the industrial users, and the actual amount that shows up on the electricity bill, if they would allow it to show up on the electricity bill, isn't going to be thousands of dollars per household. And since it's not a big amount of money and the government has an estimate that it's, you know, less than a couple of bucks, why is the government attempting to cloud the issue and not allow that charge to show up on electricity bills under the rate rider? Why are they pulling an Enron accounting deal and moving that column off our electric bills and onto the taxpayers' burden, to be hidden in the great mass of provincial debt?

I submit to this Assembly that there is more yet to come that is going to so adversely impact the Balancing Pool. The government knows it full well, and rather than back up and correct the mistakes that they've made, they simply use the solution that they apply to almost everything, and that is: tax Albertans, borrow more money, throw more money at the problem, and that'll solve it. Well, that doesn't work. It doesn't work when you've got a systemic problem, and this government has got a systemic problem. Our children, our grandchildren are going to be paying for a systemic problem from a government that will not back up and undo the damage that it has done to our electricity system.

You know, what's kind of odd to me is that the amount of extra revenue brought into this government by increasing the tax under the specified gas emitters regulation is only in the tens of millions, but that mistake that they made is costing us billions. That's a really shocking return on investment here. We're going to go broke with that kind of investment advice.

We've had one colossal mistake after another. This government knew full well the impact of changing the tax on the specified gas emitters. This measure that's before us, as I said, is really just a mess.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members who would like to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Are there any members wishing to speak to the referral amendment?

The Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I would like to request unanimous consent of the House to move to one-minute bells.

[Unanimous consent granted]

**The Acting Speaker:** There are no other members wishing to speak to the referral amendment?

Seeing none, I will call the question on amendment REF1 on second reading of Bill 34, Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016, as proposed by the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment REF1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:56 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	MacIntyre	Schneider
Fildebrandt	Nixon	Smith
Hanson	Pitt	Yao
Loewen	Rodney	

**10:00**

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Phillips
Babcock	Hoffman	Piquette
Bilous	Horne	Rosendahl
Carson	Kleinstauber	Sabir
Ceci	Larivee	Schmidt
Coolahan	Littlewood	Schreiner
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Shepherd
Dach	Luff	Sigurdson
Dang	Malkinson	Sucha
Eggen	McKittrick	Turner
Feehan	Miller	Westhead
Ganley	Nielsen	Woollard
Gray		
Totals:	For – 11	Against – 37

[Motion on amendment REF1 lost]

**The Acting Speaker:** We are back on the original bill. Are there any members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm rising today to move a reasoned amendment, a bit of a safety net, if you will, for the government. That, of course, is to Bill 34, the Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016. It's on behalf of my hon. colleague from Calgary-West. I do have the requisite number of copies for distribution available for the Assembly. If you would like, I will take my seat until it is circulated.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you. Hon. member, the amendment will be referred to as amendment RA1. Please go ahead.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. As you can plainly see, it reads:

Bill 34, Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016, be not now read a second time because the Assembly is of the view that the bill does not adequately address and minimize the adverse long-term financial implications of changes to the Electric Utilities Act with respect to debt financing.

Madam Speaker, Bill 34 allows the Minister of Finance to make undefined and unlimited loans on recommendations from the Minister of Energy to the Balancing Pool in order to cover what will be, naturally, impending deficits. It is worth pointing out for every member in this Assembly and all Albertans that never in the history

of this province has such a borrowing practice occurred. I find that absolutely alarming. Now, since 2006 the Balancing Pool has always had a positive balance at the end of each and every year. Simply put, what has been proposed is a request to spend more money and, in turn, generate more debt, if you can believe that, as if the NDP was not deep enough already.

