



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Thursday morning, December 8, 2016

Day 60

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**

Second Session

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Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees  
Sweet, Heather, Edmonton-Manning (ND), Deputy Chair of Committees

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Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)	MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)
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Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)	Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)
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Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)	Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)
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Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)	Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)
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Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (ND)	Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
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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

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

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Thursday, December 8, 2016

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Deputy Speaker:** Good morning.

Let us reflect. Hon. members, on December 10 it will be international Human Rights Day. This day recognizes when the United Nations General Assembly adopted the universal declaration of human rights. Let's take some time today to reflect on the significance of this day and be resolved to never stop defending the freedoms and rights of all human beings.

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I would like to call the Committee of the Whole to order.

#### Bill 35

##### Fair Elections Financing Act

**The Chair:** We are currently on amendment A6. Are there any further speakers to this amendment? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I just want to wrap up my comments on this amendment by talking briefly about some of the things that the hon. Government House Leader had spoken about last night in his speech. He had talked about choice and the fact that the way the bill is structured allows for Albertans the choice of where they put their money, be it a constituency association, a party, a nomination candidate, a leadership candidate, an actual election cycle candidate. I'm baffled by that because those are all choices that Albertans have right now, so this bill does nothing to enhance those choices.

What this amendment seeks to fix and to address is a fundamental flaw in the bill which puts big money into politics. I've heard a couple of times in this House that the objective here is to take big money out of politics. What this does is put big money into politics by allowing as few as three individuals to finance an entire election campaign for a single candidate. That's what this bill allows for. It's a problem that was fixed at committee. It's baffling to me why it hasn't been fixed in the bill. I think it shows the disdain that the government has shown for the process of that committee, and it is profoundly disappointing.

Madam Chair, that is why we brought this amendment, and I'm actually surprised that the government is not choosing to support us on this because I think it is in fact a very reasonable amendment. It helps achieve what is the stated goal of this government's legislation, which is to get big money out of politics. Would anybody here love to tell me who here would not like to get big money out of politics? Hearing none. Of course we do. Of course we do. We all want to get big money out of politics. So it's a fairly straightforward amendment, and I would very much appreciate and love to see this government support it.

You know, what they've done is that they've got their thumb on the scale here with this bill. They've got their thumb on the scale. Some would say that they're stacking the deck against opposition parties. Some would say that they're stacking the deck. They've got 53 cards. Fifty-three cards. They've got an extra joker in their deck of cards, Madam Chair, and they have stacked the deck against opposition parties.

Albertans will see right through it. Albertans will see through it, they will know what this government has done, and they will reward them accordingly at the ballot box by voting for someone else because they'll see that the government has taken the opportunity as a majority government to tilt the scales, to stack the deck in their favour, and that is not how we do things in Alberta, Madam Chair. That is not how we do things. Albertans like a fair fight. They don't like it when the bigger kid uses their advantage and takes advantage of the smaller. That's what's happening here.

Madam Chair, I would encourage everyone to please support this very reasonable amendment, and I look forward to other comments. Thank you.

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

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, good morning, Madam Chair. It is a pleasure to be back in the Chamber with you today, of course, and with my hon. colleagues in all the other parties in the Assembly on this fine, cold morning. Welcome to Thursday. I hope that everybody has a safe trip back to their constituencies later today.

I do want to talk a little bit about the amendment that has been brought forward by the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow, the independent member for Calgary-Elbow, my good friend . . .

**Mr. Clark:** The next government.

**Mr. Nixon:** Yeah. I'll even give it to him today because I'm feeling Christmasy.

. . . the leader of the Alberta Party.

Last night as we finished our work in the Chamber for the evening, the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie and the hon. Government House Leader rose, and it was nice to hear from the NDP on this important piece of legislation. They tried to focus their comments – not tried to. They focused their comments primarily around the concept of choice. Particularly, the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie felt that it was important to point out that the Wildrose Party, the party of the Official Opposition, my party, was all about choice.

I do want to confirm through you, Madam Chair, to him that, without a doubt, this is the party of choice that is in the Assembly and his party across the way is not the party of choice. I do appreciate him bringing that to all of our attention. We've been mentioning that to the people of Alberta for a while and him helping to reinforce our message is appreciated, certainly by me. When it comes to things like parental choice, we stand with parents; his party doesn't. When it comes to things like farmers' property rights and the choices around their land, we stand with them, and his party doesn't. I do appreciate him pointing that out as we went home for the evening. It was certainly appreciated.

However, when we go to talk specifically about the amendment that we're debating right now, that has been brought forward by the Member for Calgary-Elbow, I think the argument falls short and, to be quite frank, is a little bit confusing and appears to be almost smoke and mirrors to a certain extent. Madam Chair, it's trying to, you know, in my mind, distract us and the people of Alberta from the fact that this government, the members across the way, are actually trying to raise the contribution limits inside constituency

associations. They want to gloss over that fact and then just get to the fact that with this legislation we're going to lower the ridiculous \$15,000 amount to \$4,000. That's something that all parties agree on in the Assembly.

As the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow just articulated in his comments, during the debate in the Ethics and Accountability Committee – and I will note that the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie was a member of that committee – this concept was debated in great detail. And the committee as a whole decided, with unanimous votes if I recall from all parties inside that committee, that we needed to deal with the issue of making sure that we did not accidentally raise constituency associations at the same time as we were trying to get big money out of politics on the party side.

Now, this has been pointed out by many members in the last few hours as we have debated this important piece of legislation, Madam Chair, but by raising the amount from \$1,000 to \$4,000, four times the current amount in the legislation, we are putting in a situation in constituencies, you know, where three people can essentially finance one MLA's campaign. The main reason for getting big money out of politics, that has been stated by all parties, is an attempt to make sure that small groups of people can't influence political parties more than others or influence candidates more than others. The idea is that we want more people to participate in the process and to make sure, you know, for lack of a better term – and I don't think that anybody who is currently in this Chamber would allow this to happen to them – that one or two or three people can't buy a tremendous amount of influence with one political party or one political candidate.

9:10

Now, if three people inside a constituency can pay for an MLA's entire campaign, that means, I would say, that they could certainly be perceived as buying influence. Given that throughout this debate the government has really focused on and hung their hat on the fact that they want to get big money out of politics – something, again, Madam Chair, I agree with them on – the opposition, including myself, continues to point out that when you dig into this bill in more detail, it clearly shows over and over and over that most of the bill has nothing to do with that. It's truly about rigging the system to the benefit of the members across the way.

Now, that probably is because – I mean, at least from what I hear when I'm talking to everyday Albertans – this government is in deep trouble in 2019, so they need to try to get as much of an advantage as they can for themselves to try and get their MLAs re-elected. But when we make decisions in the House, particularly around democracy, it shouldn't be about our jobs or our re-election chances. It should be about protecting our democracy. We all came here and took an oath or affirmed our dedication to our democracy and to our constituents to make sure that we protect them. So when we're debating something as fundamentally important as democracy, I suggest, through you, Madam Chair, that we need to remove any attempt to try to make an advantage for any one political party.

At any time over the years the current government could become opposition again. The opposition could become government, or vice versa, and things will move around. What is most important is to protect democracy, to make sure that Albertans can continue to have choice, continue to participate in the system, and to make sure that small groups of special interest or small groups of people with access to more resources can't have undue influence over top of the rest of the people of Alberta.

Now, I think that's a noble goal. It's a goal that the government says that they have, but then at the same time they bring forward legislation increasing contribution limits by 400 per cent and then

have the nerve to stand up in this Assembly, Madam Chair, and say: "No. We're lowering it. We're lowering it." We even had cabinet ministers yesterday calling us liars when we pointed out that they were going up by 400 per cent, though their own bill shows without a doubt that they are raising contribution limits on constituency associations by 400 per cent. Four times the amount. Two or three individuals can now fund one campaign, particularly now because we put contribution limits in to try to get that situation in some sort of relative control, but the consequence of that is that fewer people will participate when we make the donation limit so high.

Now, I will note that as the Government House Leader and the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie presented last night, particularly the Government House Leader spent a lot of time talking about stickers on poster boards. I was a little confused, to be honest, but it was late at night. Maybe this is some sort of NDP ritual at their constituency associations – I don't know – where they put stickers on boards.

**An Hon. Member:** It's a religious thing.

**Mr. Nixon:** I don't know what it's all about. It was quite fascinating, about putting stickers on the boards.

I think his core point, though, was something to do with choice. It was late, so it was a little bit confusing. But, again, we've established that this side of the House is fairly committed to protecting Albertans' choice, particularly when it comes to democracy. The other side of the House, the NDP side of the House, clearly, as we've seen this legislation progress, are dedicated to attempting to rig the system to their advantage and probably don't care about Albertans' choice. To put forward the argument of choice in regard to the amendment that the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow has brought forward is ridiculous because the choices that were presented in the argument by the hon. Government House Leader and the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie about what choices the people of Alberta would get as a result of the legislation that the government has brought forward already exist.

Already inside our province you can donate to a leadership campaign. I suspect some members inside this Assembly have already donated to leadership campaigns in the past. I know I've donated to leadership campaigns in the past.

**Mr. McIver:** I've collected donations for leadership campaigns.

**Mr. Nixon:** Yeah. I know that my good friend the hon. Member for Calgary-Hays, I'm sure, has collected leadership donations in the past as he pursued leadership. I know that the leader of the opposition certainly has collected donations for his leadership campaign in the past, and I know I have donated to leadership campaigns in the past. I have that choice. So do all of you, and so does all of Alberta. There's a good choice that already exists. I don't really know what that has to do with the amendment, but that's what the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie brought forward.

Nominations. I have had small donations for my nomination in the past. I don't know about all members of the Assembly because nominations sometimes are different, depending if you're in a heavily contested nomination. I was in a heavily contested nomination against a sitting MLA, so there was a little more action than in most nominations, so a little closer to a campaign. Some people are just appointed or acclaimed to a nomination, depending on what's going on there, so they may spend less. Certainly, they or anybody else in Alberta has the option to donate to their campaigns, to their nomination campaigns, and to participate in that process. I don't know about all of you, but that sounds like a second choice that Albertans have, and again, Madam Chair, it was an argument

that the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie used against this amendment.

Parties. I donate to my party. I know many members across the way donate to their parties. Many Albertans donate to our party. This year more Albertans donated to our party than any other party in the Assembly. I do know that if I look at every party in the Assembly, Albertans are donating to them, and they're allowed to. There are generous tax benefits that are associated with that, and currently that is taking place. You can see every quarter that parties are taking in money from their donors. Certainly, if you're a member of a political party on all sides of the spectrum, both federally and provincially, you're getting the e-mails asking you for money or the phone calls asking you for money. Clearly, people have the choice to be able to participate with their party currently under the system.

Again – now we're on the third thing – I don't understand what this has to do with this amendment and why the member would bring it forward: candidates. During my election to come to this place with all of you here today, I received donations. I donated to my own campaign. Many people in my community and family members did. They certainly had the choice to donate to my campaign. I appreciate that they did, all of my donors. They had a choice to donate to the NDP candidate that ran against me in Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre, a nice young lady. I enjoyed the campaign with her. She was from Edmonton, so I suspect most of her donations probably came from Edmonton, not Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre. But they had a choice. The people in Sundre could have chosen to donate just to the NDP candidate, to the Wildrose candidate, to the PC candidate that was in our constituency, just like they had the choice of who to vote for. Again, choice already exists in our system on that issue.

Now, if the core of the argument being brought forward by the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie is that \$15,000 a year to a party, doubled in an election period to \$30,000, was too high, I agree with him. I have always agreed with him on that. This party has been on the record for that a long time, and quite frankly, Madam Chair, the governing party has been on the record for that a long time. It is something that these two parties shared long before this party was in power. We have done that. Through the committee process we got that done immediately. The idea that the number had to come down was agreed upon very, very quickly. There was lots of discussion on what that number should be, trying to determine, in looking at other jurisdictions inside the country and around the world, what the appropriate number should be for Alberta based on its economy, population, size, those types of issues. We wanted to make sure that we had the right number to make sure people could participate in democracy but, at the same time, get undue influence out of the process.

Where the process derailed – and the amendment that the Member for Calgary-Elbow is bringing forward is an attempt to deal with that – was the idea of raising constituency associations up at the same time that you're trying to drive party donations down. This was debated in great detail. The Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie participated in the debate, and I enjoyed his comments during that debate. I certainly participated in that debate. In the end, all parties, including the NDP Party, the governing party, agreed that \$4,000 for constituency associations was too much. Increasing them by 400 per cent at the constituency level was not appropriate, and it was counterproductive to what we were trying to do with this legislation. So we passed an amendment where everybody agreed, and we said that it would be \$1,000 for constituency associations and that we felt that that amount was appropriate.

Then we arrive in this Chamber and we see the legislation. The government has decided to bring it to \$4,000 and then has the nerve

to keep rising and pretending like they're lowering contribution limits when the evidence shows that they're not. So the amendment the hon. member has brought forward is an attempt to deal with that. The question then becomes: what has changed in the few short weeks since the members across the way were in committee? It would be nice if the members would rise and explain what has changed, not try to cast the illusion that there was not choice already where to donate and that for some reason now, by passing this piece of legislation, Albertans get a whole bunch more choice where to donate. They already had the choice to donate to all of those places before. This legislation does nothing to change that, and this amendment brought forward by the Member for Calgary-Elbow certainly does nothing to prevent choice.

9:20

What it does is that it prevents one or two or three people from having a tremendous amount of influence on any one MLA or any one political candidate, which is the stated goal by this government, Madam Chair, on what they're trying to do with the legislation, though the evidence from the legislation that they brought forward clearly shows that maybe that's not really the goal.

When you look at some of the other amendments that have been brought forward during debate in Committee of the Whole here in the Chamber and the government's arguments against those, it clearly becomes, without a doubt, so obvious to everybody that we know that this is about stacking the deck for the NDP government. This is about rigging the system for the NDP government. This is about tilting the process in favour of the NDP government. If it was truly about contribution limits, you would stand with the opposition, who is truly trying to get the contributions low, and you would get them out. You would stand with the opposition and you would make sure that governments can't abuse the taxpayer dollar during by-elections and elections, just like your government whip proposed during committee.

Instead, we're back here again, with the Government House Leader and the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie rising and talking about stickers and confusing everybody and trying to make it sound like they've brought choice for the first time into our electoral system, that already existed for as long as I have participated in politics.

The reason that the members across the way have fought so hard for this I think is obvious; some people may not see it. I was confused during committee as the members fought so hard to line their campaign pockets with taxpayer dollars to pay for their campaigns and for their party campaign and spent their whole summer trying to get constituents to pay for their bills. I didn't understand that, particularly because when I talked to Albertans, they were appalled by it. They were very, very upset about it. As I've said to you before, Madam Chair, I suspect that it just shows again how much more our side of the House actually talks to rural Albertans and doesn't hide in the bubble of the Assembly, because we knew that was wrong. It took them a lot longer to get there, but they got there, and I appreciate having the opportunity to help them get there.

But at its core the reason that you're seeing the other stuff, Madam Chair, and the reason you're seeing the government want to vote against this particular amendment, again, is because we have established, without a doubt, through the Committee of the Whole process that this government's primary goal is to rig the election, to beat up on democracy, to kneecap opposition parties, to make things harder for this side of the House – to make things harder for this side of the House – to attack our volunteers, to attack the people that participate in the political process, to make it harder for volunteer CFOs who are trying to do it, to make it harder for people to enter

politics, to help protect incumbents, to make things easier for the incumbents, to make things easier for them. I don't know. Are you guys so scared during your nomination process coming up that you need to make it so much easier for yourselves or what? It's confusing.

Now, as I've said before, Madam Chair, it won't work against the bigger opposition parties. There are enough resources currently in the bigger opposition parties to allow us to survive the direct attack by the government on democracy. But there are some smaller parties that participate in our political process. Those parties: I personally disagree with their ideological ideas, but I do support their right to participate in the election system. I do support their right to participate in democracy.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow leads one of those smaller parties. I don't agree with him on everything. I agree with him on many things, but I don't agree with him on everything. But what I do agree with him on is that his party, his members, his voters have a right to participate in our election system. They have a right to expect the government of the day not to attack their democratic rights. They have a right to expect the government of the day to make sure that they can participate in the political process the way they want to.

There is not an Albertan I've ever met that says that they want their government to come here and mess with the democracy that is currently inside our province in an attempt to make people, to make smaller parties that are closer to the political spectrum than the government not be able to succeed in order to give an advantage to the government.

We see it happening federally right now. It's a big deal in federal politics right now with some of the stuff that has been brought forward on democratic reform, where the people of Canada have categorically rejected the idea of one government of the day attempting to rig the system to make things easier for their re-election. This is Canada. We're a democracy. The governing party does not attack small political parties inside our political arena. They attack them on policy, certainly, they attack them on where they stand and what the government would do differently, and they attack them on the differences in the views and the hopes for the province and the ideas that we have for the province, but they do not attack other political party structures in an attempt to make them not be able to participate in the system. Dictators do that, Madam Chair, not in the Canadian democracy and not in Alberta.

We don't stack the deck. We spent a lot of time talking about that last night, and the members across the way need to own this, their attempt to stack the deck. We left the committee after a whole summer where we watched members – I'm not going to name them all; they're all in *Hansard*, though – over and over and over vote shamefully to try to get their campaign expenses paid by the taxpayers of Alberta. Then as we brought that up . . .