Now, since taking office, the NDP have exhibited a complete and utter disregard for the taxpayer and public purse. The numbers speak for themselves. We've seen nothing but reckless and profligate spending habits to compound what I have heard termed by many of my constituents as unconscionable spending habits. The NDP have raised taxes on all Albertans – that cannot be argued – during what could be argued is the worst recessionary period that almost every Albertan has ever seen. It includes, of course, a carbon tax. I firmly am convinced that people will not realize what it's all about until it actually happens, and it hits them in the pocketbooks starting next month. It was never campaigned on, was it? Anyone? It is destined to increase given the Premier's comments: we have never outlined that \$30 was where it was going to stop. How high will it go? Nobody knows. All of this on top of something I'd never thought I'd see here in Alberta: downgrades, downgrades after downgrades of what used to be our impeccable credit rating.

Madam Speaker, it can't be argued. This is the opposite of a catalyst for growth. Simply put, you do not increase taxes during a recession, especially when families are having an increasingly difficult time meeting their basic needs due to record unemployment levels. I don't know how many members on that side of the House are talking to their constituents. I can tell you that it is making me physically sick to talk to so many of these people who tell me – not just stories; these are realities – of losing family businesses that took generations to build, careers that took decades to build. It's not just about the money. It's not just about sending Johnny or Jane to hockey. It's about: how do I pay for my home? This isn't fair, in my humble opinion.

Madam Speaker, unemployment is reaching an area I'd never thought I'd see in this province, double digits. GDP growth is going in the exact opposite direction it has been for decades. To make a bad situation worse, we can add – I'm going to phrase this nicely, as nicely as I can – a lacklustre NDP jobs plan compounded by tax increases. I've had constituents ask me: "What are they trying to do over there, really? Are they trying to dismantle the very economy, the very culture, upon which this proud province was built?"

**An Hon. Member:** It's a nightmare.

**Mr. Rodney:** People call it a nightmare.

This scenario relates to the theme I mentioned at the beginning, Madam Speaker: a lack of regard for the taxpayer, a lack of regard for the public purse. The fact that the government has to table such legislation simply illustrates not only an inability to budget properly but an inability to understand the true cost of their policies.

Their constant meddling with the electrical system is proof of this and has manifested itself in Bill 34. The NDP's haphazard actions to overhaul the electrical system are putting Albertans at a risk they never would have imagined before, Madam Speaker, and these failed policies are driving Albertans further into debt. This will cost Albertans for years to come because the NDP don't have a clue with respect to how this money will be repaid – they've said it themselves – nor do they seem to understand the concept of accrued interest. Over \$1 billion in debt financing alone: that's like a Calgary South Health Campus down the drain every year. It's like huge sections of ring roads every year. How does this make any sense at all to anyone? I don't know.

But I do know this: at this rate, royalty from pipelines will not even cover the interest payments. How does it make sense? I hope someone over there can explain it to all of us. If we think about that for a moment – well, I'll just ask this, Madam Speaker: do we have more pipeline announcements coming? We would need two more to even work our way towards the black some day.

Now, if the NDP had any semblance of a plan, if they had an ability to budget properly, if they had respect for the taxpayer, they would not table Bill 34. It's a short-term solution to artificially insulate Albertans from the NDP world view. When will the cycle end? It's a vicious cycle. I don't see it ending. By moving forward with Bill 34, we're continuing the disturbing trend of burdening future generations with debt.

Hon. member, what did he call it a minute ago?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Generational theft.

**Mr. Rodney:** Generational theft. Thank you, sir.

Through the Speaker to the member and to all Albertans: no matter how you slice it, this is debt for future generations, and they're going to have to repay it. They had nothing to do with it. They didn't ask for this. The people over there did. The NDP asked for this, and they don't have a plan to repay it. The government is, whether they choose to admit it or not, destroying future livelihoods, future opportunities, future chances of prosperity. That's the reason why the size of Red Deer used to move to Alberta, because jobs were waiting for them here. Now we see the opposite, well over 100,000 jobs – that's people's jobs – lost in the last year alone. We're going the wrong direction here, folks.