**The Chair:** Are there other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A6? Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to rise again and speak on Bill 35 and particularly on this amendment. You know, on the government side yesterday one of the members used their statement to give his version of a children's rhyme, something about the sky falling or something to that effect. That was cute. I'm not sure how clever it was, but it was definitely cute. I enjoyed the entertainment value of it. But the reason I raise this is not to critique, good or bad, the member from the government side yesterday but as a lead-in to the fact that a more recent and current tale is one that the government-side members ought to pay attention to. It's not nearly so cute, and it's not nearly so funny, but it's very pertinent to what we're doing here today and

much more recent in context. It is that the people of Alberta really believe in the concept of fairness. They want everybody to do their best. They don't demand perfection. They would like it, but I think they accept from amongst their elected people their best efforts.

They don't like mistakes, and they criticize them, but if they believe the best efforts are there, lots of times they'll give people second chances. What I use as an example of that is that our party was in government for 12 or 13 elections in a row, and no one thinks we were perfect. I'm sure we could all agree on that. No one thinks we were perfect. But they kept re-electing us because I think that underneath it all they believed we were doing our best and that we were mostly amongst the good ones. At least, intentions were good. Let me say that. At least I will say this: enough of them believed it that they kept re-electing us for 12 or 13 elections.

Where that changed last year was when they stopped believing we were the good ones. I believe that what we did to cause that, one of the big things we did to cause that, was that we called an election a year early. We called an election a year early, when the party who was the Official Opposition then and is still the opposition now was in disarray. Nobody argues with that. We called the election when the Liberal Party appeared to be in disarray. We called it when we had a year left in our mandate.

**Mr. Clark:** How did that work out?

**Mr. McIver:** That's my point. Hey, I'd appreciate a little patience, Member for Calgary-Elbow. I'm coming to that. You're just jumping ahead a little bit, if you don't mind.

When the people of Alberta saw that, they decided we were no longer the good guys and good ladies, that we were no longer doing the best for them, and they rewarded us the way they reward people that they don't believe are doing their best anymore. They fired us.

Now, the reason I raise this – and you can only imagine, folks in here, that it gives me no joy to raise this, but I'm actually, government members, the best friend you've got right now – is because I am reminding you that what you are doing with this legislation is very similar to what was done to get the last government that I was part of fired. With this legislation there's no way, if you pass this legislation, that you could possibly tell Albertans that you have their best interests at heart. You've got lots of policies I disagree with, and I'm sure that in every case you can make some excuse or some argument why you think it's good for Alberta. I may disagree with every one, but you could at least make some argument.

**9:30**

On this piece of legislation you have crossed that chasm. This is as self-serving, as biased a piece of legislation, designed to tip the electoral scales in your favour, as you could almost possibly do. There's just nowhere to hide. You know what? You can't look your constituents in the eye after passing this piece of legislation and expect any of them to believe that you have Albertans' best interests at heart and not only your own. Now, it's a little disappointing that you've come to this point after 18 months or 19 months instead of 40 years, but it appears that you have. There's still time to save yourselves by either rejecting this piece of legislation or making some amendments to it that would make it more balanced.

Now, we established in talking last night in the House the fact that you are going ahead and making it so that quarterly reports have to be done by constituencies, when you're the only party who doesn't really raise any money at your constituencies and that you're loading administrative burdens onto every party but your own, costing every party but your own a bunch of money, completely tipping the scales.



I pointed out in this House last night, and I will do it again today, that since this government has been in place, Madam Chair, they have told people – because people have told us. We keep hearing from supporters of ours that they're afraid to give us money, afraid to be on our boards because the government has said: if we find you on any PC list, we won't do business with your company; we won't employ you on any boards.

**An Hon. Member:** Shameful.

**Mr. McIver:** You know what? That is shameful behaviour. So there are two examples.

Now, what's before us here now is just one more example. In committee all parties, including the government party, agreed that \$1,000 was a good number, yet here you are at \$4,000. We had a supporter of ours do some research on this, and here's what's interesting, Madam Chair. Of all the parties, the NDP has the least amount of donations over \$4,000. Again, talk about self-serving. They talk about taking big money out of politics, but what they're really doing – and to be clear, you know, for full disclosure, our party had the most donations over \$4,000. The Official Opposition had a good number of them, and the governing party I think had less than 10.

Here's another example – if it was only one example, it would be bad enough – another in a long string of examples in this legislation where the legislation is not designed to be fair and is not designed to take big money out of politics, especially if they turn down this amendment, because they're actually raising the donations from \$1,000 to \$4,000 per year, which would, I think, by some definitions, be called: putting bigger money back into politics. What they're doing here is cutting off donations for every party but their own, another example of the governing party trying to tip the electoral scales in their favour, against everybody else, and they're doing it with legislation that they can ram through with the majority they have.

**Mr. Nixon:** To stack the deck.

**Mr. McIver:** To stack the deck, to tilt the playing field, to put their thumb on the scale. There are a whole bunch of ways to describe it, but it is essentially taking democracy and abusing it from a government majority standpoint. It's shameful and despicable, and the government ought to be ashamed. They ought to be ashamed. No credibility on this. No integrity on this because they are going against even what their own members agreed to in committee, which was to keep the donations for constituencies at \$1,000. I can see that they've done the math. They've realized that, they've looked at the numbers, and they've said: what number will hurt the other parties the most and hurt our party the least? If you do a mathematical examination, you'll find that number is pretty close to \$4,000. Shameful. Shameful.

You know what? I get it. You got the majority. You get to do what you want. But what I don't think the public will stand for is twisting democracy in your favour because democracy, by definition, is equal. Everybody's voice has to be equal. This is a bold, barefaced attempt to make democracy more advantageous for the government side than for any of the opposition sides. It's as plain as day, and this is only one example in the legislation.

You know what? What's interesting is that the Member for Calgary-Elbow has offered the government an opportunity to save some face and say that, at least in this example, in this one section only of the legislation: we will do what the title says. As I've said before – and I'll say it again – you call the legislation the Fair Elections Financing Act. The government members always say: taking the big money out of politics. Well, apparently, what the big print giveth, the small print taketh away, and that's exactly what's happening here.

You're actually adding money in. You are making it, with the rules that you have, as pointed out by several of my colleagues in the House, including our Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, that I've heard say it a few times, so that with a \$50,000 limit for a campaign in a constituency, when you take \$4,000 per year from a donor, if the donor gives you \$4,000 a year for four years, that's \$16,000, okay? And you just multiply that by three, and you get to \$48,000 out of the \$50,000. Three members, three people from your constituency, or three Albertans can finance \$48,000 out of the \$50,000 that you're allowed to spend in a campaign. Yet the government is going to turn to the cameras and say: "See? We made it even." Nonsense. Absolute nonsense.

They've picked a number at \$4,000 that's the most disadvantageous to all the opposition and the least disadvantageous to the government. It's good for the government, bad for the opposition, and they expect Albertans to believe that they are defending democracy. They're crapping on democracy. They are offending anybody that believes in democracy. That's what this government is doing with this piece of legislation in black and white. Folks, when it's in black and white, you can't really hide from it because people can go on the website and see it.

You can stand up in front of the cameras all day long and tell people that you're taking the big money out of politics, but those that pay attention will know that you're increasing the donations from \$1,000 to \$4,000. It doesn't actually twig on you that it's just a little inconsistent with what you and your Premier and your front bench have been saying to the cameras? You're not telling Albertans the truth. Albertans know it. They'll bust you on it. You know what? If it was about policy, they could say: well, you know, I kind of like it. But it's not about policy; it's about democracy. You're dumping on democracy. You are dumping on the thing that makes the country what it is, our province what it is, the only thing that makes it great. You're dumping all over it. It's a shame. Absolutely shameful, Madam Chair. Absolutely shameful.

You know what? I tried to start off with a tale about how our government ended up not being in government. This is the type of thing that will cause Albertans to fire a government. There is an old maxim that I believe in, that people don't hire governments; they fire governments. There's no doubt that last year on May 5 they fired ours. I get that. The government members, Madam Chair, ought to actually pay attention to that and think about how that happened. When the public no longer believes that the government they have are good people and have their interests at heart – this is a piece of legislation that will really twig Albertans to understand that this NDP government does not have their best interests at heart. I'll tell you what. When the election comes, I will have this in my hand, and I will be out campaigning, because this is a reason to fire a government. This is a reason to fire the government right here.

You know what? I will sit and listen for a little while right now, but government members ought to actually think about this. You ought to be ashamed to look your constituents in the eye if you don't vote for this amendment because while this won't fix the whole piece of legislation, this will make the one small piece of it at least somewhat consistent with what you're telling the public. If you can't support this – you know what? – then the emperor has no clothes, folks. Then you actually have no credibility, and you have dumped on democracy. Don't do that.

#### **Chair's Ruling Relevance**

**The Chair:** Hon. members, I've tended to give a great deal of latitude in the subject matter that we talk about, but in the interests of greater efficiency I'd remind members that during committee

stage, we need to be debating the clauses of the bill. In this case we're debating the amendment itself, so if you could try to keep your comments a little bit more directed, that would be helpful.

Thank you.

9:40

### Debate Continued

**The Chair:** Go ahead, hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Certainly, Madam Chair. We are talking about an amendment that attempts to stop the government from rigging the system with the bill they brought forth, an amendment that will help protect constituency associations from this government's headlong approach to attack constituency associations, an amendment that will help protect smaller parties from this government's approach of attacking constituency associations.