It's one thing to borrow money with a plan to repay it, but it's another thing to borrow unlimited amounts of money with no plan to repay it and essentially throw caution to the wind. That, Madam Speaker, again in my humble opinion, is irresponsible borrowing, and it is a practice that does not resonate with any Albertan I've ever met. It's a practice that this government is exhibiting not only in Bill 34 but in other policies and pieces of legislation.

**10:10**

It's for that reason that I'm very pleased to table this amendment. By their own admission from before the election the NDP need to be transparent with Albertans, and here with respect to how borrowed monies of the Balancing Pool will be repaid, they need to have a plan to refinance their debt, and that concept simply goes hand in hand with good governance.

Madam Speaker, for the sake of all Albertans I hope all of the members of this Assembly will take a deep breath, vote for this amendment, and do so so that the NDP can come back with a responsible borrowing plan and re-evaluate what is currently, to put it mildly, a poor piece of misguided legislation.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

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

Seeing none, anyone wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. As much as I would love to engage and remind the member, appreciating his comments, that the Minister of Finance laid out a clear path for our government to go back to balance, I will save those arguments for another day and would like to move to adjourn debate.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## 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? [interjections]

**Mr. MacIntyre:** I know you're surprised. I know you're surprised.

Well, Madam Chair, we have before us, of course, what is becoming one of my favourite bills to oppose. There are a number of amendments that we are bringing forward, and I am going to be proposing an amendment in a jiffy here. We're on A6 right now.

**The Deputy Chair:** We are on amendment A6 still.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Can you read the amendment, please, ma'am?

**The Deputy Chair:** You're testing me now. Just one second. My apologies. We have a lot of amendments.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** We're on the main bill right now?

**The Deputy Chair:** No, we're on amendment A6. I'm just going to clarify the amendment. My apologies, hon. member.

Amendment A6. Mr. MacIntyre 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."

**Mr. MacIntyre:** May and shall. This comes back again, Madam Chair, to this issue of being completely unable to manage something you do not measure. We have a situation here where "the Minister may establish renewable electricity program objectives." As I mentioned before – I'll just remind the House again – when you've got a situation where a minister of the Crown may or may not do something, especially when it concerns something of the scope of our electricity system, we have a situation where literally billions of dollars are hanging in the balance. Under the terms of this particular bill, strangely, the Minister of Energy has an enormous amount of discretionary authority when it comes to the development of renewables projects, to the point, Madam Chair, where the Minister of Energy doesn't even have to demonstrate need. There is no – no – compulsion on the minister to demonstrate need, yet the minister has the discretionary authority to insist that these renewable projects be built.

That said, it only makes sense, then, that the minister provide the people of Alberta, first and foremost, but also industry with clearly defined objectives. What this amendment attempts to do is make sure that the minister does the appropriate thing, that the minister shall establish and make public program objectives that promote specific goals, including specific environmental goals and specific social goals and specific economic goals. Without these specific goals being clearly enunciated to not just the people of Alberta but also the investment community, how in the world is anyone going to even understand that what the minister is doing is the right thing? We're talking about a multibillion-dollar industry, a multibillion-dollar infrastructure build-out between now and 2030 to build 5,000 megawatts of generation and another 80 per cent of that as backup for it. It only makes common sense, maybe not so common sense anymore, that the minister ought to have specific program

objectives and that the minister shall establish them and shall make them public.

First of all, what kind of program is this section talking about? Well, it's promoting large-scale renewable generation. There are a number of persons involved in the process of getting renewables generation actually up in the air or built in some way. We're talking about municipal governments that are going to be involved, various agencies like the Alberta Utilities Commission, the Alberta Electric System Operator, electricity companies like TransAlta, Fortis, ATCO, rural electricity associations, and so on. There's a massive amount of industry out there that needs to know the direction that the province is actually taking so that they can plan and plan appropriately. But under the terms of this bill, Bill 27, the minister is not under any compulsion whatsoever to establish specific objectives. None. None whatsoever. The minister may, if she feels like it today.

10:20

**An Hon. Member:** Or not.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Or not.

Maybe it's an oversight on the part of the government, and if that's the case, then fine. Here we have an amendment that's very clear. We're going to fix it. We're going to make it a little better. The minister is actually going to have a very clear mandate that the minister must establish, shall establish – “shall” in legal terms is a compulsory word. The current language needs to be fixed. Secondly, if the minister is going to ask the ISO to do something like this, there had better be some very clear objectives and specific evaluation criteria in place. Otherwise, why do we even have this section? Why even bother saying, “The minister may establish”? Why even have section 3(2) in existence in this bill? It doesn't make any sense the way it is currently worded.

If the minister doesn't want to – think about putting “shall” in here, Madam Chair. It doesn't mean that the minister, the person, the politician, necessarily has to be the individual that comes up with the plan, but she has the responsibility to make sure that it is done. I understand how things would work. That minister would delegate that responsibility to experts. Hopefully, the minister would bring in many, many experts to advise the minister on what would be the very best objectives, what would be the very specific goals, the environmental goals, the social goals, the economic goals of a particular project. The minister would then publish what these are and issue RFPs or RFIs, and away we go with that project. But as it currently stands, the minister has no compulsion whatsoever to do that. Is the government really saying that we need a section like this in the legislation to let a minister decide these things?

You know, from the get-go, from the election in 2015, one of the things that maybe the government has heard me ask for time and time again is economic analysis. I don't know. The word “economic” seems to be a common word that my lips ask for. Economic analysis. Economic analysis. There's a reason for that, Madam Chair. The good people of Alberta need to know the numbers. The good people of Alberta need to know what it's going to cost. We just debated a bill where the government hasn't taken the time to figure out what it's going to cost the Balancing Pool, so just give them a MasterCard with no limit. But then that's how the government seems to be operating everything, including the provincial budget. Just give the Minister of Finance a MasterCard with no limit.

Well, my request under this amendment, of course, is that the minister have some specific guidelines that the minister must follow, and that is to clearly enunciate the environmental, social, and economic objectives – the objectives – and then make that

public for people. Get the good people of Alberta involved in the process. As I will say repeatedly, I expect until the next election, there are a couple of things that this House is going to hear from me time and time again. It's: where is the economic analysis? The second thing is: you cannot manage what you do not measure. Economic analysis is part of that.

Without really clear program objectives and clear evaluation metrics the government is going to be flying by the seat of its pants. We've already seen the disasters that this leads to. If you don't have clear objectives, if you don't have clear evaluation criteria, if you don't put a goal out there, you're going to hit it. You're going to hit your nongoal every single time, and it leaves our entire province like a ship without a rudder.

There are a ton of examples around the world of failures both of government and in industry when corporations, when governments, and even families, for that matter, don't have clear objectives. You know, without a clear vision people perish. It's true. Without really clear objectives in place it's hard on people. People get hurt. Can anyone on the government side get up and say why this particular section should even be here without this kind of amendment? Is it really the case that on the government side of this House they want to have a minister that doesn't have clearly defined goals, clearly defined objectives?

We've asked repeatedly in a number of bills – Bill 25 specifically, Bill 27 here, and other bills – for performance criteria, measurables. When we were in the debate on the carbon tax bill, Bill 20, we were repeatedly asking the government to put in place measurables to determine that in fact carbon taxation was resulting in a net decrease in global greenhouse gas emissions. It was very surprising to us over here that the government voted down such key performance indicators. If you don't have those key performance indicators in place, then you really don't know whether the measures you're putting in place are doing what you want them to do or not. It's impossible to know whether carbon taxation is going to result in any net decrease in greenhouse gas emissions if the government isn't putting into place even something to measure that, yet we have the government already talking about going to \$50 when they have absolutely zero evidence and zero measurables in place to determine if the current rate is going to do any good. It's really, really irresponsible and reckless.