There are choices in this life, and the government is making choices. You know, I had a call late yesterday afternoon from Rocky Mountain House's radio station. They wanted me to go on the air, and they have me on quite often, so I came on. You know what the opening question was? It was about choices. It was about the comments from the premier of Alberta, who said that Albertans should make better choices.

Now, I had a lot to say about that to the people of Rocky Mountain House, and I can assure you that the people of Rocky Mountain House will have a lot to say about that next time at the ballot box because, let me tell you, the people in my community do not deserve to be told by the Premier to make better choices when they are fighting for their jobs, their homes, and their livelihoods because of the policies of this government. This amendment right here is about saying to the government: "You should make better choices. You should bring forward better legislation. You should stop attacking the opposition parties. You should stop trying to rig democracy and, instead, make it fair for constituency associations, make donation limits appropriate for constituency associations, to keep it separate, to make sure that we don't see \$4,000." That is what this amendment is about, Madam Chair. This is exactly about different buckets for different constituency associations.

The government wants to avoid that. I get it, Madam Chair. I get it. They spent their summer trying to stack the deck, and now they're in the Legislature trying to stack the deck. The Member for Calgary-Elbow with this amendment is giving them an opportunity to stop that behaviour, to make different choices, to make a different choice and, instead, stand with the Member for Calgary-Elbow, have a serious look at the amendment that he has brought forward, recognize that as the legislation currently stands, if we don't pass this amendment, there will continue to be an attack on smaller parties. It will continue to prevent other parties from being able to participate in our democracy, it will continue to attack volunteers in our democracy, and it will continue to kneecap the opposition.

Now, Madam Chair, I certainly think that you're probably just as appalled as I am about the move by this government to try to rig democratic rules to make things easier for them in the next election. This amendment that we are debating right now gives them an opportunity to not do that.

Now, with some of the amendments that they voted against, there will still be a tremendous amount of rigging, but at least in this case we can empower constituency associations all across the province to be able to participate in democracy how they always have, to have, like, grassroots participation in democracy. You know, "grassroots" is a word that all parties in the Assembly often use. It's something that I know is very, very important to the Wildrose Party. I've watched the NDP members stand up and raise this issue in the

past and say that grassroots is important to their democracy. I would note that the way the grassroots participate in the democratic process for the New Democratic Party is different than the way they probably participate in our party, but I would also note that the legislation as it currently stands – and this is what the amendment is trying to fix – only attacks the way the grassroots participate in the parties on this side of the House.

Think about that. Madam Chair, it only attacks the way the grassroots participate in the opposition parties, not in the way that the grassroots participate in the government side. Now, some people would call that stacking the deck. There is no way around that. This amendment is about stacking the deck at its core. The amendment is about stacking the deck at its core. Stacking the deck.

The opportunity is here for the government to stop stacking the deck, take the member up on the offer – opportunity, I guess, would be a better way of saying that – and vote or help work to make the amendment better. That's an option that is before the government. If they don't quite like some of the wording and they want to do something a little different, we'd like to hear about that. But to be able to make sure that they are actually not bringing big money back into politics, that they aren't increasing constituency donation levels by 400 per cent, that they are not crippling opposition parties' political structures and that, by doing this, they'll be able to keep buckets within the system, to be able to protect the integrity of the political system that we all enjoy. That's a choice, Madam Chair, that the government has before them.

I will close with this because I am eagerly awaiting the vote on this amendment. We have choices. All of us make choices on a daily basis. We have choices in politics, we have choices in our personal life, and this government certainly has choices. Rather than say to my constituents and the people of Alberta that they should make better choices – let's be honest today, Madam Chair – this government should make better choices.

This government should stop rigging the system. This government should not waste their summers trying to line their pockets with taxpayers' money and instead should stand up and support the Member for Calgary-Elbow and protect our political system. If they do not, Madam Chair, they one hundred per cent prove to the debate about this that all this government is about is rigging the system to their advantage. It's trying to get taxpayers to pay for things to make them feel better or pay for their campaign expenses. It's trying to attack political parties, and that is shameful. As I've said before, they should hang their heads in shame and . . .

**Mr. Carlier:** Point of order.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, we have a point of order. One moment. Go ahead, Deputy Government House Leader.

### Point of Order Repetition

**Mr. Carlier:** Yeah. Thank you, Madam Chair. I heard, you know, earlier, before the member stood up to speak: try to keep on topic, on task. This member, in particular, should be called to order because he has persisted in needless repetition, raised matters that have already been said in the current session. It's my understanding that he stood up and spoke for a third time, which, for sure, is his right, but he hasn't added anything to the debate. He is just repeating over and over again the same things he already has. I do believe it's a point of order.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. leader of the third party.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I would say that, unfortunately, the Deputy Government House Leader made the argument against his own point of order. Before he stopped speaking, he pointed out correctly, just for the record, that there is no limit to the number of times people can speak in Committee of the Whole. For that reason there is no point of order.

**Mr. Nixon:** As was pointed out by the leader of the third party – and I appreciate his pointing it out – this is not a point of order. It is categorically offensive that the government of the day would attempt to stop members from speaking about important amendments. I get why they are ashamed of what they are doing and why they would want to, but that is not what this is. This is democracy here. This is exactly what we're talking about, trying to stifle the opposition from being able to speak on behalf of the people of Alberta.

**The Chair:** Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. This is not a point of order. The minister of agriculture is saying that repeating what we have to say here somehow makes this illegitimate debate. Every day we listen to the same minister read the exact same notes repetitiously in question period over and over and over. If that was so, then practically fourth-fifths of his answers in question period would be ruled out of order.

The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre is making very valid points about democracy, the fundamentals of what we're talking about here. The fact that they would bring a point of order to try and stop him from speaking on this really speaks to the point of what we're doing here, protecting democracy. This is not a point of order. The government is just ashamed that they have to sit here and listen to people who do not agree with them, Madam Chair. There's no point of order.

**The Chair:** Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. This is Committee of the Whole. This is an opportunity for members to get up and speak on numerous occasions and even on the same bill or on the same amendment. The Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre has been speaking on different amendments. You may think that he is repeating himself. That's unfortunate.

There was an amendment earlier this week that offered you the chance to send this to committee and you wouldn't have to sit here and listen to this for three days. So now sit here and listen to it for three days.

**The Chair:** The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Carlier:** Yeah, Madam Chair, I just want to make some comments on what the Member for Strathmore-Brooks talked about: repeating answers. You know, often if you get the same question, you get the same answer. Answers don't change just because the question is the same. I'm not sure exactly where his argument was there. Often in question period in particular: same question, same answer.

9:50

**Mr. McIver:** I have different comments to make, Madam Chair. My, I hope, very respectful advice to you is to rule against this point of order based on the fact that what the government does not get to do is stifle debate and stifle dissension. If you are to make a ruling that allows government to stifle debate and stifle dissension, you

are making everything we're doing here irrelevant, and I think you are much too wise to do that.

**The Chair:** Hon. members, given that it's committee, I've given a little more leeway than normal, but once you've spoken to a point of order, generally that's enough. I think we're starting to run into repetition on the points of order, so let's settle that piece.

Again, it is committee. Members are allowed to speak as often as they like and even if it involves repetition at times. It happens. My kids always accuse me of repeating myself, but that's what happens. I would encourage members that it's important that we stay focused on the amendment, focused on the clauses of the bill, and let's try to be a little bit more efficient in how we conduct business here in the House.

Please continue, hon. member.

### Debate Continued

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. As I said, I was actually close to finishing my comments, but I think I'm going to have to recap them now because I don't exactly know where I was at before I was interrupted by the point of order.

I think the reason that we're seeing some repetitiveness in the comments about certain amendments is that at the core the bulk of the amendments that are being brought forward by the opposition are an attempt to stop a couple of key issues. We've discussed them, but obviously the government by their comments, through you, Madam Chair, are not fully understanding what we're bringing forward. So maybe we need to try to do a better job of being able to articulate what we're trying to say, and I will try to do a better job. My colleagues on this side of the House seem to know what I'm talking about, but maybe that's because we actually have grassroots democracy in our parties. Maybe that's what it comes down to.

At the core here's what we're dealing with. First, on this bill we're trying to get big money out of politics. The Official Opposition has agreed with that. The third party has agreed with that. Both independent members have agreed with that. So here we are. We're trying to get big money out of politics, which is what this amendment refers to. This is specifically to that amendment. We're going to lower the limits from \$15,000 a year to \$4,000 a year, very much part of this amendment. There you go. We're on the amendment, and we're at \$4,000 a year. I agree with that. I think that taking it from \$15,000 to \$4,000 a year is a good idea. I don't know for sure that \$4,000 was the right number, but it's a compromise. We had to get out of \$15,000, so we're passed that.

There's a second component of this. In our system currently, until this bill passes, a constituency association can receive \$1,000. Now, unfortunately, this government again has brought forward retroactive legislation in the middle of a quarter, which has created a whole bunch of accounting problems, and as we can see from the state of the province's books, that side of the House is not very good at accounting. We'll digress on that for right now.