Here we have this Bill 27. We have a minister clearly being given an enormous amount of power under the terms and conditions of Bill 27, yet that same minister doesn't have any requirement for specific goals, either environmental goals – what about those environmental goals? Why under this bill, where this bill is supposed to be the Renewable Electricity Act, establishing the framework for getting 30 per cent by 2030, is the minister not required to make any environmental goals, no specific goals on the environment? Isn't the reason why we have this act all about the environment?

Here again there is no requirement for the minister to have any program objectives, specific program objectives, for the social impact. Here again, Madam Chair, one of the rationales behind getting to 30 per cent by 2030 was to improve health, to improve the health of Albertans, yet the minister is not required to specifically make any objectives regarding the social aspect of this act. It's a little bit odd when we have the minister of the environment, the Minister of Energy, the Deputy Premier, the Premier herself, and multiple members over there standing up, you know, beating the health care drum, saying, “We've got to have this because people are getting sick,” yet the minister is not required to establish any clear program objectives regarding the health of Albertans. Yet that is part of the justification for this bill's existence, getting to 30 per cent by 2030.

10:30

Then let's take a look at the economic goals. This government has claimed time and time again that the drive to 30 per cent by 2030 is going to provide thousands and tens of thousands of jobs to Albertans and that the drive to a carbon-constrained economy is going to be prosperous for us all. We've heard this time and again: thousands of jobs, that all those oil patch workers and all those coal miners and all those coal generating plant workers are going to find employment in this new green industry. Yet the very act that is bringing renewables to 30 per cent of generation by 2030 does not require the minister to create any program objectives regarding the economy. None whatsoever.

What this actually says, Madam Chair, in its current form, Bill 27 unamended, is this. One, the minister has the power to insist that renewable generation be constructed regardless of whether we need it or not to answer our demand load. Two, regardless of the impact on our economy the government is prepared to borrow whatever money is necessary to make it happen. Three, the Market Surveillance Administrator cannot be the watchdog over how this rolls out when it comes to renewables. Four, the minister, with all of that discretionary power, doesn't even need to create any program objectives to promote specific goals, including environmental, social, or economic.

In other words, Madam Chair, here we have someone given an enormous amount of power and zero accountability. Zero accountability. The minister doesn't need to create specific goals, no specific objectives, and this government is removing any ability to even measure the performance. They don't want to be measuring, don't want to be watching, don't want to be seeing if, in fact, the government's claims actually come true. There are no specific criteria, and there's no compulsion for the minister to make them.

This is another blank cheque. This is another situation where we have one individual being given an enormous amount of authority and power in our province. The watchdog can't watch, and Albertans cannot measure their performance. Is that the kind of transparency the NDP campaigned on? That's not transparency. That's not even opaque. That's a brick wall, and it's a protective brick wall where the minister is protected. The Market Surveillance Administrator can't even so much as accept a complaint, and even if they could, they can't investigate it.

This is not transparency, Madam Chair. What this amendment is trying to do is make the minister accountable for some achievement of clearly identified objectives. Now, I realize that's going to take some work. It's going to take some work on the part of the minister and the minister's department to actually develop clear, specific environmental goals, economic goals, and social goals for this particular bill. But a responsible government should do that. I guarantee you one thing. Any business or businessman or board of directors worth their salt would conduct these kinds of things and provide their company with these specific goals. You take any business course you want to take. Goal setting is always one of the key – key – elements to a successful business.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A6? The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm sure it will come as a surprise to the opposition that I rise tonight to speak against this amendment as it is unnecessary and unhelpful given the full context of the bill.

The member opposite is endeavouring to create a problem out of section 3 where no problem currently exists. Section 3 simply allows the minister to direct the AESO to develop a program with

specific objectives for that one round of the program. These would be objectives over and above the general objectives that exist for every program in this bill. The member opposite suggests that without his amendment we might develop programs without objectives. However, clearly stated objectives are ubiquitous in the bill itself, with no need to require the minister to set additional ones.

The Legislature sets objectives by enacting this bill itself. I'm sorry that the members opposite don't support these objectives. Opposing renewable energy and the opportunities it brings for Alberta is certainly their prerogative. However, the government is setting the objectives in law. Let me take this opportunity to put them on record and to list some of them. Some of the objectives included in this bill are promoting the growth of renewable electricity generation in Alberta; reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving air quality; ensuring that at least 30 per cent of electric energy produced in Alberta, measured on an annual basis, will be produced from renewable energy sources; promoting large-scale renewable electricity in Alberta; employing a fair, transparent, and competitive process that does not jeopardize the safe, reliable, and economic operation of the interconnected electric system. So right there we have half a dozen objectives for renewable electricity programs in the legislation. It's black and white. The minister need not necessarily set out more.

Now, section 3(2) is purposefully discretionary. What section 3(2) does allow for is that it allows the minister to set additional objectives or criteria. Say you wanted to incent a program that was based on community ownership or was based on inclusion of indigenous communities or was based on particular, specific technologies or specific rural or urban economic development objectives. This discretion will allow us to seek specific outcomes that are important to Albertans as we continue to hear from them and solicit their feedback. But to require the minister to set more objectives than are already in the act is unnecessary. For example, the first program procurement will be decided on price alone. Would the opposition require us to add other objectives rather than focusing the first program on one that ensures lowest cost?

Functionally this is why we oppose the amendment. It creates extra red tape and duplicates elements that are already in the bill, so I would recommend that everyone oppose it.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A6? The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

**Mrs. Aheer:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Yes, I definitely want to speak about this. I'm just making some notes in response to the Member for Calgary-East. Unfortunately, I wish so much that what is laid out in this part of the bill was black and white. What we're actually asking for is exactly what you just said. We are asking that it "shall establish and make public." All that means is that it adds credibility to the minister's ability to bring forward programs. As you've said in your own speech just now, if it's best for Albertans, then Albertans should know. Right? We want to make sure that the words "shall establish and make public" add credibility to parts of this legislation so that, as the Member for Calgary-East just said, if the minister so chooses to bring forward programs, you have the capacity to do that.

Right now, as it stands, the minister has power over power and on almost every aspect. Not even almost. We're going to find everywhere in this bill the lack of oversight, the lack of metrics, the lack of desire to show transparency, which I believe was in the member's brief statement, too. How is it that members can justify transparency without legitimate words like "shall" and "must" and

“shall establish and make public” versus “may”? How can you even say the word “transparent” without making sure that the responsibility of that minister is to be transparent? Are we supposed to just trust that that’s what’s going to happen? I guarantee you that Albertans are not going to go for that.

10:40

The whole reason for putting these words into legislation is to protect Albertans, and governments shouldn’t be afraid of those words because ultimately it shows a government’s desire to make sure that they’re doing right by Albertans and are protecting Albertans. As the member stated, there may be ideas that the minister wants to bring forward, and he or she may think it’s a great idea, but without actually having those words in the legislation to make sure that they are managing the oversight on this, that minister could end up in a whole bunch of trouble.

This is actually protective. This is a protective mechanism not only for Albertans but also for the government because you have to go through the process of making sure that you’ve followed: shall establish and make public. Any time that you have to do something in public, the person is going to do their very best, and they’re going to make sure that they’re prepared and that, when they are standing in front of folks or they are presenting, they’ve gone to the work and the effort to make sure that all of those avenues have been checked.

It’s like anything. I could compare it to music even, doing a performance. You’re not going to just go and do a half-baked performance of something that’s very important to you in front of people that have either hired you or are having you there to do that job. That’s just in my little world of what I did before I was here. I can’t imagine not feeling that sense of responsibility. Sometimes you sign contracts for those things. Well, this is just a continuation of what a normal businessperson would do in a normal, everyday life when you have contractual obligations. I mean, putting in the words “shall establish and make public” should be something that we would demand from our government to make sure that they’re following through with their obligations. I would be proud to put that on something that I put forward because I know I would follow through with that. Even if, let’s say by accident, something happens, this wording that we’re actually wanting to put in will protect those folks that are doing that.