The core of this bill then turns around and raises the constituency donation level from \$1,000. So I want everybody to be clear on that because there seems to be some confusion, Madam Chair, to the members across the way: \$1,000 is what their constituency associations can receive right now. As has been established in great detail during debate, their constituency associations do not receive any money because they're controlled by a central authority, and they take all the money that is raised at the constituency level. That's what they choose. On our side, to myself or any of the members on this side, our constituency associations can receive a maximum of \$1,000 a year.

With this legislation that is being brought forward by this government, the NDP government, they can now receive \$4,000 a year. Now, this amendment that has been brought forward by the Member for Calgary-Elbow is specifically about that at its core, the fact that for a constituency association we're now going from \$1,000 to \$4,000, which, Madam Chair, I think you will know, obviously, that \$1,000 is significantly less than \$4,000. In fact, it's \$3,000 less. To get very, very specific to help the members across the way: constituency associations donation limits have now increased by \$3,000. Three thousand dollars. Now, if they're wondering how I got to that: I minused \$1,000 from \$4,000. So now we have an increase of \$3,000. That seems significantly higher than \$1,000. Again, to the amendment brought forward by the Member for Calgary-Elbow, this is what he's trying to fix.

Now, on top of that, with this bill we cap the amount that any individual candidate could spend during an election at \$50,000. So once you cap the amount at \$50,000, that that's the only amount that could be spent during that campaign, and you raise the donations up to \$4,000, any one person can donate \$4,000 a year each year or one person and their spouse can donate upwards of \$8,000 a year from one family or a family associated with one business, you only need two or three people to be able to fund an MLA's campaign.

Now, at its core the bill that has been brought forward by the government – the government has attempted to say that it's all about getting big money out of politics, which we agree with. We have shown over and over throughout the last couple of days that truly at its core the government's goal is about rigging the system. There's absolutely no doubt about that now as each amendment goes through. Specifically to this amendment, the hon. member is trying to say: "Hey, we don't want just two or three people to be able to influence a campaign. If the goal of this bill is to take influence out of politics, this is counterproductive."

In response to the reasonable questions brought forward by the Member for Calgary-Elbow, the government, when they're not trying to raise pointless points of order and stifle the opposition from speaking, are rising and saying: "No. No. This is just about taking big money out of politics. That's all we're about." But they won't answer the question about the 400 per cent increase on constituency associations. Four hundred per cent. Four times. That's important, and it is the core of what this amendment is about. It is the core of this amendment, which is to say: "No. Whoa. Back up. Let's have a look at this. Are we really accomplishing the goal of getting big money out of politics?"

Now, it's made categorically worse in my mind, Madam Chair, when we point out the fact that during the committee that was struck by the Leader of the Opposition and the leaders of the other opposition parties in the Assembly and the Premier on ethics and accountability, the members that were sent there from the governing party supported that concern. I could pull out *Hansard* and quote it all, but they're not going to stand up and deny it because they know they supported it, so I won't waste our time with that. They supported taking it to \$1,000. We've already seen that they've been overruled by the government front bench. I guess that's how they run their party. It's particularly interesting that the government whip was actually on that committee and fought to get that limit lower. I digress on that, too. That was the decision that they made.

But the government can't continue to then rise in the Assembly under the guise of getting big money out of politics, trying to defend the actions that they're taking to attack political parties or to kneecap political parties or to make things worse for political parties on the other side of the spectrum to make things easier for them under the guise of getting big money out of politics because

the core of the disagreements on this bill comes down to constituency associations and how parties manage themselves.

The core of the disagreement on this bill, Madam Chair, is not around lowering from \$15,000 to \$4,000 for any one political party. The core of the disagreement is how the governing party is treating other political parties that are in the spectrum. This amendment brought forward by the Member for Calgary-Elbow gives them an opportunity to say: "Okay. You know what? We got caught with our hands in the cookie jar." Or the pickle jar, as the Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills likes to say. "We got busted. We're caught, just like we got caught on political donations or on campaign subsidy when we were in committee." That's okay. You got caught, so rise up and do the right thing and say: "Okay. You know what? We had a majority, and we thought it would be cute to try to rig the system to attack smaller political parties, but, hon. member, you got us. I'm sorry, Albertans. We'll move on."

Instead it appears, based on about two or three days of debate on this piece of legislation – three days, I think – that the governing party is going to continue down the road of attacking other political parties.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Why?

**An Hon. Member:** Because they can.

**Mr. Nixon:** Because they can. You know what? They can. The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays pointed out that they have a majority. You don't have to stand inside this Assembly for too long to understand that this side doesn't have enough votes to be able to stop it. We will in 2019, I assure you of that, something that the other side of the House should remember because this amendment will impact them when they're on that side. At that time, when the governing caucus is back down to four or five members sitting on this side of the House, they might be saying: "Whoa. We kind of wish that we'd listened to the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre because this legislation is still hurting us."

**Mr. McIver:** We often say that.

**Mr. Nixon:** Absolutely. I mean, as the leader of the third party says, they often say that in their caucus meetings. It doesn't surprise me. I do wish that he would call my spouse because she doesn't. We need to get this right. All I am sincerely doing, Madam Chair, is trying to give the governing party an opportunity to do the right thing.

10:00

**An Hon. Member:** We're helping you.

**Mr. Nixon:** I'm helping you. I'm helping you.

And it's applicable to this amendment, the thing of help, because that is the point of amendments. The opposition is attempting to make the legislation the government brought forward better, trying to fix things that they may not have seen. That is our job. I know the hon. agriculture minister is hoping that we would come here on behalf of our constituents and just sit here and rubber-stamp everything he does or everything his party does. That's not what the people I work for tell me to do. My job is not to come here and say: "Oh, yeah, go ahead. You can rig the whole system to your advantage. It's all right." I sure wouldn't want to go home to Sundre tonight to the A&W and say: you know, the agriculture minister said that I'm just supposed to do whatever he says. That's not our job. Our job is to do exactly this, and that's what we're doing. We're saying: "Look, there's a mistake here. You're making a terrible error."

The reason this matters is because of what happened in committee on this exact legislation. There were, clearly, mistakes made, which show that as we debate this legislation with this amendment, it is our job to say: "Hey, look, we have an amendment here that will fix the legislation that you're bringing forward. We have an amendment here that'll stop the errors that you're making." We've done this so much as we've gone through it – and I will close shortly, Madam Chair – in our time together in this Assembly, when over and over and over and over this government has attacked the people of Alberta with their legislation – attacked them – attacked communities, people's livelihoods, their homes.

Here they are again now, but what's worse is that this time they're attacking democracy. They're attacking democracy. This amendment brought forward by the Member for Calgary-Elbow will help stop or at least blunt the attack that is coming from the NDP government. By not voting for it, the governing members, I would submit to you, Madam Chair, are showing that they have no interest in protecting democracy and that their own interests are nothing but the self-interest of re-election.

Thank you very much, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise and speak to Bill 35 and the amendment put forward by the Member for Calgary-Elbow. The Member for Calgary-Elbow's amendment is, I think, well thought out and a valuable contribution towards making the so-called Fair Elections Financing Act a little less unfair than as proposed by the government. I think it seeks to address some of the genuine flaws in the bill which are meant to stack the deck in favour of the government.

I really appreciated the comments from the leader of the third party. I think he gave the government an opportunity for some self-reflection, to perhaps look in the mirror, if you will. The leader of the third party's comments, I believe, were humble and genuine. He talked about the problems of the previous government, the arrogance that had set in, and how the previous government wanted to rig the election in its favour.

It called an election a year before a fixed election date when it believed the Official Opposition, the Wildrose, was dead. Rumours of our demise turned out to be significantly exaggerated, but incapacitated and disorganized we were for some time, and the government attempted to take advantage of that and seek re-election in its own selfish interests and not the interests of the public. The Liberal Party was in disarray, and that surely fed into the former government's decision to call an early election for its own selfish advantage.

I want to thank the leader of the third party for being honest about that. I think these were humble and genuine comments and some lessons learned. I know that that's probably difficult for the leader of the third party to say. I know he's proud of his party and his record in public service, and to be able to recognize when your party is wrong about something is difficult. We all struggle to do that because we think we're all right all of the time. I assure you, Madam Chair, that I am right all of the time, but theoretically I might be wrong from time to time. Theoretically, at least. The leader of the third party recognized that they were wrong in doing what they were doing, and Albertans punished them for that and rightfully so. I'm hopeful that some lessons have been learned.

The leader of the third party is trying to share some of those lessons with members on the government side. That is something they should not ignore lightly. It's something they should take to heart as they try to rig an election in their favour. The NDP are now

doing the same thing. The NDP are trying to rig the system in their favour. They've seen the polls, they've talked to their constituents, and Albertans are planning to fire them in two and a half years. They know – they know – that the vast majority of members on the government side stand a very, very real chance of losing their seats in the next election. They know that they stand a very real chance of being thrown out on their petard in two and a half years, and they know that if they're going to have any hope of staying in power, they're going to have to rig the system in their favour. They're going to have to stack the deck.