I also want to speak just on the enormous responsibility in what is going to come forward here with programs. You know, we see all sorts of information about particular types of renewables and alternative energy that’s gone wrong, pieces of massive infrastructure that have been left and not reclaimed all over the world. At the very least, we are asking the minister to make sure that this is public information. I mean, we’re dealing with municipalities here. Those municipalities don’t have the right to know what’s coming onto the lands in those areas? You were saying about indigenous folks and other things, Member for Calgary-East. Well, I would assume – I mean, maybe we’re the only ones who are seeing this – that consultation would be key. I would assume that those folks as well as anybody else whose land that these projects may be built on would want you to make sure the words “shall establish and make public” were in there. How else are we going to make sure that we have a check on a system where the only requirement is: well, maybe today I feel like doing that.

I mean, if feelings are going to determine legislation, we are in big trouble. Feelings are not going to justify bad decisions from this government. You’re in big trouble if you’re going to try and defend this one. I would suggest that everyone in this House vote in favour of this amendment.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak?

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Well, I just want to respond a little bit to some more on this amendment, this fine amendment, and some of the comments from I believe it’s Calgary-East.

The Member for Calgary-East pointed out in her rejection of this amendment that there are all kinds of program objectives already contained within Bill 27 – I believe that’s a fair paraphrase; would it not be a fair paraphrase? – which then leads to the obvious question: then why in heaven’s name do we have section 3(2)? Why do we have section 3(2)?

(2) The Minister may establish . . .

(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.

Why do we have this, then, if it’s already been done elsewhere in Bill 27? The logic falls down a little bit there, which is not uncommon. If we’re going to have this section in this bill where the minister may or may not do something, at least let’s make sure that the minister shall.

A second comment that I take exception to is that the hon. Member for Calgary-East seemed to think that members on this side of the House are somehow against renewables. That’s a really interesting comment given that, you know, for myself at least, that’s how I earned my living for many, many, many years, on alternative energy projects and teaching alternative energy curriculum at NAIT in the alternative energy program in the school of sustainable building management, and I’m still on faculty there. You know, that was my dream job. Someday, when I’m either worn out from beating on you guys or tired of talking in this place, maybe I’ll go back to that. I don’t know. You may want me to go back to that.

Here we have a situation where, you know, people on this side of the House actually do really appreciate renewables. The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View’s house is plastered with solar panels all over the roof. Anybody on that side got something like that?

**An Hon. Member:** No.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** No? Oh. See, in the world of renewable technologies one of the things that you really have to do is that you’ve got to put your money where your mouth is. In the industry that I came from, one of the questions that people always asked was: well, what have you got on the go yourself? I mean, our engineering people were being asked that all the time.

You know, taking that under advisement in the early days, it was kind of incumbent upon all of us to actually have these sorts of things in our homes and in our lives. Being a renter and not owning a home, of course, the landlord would frown terribly if I went up and started hammering solar panels on the roof. However, I spent the summer off grid, which was an enjoyable experience, in the middle of Sylvan Lake on a sailing vessel, off grid, solar powered, when the wind didn’t blow. As you may know, sailboats need wind, just like a wind turbine does. But living off grid with solar power was a fun experience for me. I know many people who do live off grid, who have various alternative forms of energy generation. Some of them are colleagues from industry. Some of them are just do-it-yourselfers.

You know, out west towards Edson and that way there are a number of people that are off grid. Some are grid tied, but many are off grid, people that I know. They’re experiencing what it’s like with renewables and the different changes to lifestyles that they have to incorporate in order for renewables to actually function for them given some of the constraints that we experience here such as minus 40, such as snow, ice, such as, you know, really huge demand loads,

things like that. We're really going to put some stress on the old batteries when the children come home and flip on every light and every electronic device, the television and everything else. These are some of the constraints you experience with renewable technology.