You know, Madam Chair, when you stack the deck, normally you want to slip a couple of aces in there, but we have got 55 cards of jokers right now. It's a deck of jokers because it makes no sense to the democratic processes of this province. If this government was actually interested in getting big money out of politics, they would accept the opposition's recommendations to get big government money out of politics. They would have accepted our amendments that would have banned government advertising during elections.

You know, just the other day – just the other day – this government shamefully put millions more taxpayers' dollars towards government advertising, government advertising for partisan, political propaganda in support of the carbon tax, that 80 per cent of Albertans oppose. Eighty per cent of Albertans want nothing to do with the CLAP, the so-called climate leadership action plan, of the government. Albertans do not like the CLAP. They do not like the carbon tax. And this government knows that Albertans do not want the CLAP, so they're trying to sell it to them in government advertising with millions of taxpayers' dollars. They're spending millions.

You know who this sounds like? Well, let's talk about lessons from the previous government. This is mirroring the actions of Alison Redford at the most depraved and corrupt point of the most corrupt government in the history of this province. They are following in their footsteps right now. Alison Redford, we remember, the former Premier Redford, would spend millions of taxpayers' dollars to put her name on billboards and advertise failed and poor government policies that Albertans didn't want. Redford took this province into debt. She began to destroy the legacy of Ralph Klein and the great conservatives who built this province. Albertans didn't want to go there, so to sell Albertans on those policies, she spent millions of taxpayers' dollars on government ads to sell her unpopular policies. Well, in the end it didn't work.

But I remember the NDP. They sat in the nosebleeds of this House for decades – they sat in the nosebleeds – and when the Redford government spent taxpayers' money on partisan political advertising, they stood up rightfully and condemned it. I thought that we agreed. I was at the Canadian Taxpayers Federation at the time, and I genuinely thought there was real agreement between myself and the Wildrose and the Liberals and the NDP that this was a bad thing to do, that regardless of your views on the larger, philosophical role of government, the left versus right stuff, none of that mattered on this stuff. This was about basic ethics, that it is unethical to take taxpayers' money to fund political campaigns.

And what have the NDP done? As soon as they got over there, they put their snout in the trough. They put their snout in the trough because it's their turn to do it. I expected them to be better, Madam Chair. I expected them to perhaps govern according to their ideology, but I expected them to govern more ethically. I expected them to govern more democratically. I expected them to hold themselves to a higher standard, but now they have gone far beyond the worst excesses of the former Redford government's abuse of taxpayers' money for government advertising in favour of their partisan political agenda.

10:10

**An Hon. Member:** Shame.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** It's shameful. It's shameful.

You know, corruption is not just lining your own pockets with money, Madam Chair. It's not just forging flight manifests and whatnot. It's also taking taxpayers' dollars and putting them towards your own partisan or personal reasons. It involves abusing taxpayers to further your own partisan political interests in ways that have nothing to do with your principles or your policies and is just about your re-election, and that's what we're seeing. This is a corruption of government policy designed to favour the re-election of the members opposite because they know that they're in big trouble in two and a half years. They know that they're in big trouble with the voters in their constituencies, so they have to try and rig the system – they have to try and rig the system – in their favour to give them every possible advantage, and it's shameful.

You know, just the other day the Premier said that Albertans have to make better choices. Well, speaking of lessons from the former government: Albertans have to make better choices. What does that sound like? That reminds me a lot of telling Albertans to look in the mirror. That reminds me of telling Albertans to look in the mirror because they're at fault for the poor choices of the government. Well, the Premier seems to think that she knows better than Albertans. The Premier seems to think that she can make better choices than regular Albertans, that she can make better choices than families and small-business owners and taxpayers, that the government needs to tell them how to make better choices. Well, you know, I would tell this government to look in the mirror themselves.

If this government, if these members sat back in the nosebleeds, as I'm sure they will again in two and a half years, what would they say? What if the Wildrose sat on that side of the House? If the Wildrose sat over there and brought forward a bill designed to rig the system in favour of our re-election, do you think that they would do what the minister of agriculture has done and try to silence us, or do you think that they would do what we're doing right now? Do you think that the members sitting on the government side right now, if they were in opposition and we brought forward a bill to rig the system in our favour, would sit silent and just rubber-stamp a bill like that? Or do you think that they would stand up and fight against it with everything they have? Would they stand up and speak against the bill at every stage? Would they put forward reasonable amendments to try to make this bill actually fair for the election process of this province?

I know that there are four members on that side of the House who sat in opposition, and I genuinely believed that they cared about democracy, that they cared about a fair and reasonable and open and transparent process. Then they got over there, and everything changed.

Well, I really hope that if the members on this side of the House right now are honoured to sit on the government side, we do not fall into that same trap. I hope that we will hold ourselves to a higher standard than the members in that government who used to sit in opposition and used to bellyache about the undemocratic and untransparent and unfair actions of the former government. I hope that if we are honoured to sit on the government benches of this House in two and a half years, we will hold ourselves to a higher standard, that we would not be such hypocrites as to speak in favour of democracy in opposition and run roughshod over it in government. I hope that we would hold ourselves to a higher standard, Madam Chair.

The NDP know that they have to rig the system because they have no other way to get re-elected right now. In rural Alberta they are about as unpopular as the flu. In rural Alberta virtually everyone wants the NDP gone. There was just a federal by-election in Medicine Hat-Cardston-Warner, where the NDP proved that they are the new 1 per cent. They proved that they are literally only 20 per cent more popular than the Rhinoceros Party, Madam Chair. The Rhinoceros Party. Frankly, the Rhinoceros Party is a significantly more electoral option, I think, for more Albertans. If there was a two-party system in this province and the NDP was one and the Rhinoceros Party was another, my money is on the Rhinoceros Party right now.

In rural Alberta people want this government gone almost unanimously. I can't find a New Democrat in my riding anymore. They're gone. In Calgary the NDP support is less than half of what it was on election day. Calgaryans know that this government is not governing in the best interests of Albertans. It's not governing in the best interests of Calgary. Even in Edmonton, where this government enjoyed tremendous support during the last election, Edmontonians have begun to turn against this government, too, because they see that this government is not governing for Edmonton. It is not governing for Alberta. It is governing for themselves.

That's what this bill is, Madam Chair. This bill is purely meant just to seek the re-election of this government. It's not meant to cut taxes. It's not meant to improve health care. It's not meant to improve education, to improve our roads, our environment. It's not meant to improve the finances of the province. It's not meant to improve the democracy of this province. It's meant for one thing and one thing only, and that is to rig the system in favour of a government that knows it's going down in defeat in two and a half years if they don't change the system.

Madam Chair, the Premier said that Albertans need to make better choices. Regardless of what this government does here trying to rig the system, no matter how much they rig the system, we're still going to have an election in two and a half years. The Premier says that Albertans need to make better choices. I'm confident that in two and a half years, no matter how much they rig the system, Albertans are going to make a better choice, and they're going to throw them out of office.

Thank you very much.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow on the amendment.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll be very brief in what I hope will perhaps close debate on this. I just want to make two points, two very important points.

The government shouldn't care whether this amendment passes because it has no impact on their party, because they raise zero dollars through their constituency associations. Now, I suppose I almost hesitate to bring this point up because what I'm really saying is: hey, NDP, here's actually an opportunity for you to kind of stick it to the other parties again because every other party here raises money through constit associations and therefore could conceivably raise up to \$4,000 per person in a constit association every year. That actually is an advantage should we choose to use that.

Now, some parties, perhaps ours, may say that we're going to impose our own limit because we think it's wrong. Maybe I should go quickly and call this vote so you guys can vote it down because, actually, it's to the advantage of the parties on this side, but I'm not going to do that, Madam Chair. That would be wrong. It's not about locking in our advantage. We're not here – I'm not here, I can tell you that – just to find ways of maximizing advantage for the Alberta

Party. I am here to do the right thing for the province of Alberta, to do the right thing for democracy. I hope that's why each and every one of you is here as well. I hope that's why you sought election in the first place.

This has no impact at all on the NDP. What it does is that it puts big money back into politics. You have created a loophole, deliberately or inadvertently, that will allow us to raise more money in constituency associations, four times as much money. That's not right. It's not right, Madam Chair. It's absolutely not right.

The other thing I want to emphasize, which I don't know if I've emphasized enough, and then I'll return to my seat and we can vote on this: the amount of work this creates for Elections Alberta has already caused them to say that they need an increase in their budget, a substantial increase in their budget. Elections Alberta is going to have to add staff. Now, maybe that's part of the NDP's job-creation plan. That's, I suppose, possible. It's going to create at least two, three, four, five jobs, full-time jobs for people just to manage constituency quarterly reporting data and all of the different administrative burdens that this bill imposes upon Elections Alberta. The shameful part of all of that is that it solves a problem we don't have. This is not a problem that we currently have in the province of Alberta, so why have you come up with a solution in search of a problem?

10:20

I think you're being a little too clever for yourselves. You've out-thought yourselves on this one. You're trying to disadvantage others, and in so doing, you may have actually disadvantaged yourself. That's because you're not trying to do the right thing. You're not trying to make this bill right for democracy. You're not trying to make this bill right for Alberta. You're not trying to pass legislation that will stand the test of time and go unchanged for decades. You're not trying to leave a legacy that you can look back on in five, 10, 20 years from now with pride. You're trying to stack the deck. You're trying to put legislation in place that the next government, that comes in in 2019, will be forced to change, setting off this chain of events where the next government changes it to tilt the playing field to their side, and then you come in many decades later and tilt the playing field to your side. That's not what Albertans want. Albertans expected better from you. That's why they elected you. That's the kind of stuff they got rid of the PCs for, and you're doing the same damn thing. Not okay. Not okay, Madam Chair. Albertans will judge. Albertans will judge.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to the amendment?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A6 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 10:22 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Loewen	Schneider
Clark	MacIntyre	Strankman
Fraser	Nixon	van Dijken
Gotfried	Orr	Yao
Hanson	Pitt	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Fitzpatrick	McPherson
Babcock	Ganley	Payne

Carlier	Gray	Phillips
Ceci	Hinkley	Piquette
Connolly	Kazim	Rosendahl
Coolahan	Kleinsteuber	Schmidt
Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Schreiner
Dach	Loyola	Shepherd
Dang	Luff	Sucha
Drever	Malkinson	Westhead
Eggen	Mason	Woollard
Totals:	For – 14	Against – 33

[Motion on amendment A6 lost]

**The Chair:** We're back on the bill. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** I'm very excited to be back on the bill, Madam Chair. With so much robust debate over the last few days, I look forward to moving another amendment. I do note that out of all the amendments that have been passed so far, we've been successful in passing one amendment. Unfortunately, we'd like to see some more amendments, and I suspect we may be able to get something done on another amendment. Let's see if we can.

I do have the appropriate number of copies, Madam Chair. I will send them up to you and will await your permission to proceed with this amendment.

**The Chair:** This will be known as amendment A7.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I am moving that Bill 35, the Fair Elections Financing Act, be amended as follows. In part A section 39 is amended in the proposed section 43.02 by adding the following after subsection (1):

(1.1) An audited financial statement and a copy of the auditor's report shall accompany each financial statement of a registered leadership contestant required to be filed under subsection (1) if the campaign expenses of the leadership contestant exceed \$25,000.

In part B section 44 is struck out, and the following is substituted:

44(1) Part 6.2 is repealed.

(2) Part 6.2 continues to apply to leadership contests occurring when this section comes into force, and in addition, an audited financial statement and a copy of the auditor's report must accompany each financial statement of a registered leadership contestant required to be filed under section 44.96(1) if the campaign expenses of the leadership contestant exceed \$25,000.

10:40

This amendment is being brought forward because, in my view and in my colleagues' view, I believe there must be reasonable financial limits and thresholds for auditing that are not too tough, not too restrictive on potential leadership candidates but maintain transparency, openness, and accountability in our electoral system. Leadership contestants can generate a lot of money in some cases, and in other cases they don't generate a lot of money, so we want to make sure that the cost of the audit is appropriate to the amount of money that is being raised. We wouldn't want to see a leadership contestant that participated in a leadership race that would only cost a lower amount, like \$10,000, compared to a leadership contestant that may spend upwards of three-quarters of a million dollars.

We felt, after some discussion across the aisle, that \$25,000 was the appropriate number although I would be, of course, open to any feedback from any members of the Assembly if they feel differently. But the concept is that at a certain amount it becomes

appropriate for an audit to be completed and is not overburdensome on leadership campaigns.

With that said, I would be happy to sit down and hear from the government side of the House where they are at on this amendment and see if there is some bipartisan support for it.

**The Chair:** The hon. Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic reform.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to thank the member for bringing forward this amendment. I think that he is absolutely correct that it adds to accountability and transparency, that it is not going to be something that is burdensome to leadership contestants because the requirement is that there must be at least \$25,000 of expenses incurred before an audit is required.

I will be supporting this amendment, and I thank the member for bringing it forward.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to the amendment?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A7 carried]

**The Chair:** We're back on the main bill. Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments?

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, Madam Chair, we appear to be on a roll. It's very exciting to see an amendment pass in Committee of the Whole. I think that that alone deserves recognition. Let's see if we can get going on a couple more. I think we're disproportionately out a little bit. You know, I would imagine it's something like 180 to 1 or somewhere along there. I would not state that as a fact, though. I've not done a count on that.

Madam Chair, we recently discovered that the NDP has at some point in the past created what I would refer to as a shadow party. It appears, in our mind, when we look at this shadow party that it's been built to get around the rules that are regulating political parties or certainly is set up in a way that could get around the rules of political parties or at least skirt the spirit of the laws that this current government is bringing forward.

They, they being the NDP, have created an unregulated and unaudited, secret version of their party which can do things that the NDP as a party is not allowed to do. Now, I call it a secret shadow party because I believe most of the members sitting on the government side don't know about it, or at least what it truly is. I know that Albertans have never been told about it, and I certainly suspect that the bulk of the members of the NDP Party are not aware of the secret shadow party that they are automatically members of.

Now, I suspect that the government members don't know that they are members of this secret party automatically. I suspect – I don't know for sure – that they never asked to join it, but by being members of the NDP government, members, including you, Madam Chair, are automatically members of this shadow organization.

Now, this leads to some weird issues that I think we need to discuss in Committee of the Whole. Two days ago the MLA for Edmonton-Whitemud rightly recused himself from the debate on Bill 35 since he has signed loan guarantees for the NDP. Now, that member participated in the committee associated with those loans, but specifically for us here on Bill 35, he did recuse himself from the process, rightly so. I commend him for recognizing the potential conflict and working with the Ethics and Accountability Committee and declaring that conflict and taking the appropriate steps. I think we all should recognize that, and we recognize that the Speaker properly at that point asked him to leave the Chamber while we

were debating this bill, so he was not in conflict. Again, I commend the member for doing the appropriate process.

But the fact is that every single member of the NDP, whether they know it or not, is a member of the shadow party. This shadow party exists to guarantee the debts of the NDP that are in its official registered bylaws. Now, this organization is doing exactly what the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud is doing, and he honourably recused himself from this debate, rightly so. But every single member of the NDP is automatically a member of this secret organization that I'm referring to.

Now, it's an interesting question as to whether every member of the NDP caucus might also need to recuse themselves from the Bill 35 debate as the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has rightly done for backing loans. Every member across the way, Madam Chair, including yourself, is a member of the organization who is backing substantial loans, the shadow party for the NDP.

We know that one of the government ministers is married to the president of the shadow party. That minister, certainly, should recuse herself from this debate if the traditions of this Assembly are to be followed.

Now, Albertans don't know where this organization got its property. They don't know where it got its money. Who gave it money in the past? Who pays its bills now? Is it getting union money that would be illegal for the NDP to take in? How much union money is it getting? What activities is this organization undertaking that benefit the NDP? We know that the president and treasurer of the NDP are automatically on the board of this shadow party.

Unlike a legitimate political party, the shadow party isn't independently audited with the audit being disclosed to Elections Alberta. We've talked a lot about the need for transparency in our political process, but here we have a shadow party of the NDP that is not accountable to the audit process currently in our election system. Let's be clear. This organization is only audited – only audited – by the executive of the NDP. Madam Chair, I think that at the very least, this smells bad. It's awkward. It raises a whole bunch of questions, and Albertans, when they find out about it, will not be impressed.

That brings me, Madam Chair, to my amendment, that I will be moving shortly. We wanted to move amendments to Bill 35 to prohibit off-the-books political wings. That's what we want to move. There needs to be a prohibition on any political party from having an off-the-books shadow party similar to what the NDP has. I am looking at some of the hon. members across the way, and it appears, based on their reaction, that they don't know about the shadow party. We'll talk about it more in detail as we proceed.

Now, the ability to create an unregulated and unaudited shadow party is an affront to the intentions of the first bill that this Legislature passed unanimously, by every party in this Assembly. The first thing that we did together as a group in the 29th Legislature: this shadow party is an affront to that. I was proud to support the government's first Bill 1, to get union and corporate donations out of our political system. Some of the first votes that I passed in my public life were for that, but now I have to question whether the government was truly sincere about this issue.

When everyone is concerned about PACs and third-party advertisers, rightly so, the NDP now needs to explain to this House and to Albertans why it owns an off-the-books shadow party, which may be acting as a PAC. These types of shadow parties cannot be allowed to exist. That is clear.

Unfortunately, we are now told that the government has crafted Bill 35 in such a way that it's making things harder for political parties, and we as the opposition as a whole, not based on ideological beliefs or political bent of individual parties but as the



opposition that represents the majority of Albertans but the minority inside this Legislature have to ask questions about whether this shadow party has been set up in such a way to continue to benefit the NDP going forward at the same time that they're using the legislative process to cripple the opposition as a whole.