So over here on this side we are actually very pro renewables. One of the fundamental differences, though, between how we see to promote them and how the government sees to promote them is that we want renewables to be able to stand on their own two feet. We're not willing to sacrifice taxpayers. We're not willing to sacrifice Alberta's taxpayers or ratepayers in pursuit of something, especially as rapidly as this government wants to pursue it. Albertans have a right not to be disrupted.

**10:50**

As I think I've stated before in this House, one of the principles of sound energy management is to do no harm, and the reason why in industry, when we're incorporating energy management principles and energy efficiency measures, we do no harm is because the company is going to have to pay for these changes somehow. These energy efficiency measures cost money. These changes that we're going to incorporate take a lot of money. So if you start bringing in changes for the sake of renewables or the sake of energy efficiency and it hurts the bottom line of the company, you're actually gutting the company's ability to pay for the changes they want to incorporate when it comes to energy efficiency and renewable technologies.

This government came into power and immediately gutted, began and continued to gut, our economy, which ultimately has to be able to afford these very changes that they want to bring in. Right from July onward this government gets a failing grade when it comes to how one ought to roll out these kinds of things. The government has quoted me as being in support of some of the government's energy efficiency measures. I would love to, but unfortunately what has happened is that you've gutted the economy's ability to actually do them. The thing to do is to bring in measures that do no harm, and you bring them in slowly, and you do them bit by bit, here and there, here and there. You do pilot projects, and you prove that they work before you make these wholesale, sweeping, grandiose plans. This government has not done any of that.

This government has gone straight for the grandiose plans, thinking that they know best, and now we're talking about \$10 billion here and \$5 billion there and \$6 billion there. This is our people's money. This is our taxpayers' money, our ratepayers' money, and we don't have the minister being required to even create any specific economic goals. It's an option. I would hope that every member in this place would see the importance of making sure that the minister, with this much power in the minister's control – I would hope that they would appreciate helping Albertans by providing something like this, where the minister actually has some work to do, to create some specific goals.

As I have mentioned, we are very pro renewables over here, but it's going to have to be competitive, and it's going to have to stand on its own two feet, and it cannot constantly be living with both feet in the trough at the expense of Alberta's taxpayers.

I would hope that ultimately we see this government, government members, approve this very responsible amendment. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I 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:** Good evening, and thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 27. 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 Acting Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur with the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Acting Speaker:** Opposed, please say no. So ordered.

**Mr. Bilous:** Madam Speaker, I rise to seek unanimous consent for one-minute bells.

[Unanimous consent granted]

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Seeing the time and the progress and the robust debate that we've had this evening, I move that we adjourn until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion to adjourn carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:56 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[Ms. Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Phillips
Babcock	Hoffman	Piquette
Bilous	Horne	Rosendahl
Carson	Kleinsteuber	Sabir
Ceci	Larivee	Schmidt
Coolahan	Littlewood	Schreiner
Cortes-Vargas	Loyola	Shepherd
Dang	Luff	Sigurdson
Eggen	Malkinson	Sucha
Feehan	McKittrick	Westhead
Ganley	Miller	Woollard
Gray	Nielsen	

**11:00**

Against the motion:

Aheer	MacIntyre	Schneider
Fildebrandt	Nixon	Smith
Hanson	Rodney	Yao
Loewen		

Totals: For – 35 Against – 10

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:01 p.m.]







## Table of Contents

### Government Bills and Orders

#### Second Reading

Bill 37 Appropriation (Supplementary Supply) Act, 2016 (No. 2)..... 2363

Bill 35 Fair Elections Financing Act ..... 2363

Division ..... 2373

Bill 34 Electric Utilities Amendment Act, 2016..... 2373

Division ..... 2377

#### Committee of the Whole

Bill 27 Renewable Electricity Act ..... 2378

Division ..... 2382

*Alberta Hansard* is available online at [www.assembly.ab.ca](http://www.assembly.ab.ca)

For inquiries contact:

Managing Editor

*Alberta Hansard*

3rd Floor, 9820 – 107 St

EDMONTON, AB T5K 1E7

Telephone: 780.427.1875