**10:50**

We must be able to close this 747-size loophole. It is deeply concerning to the people of Alberta. It is deeply concerning to the opposition party that it even exists. But mostly and why it is applicable here today inside the Assembly, it is deeply concerning that Bill 35 has not been dealt with.

Now, I'm afraid that if a loophole continues to exist, then other parties will have to consider taking advantage of the loophole if only not to fall behind the NDP. Quite frankly, that would not be a good thing – that would not be a good thing – and it would be counterproductive to what we are attempting to accomplish with Bill 35.

With that said, Madam Chair, I would like to move an amendment. I do have the appropriate amount of copies, and I will send them up with the pages and wait for your permission to continue.

**The Chair:** This will be known as amendment A8.

Go ahead, hon. member.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Chair. The amendment states that I will move that Bill 35, the Fair Elections Financing Act, be amended in section 43 in the proposed section 44.1(1)(i) by adding the following after subclause (v):

(vi) an organization with a board of directors, executive or senior management that includes persons who belong to the executive, board of directors or leadership of a registered party.

I certainly hope that all members, including the members from the governing side, will support our attempt to close this giant loophole that is in the legislation that has been brought forward. I also certainly hope that the members on the other side will explain what is going on with the NDP's secret shadow party. It certainly is troubling and against the spirit of the legislation that this Assembly is currently working on, Bill 35. It is against the spirit of the first bill that this government brought forward and often touts as part of their legacy.

If you look at the NDP's 2015 audit, a footnote cites that the NDP's \$400,000 operating line of credit is guaranteed through a related nonprofit association. That nonprofit association which I am referring to: every member across the way is automatically a member.

While we will have a lot of discussion about this as we debate this amendment, I think the first question that we must ask ourselves in this Chamber, particularly the members who are members of an organization which is guaranteeing political donations for their party, is if they would prefer at this point to contact the Ethics Commissioner, like the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud did, to see if they need to recuse themselves, similar to what he did, or at the very least to rise and explain to Albertans why they can proceed in this debate in clear conflict but the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud cannot.

The nature of this organization is troubling, and there are many questions that need to be answered before we are able to complete the work on Bill 35. But the first question of the utmost importance is whether or not the government members across the way need to recuse themselves from this process. I highly encourage members to consider that, and I look forward to having more discussion in the future about the NDP's secret shadow party.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. There is no shadow party. The way that the member opposite is describing something that Elections Alberta and the Chief Electoral Officer are completely aware of and have been working with the Alberta NDP on is dramatic but incorrect. There is no loophole to do with this society of which we mention, and there is no conflict in this case. Again, this is something that the Chief Electoral Officer and Elections Alberta are fully aware of, and it is not something that gives the Alberta NDP an advantage through Bill 35.

Regarding the amendment that the member has proposed, I actually would really appreciate more clarification because what he has done is added to the exclusions of third party – third party “does not include,” and then he's added “an organization with a board of directors, executive or senior management that includes persons who belong to the executive, board of directors, or leadership of a registered party.”

The amendment that's been tabled I'm not sure even attempts to do what the member is describing. With all due respect, the member does not fully understand and does not have the details of this issue. There are no financial benefits provided by the entity that they are talking about. Again, the Chief Electoral Officer is fully aware and has no concerns about this. We will be working with the Chief Electoral Officer to make sure that our party complies fully with the acts that we have brought forward to get big money out of politics and to make sure that there is transparency and accountability in all things that we do.

I certainly would like to thank the member for his concern, but I do want to stress that there is no issue here. Unless he can explain how this exclusion from the definition of third party does what he is talking about, I will not be supporting this amendment because, again, I think it shows that the member does not fully understand or have the details on this issue.

Thank you.

**The Chair:** The hon. member.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the minister for rising. I do have to first point out in regard to the comments that the minister started out by saying that the shadow organization that I'm referring to did not exist, but then in the next sentence said that the Chief Electoral Officer is aware of it. So which is it? Does it not exist, or is the Chief Electoral Officer aware of it? That is a big difference.

Second, I will be writing to the Chief Electoral Officer and to the Ethics Commissioner, and I have been in contact with their office, and I would strongly suggest that the minister contact them as well before making statements on behalf of the Chief Electoral Officer and where he or is his department may or may not stand in regard to this organization.

Now, we'll talk about the details and how they apply to the amendment in reference to the minister's questions. But I do note, Madam Chair, the core of what I brought forward immediately to start was the fact that this organization that I refer to, the NDP's shadow party, is backing loans associated with the governing party. I'm going to show that in a second. It is backing loans of the governing party.

The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud rightly recused himself because he was backing loans for the NDP. Good for him for talking with the Ethics Commissioner and doing the right thing. I think it's always hard to figure that out, and that's what the Ethics Commissioner is for.

That question needs to be answered, Madam Chair. If all members of the NDP are backing loans just like the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud, why they would not need to recuse themselves from this process is a legitimate question. I would also note that at no time in the minister's comments does she say that she has been or that her party has been in contact with the Ethics Commissioner about that potential conflict, similar to what the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud was.

Now, as for no financial benefit, again, a footnote in the NDP's 2015 audit cites that the NDP's \$400,000 operating line of credit is guaranteed through a related nonprofit association. That begs the question: who is the related nonprofit association, and what is their relationship to the New Democratic Party? Is it the Calgary housing society or the Calgary house society that is mentioned in another footnote as being related through common directors? We went looking for the Calgary house society, and we didn't find it, but we did find the Calgary & District New Democrat House Society. As we looked, it does have interlocking directors with the NDP. The NDP's first vice-president, the NDP's treasurer, a former NDP provincial secretary, and an NDP labour VP and southern Alberta caucus director are on the house society's board of directors.

**11:00**

Scott Payne is the president of the house society, and he is one of the NDP's two labour vice-presidents and the southern Alberta director of the NDP caucus. He is also the spouse of a minister of this government. Chris O'Halloran is the treasurer of the house society and a former NDP provincial director and stakeholder relations manager in the Premier's office. Siobhán Vipond is a director of the house society, and she is currently the NDP treasurer and co-chair of the Premier's economic advisory council and the secretary treasurer of the Alberta Federation of Labour. The four others are also long-time NDP activists. Anne Wilson is currently first vice-president of the New Democratic Party.

The house society does own an industrial condo in Calgary, unit 321, 3132 -26th Street N.E. in Calgary, Alberta. Now, if you go to that location, the space is the NDP's Calgary office. It also seems to host the Calgary & District Labour Council. There seems to be a connection.

We looked up the objects of the society, and there's nothing special there, to be honest. Now, in 2011 the society amended its bylaws so that the society could guarantee the debts of the Alberta New Democratic Party with property of the society. Guarantee the debts of the New Democratic Party. It's right in the society's bylaws. It's current executive is completely tied to the executive of your party, and every member across the way is automatically a member of it.

So what exactly is the house society? These are questions people don't know the answers to, the minister doesn't seem to know the answers to, and certainly Albertans don't know the answers to. But, clearly, it's backing loans for the NDP Party, the same thing that the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud recused himself from this debate for.

How did the society come to own an industrial condo with a clear title? Where does it get its current money? Who gave it money in the past? Who pays its bills now so that they can pledge the condo's title as security on the NDP's debts? Is that what's going on? It's a fair question. What part of its bills are paid for by the Calgary & District Labour Council, which appears to also be located in the house society condo, if any?

The house society, Madam Chair, isn't related to the NDP; it is the NDP. They are the same organization with the exact same membership. The only difference – and this is why this matters to this debate and this amendment – is that this house society is not

regulated or audited by Elections Alberta or anyone except for by the NDP. According to the minister it doesn't exist. She has said that the government has talked to the Chief Electoral Officer about an organization that doesn't exist.

Their membership rules make it so that every member of the NDP is automatically – I want you to get this. This is very important. This is very important. The membership rules of the shadow organization make it so that every member of the NDP is automatically a member of the house society, and if a member quits the NDP, they cease to be a member of the house society. This begs a couple of questions.

The first and the most important I think right now, Madam Chair, is that because we know from the documents that this shadow organization is backing the debt of the NDP Party, we know that the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud has rightly recused himself from the debate, we know that every member across the way is automatically a member of the party, the question first and foremost is: why have they not recused themselves from debate?

We also have to ask: first, have the NDP members as a whole, have the members across from me right now been told that they're automatically a member of this and that they're backing debts for the NDP Party? But even more important, I think: have the members of the NDP Party been told that they are automatically members of an organization backing the debt of a political party? We don't know. We don't know if NDP members have ever been told this.

This leads again to weird things. Again, the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud rightly recused himself from the debate on Bill 35 since he has signed as a guarantor of loans for the NDP. He properly did it. He properly removed himself from the Chamber. But if every single member of the NDP, including the cabinet, whether they know it or not, is a member of the house society automatically and the house society also guarantees NDP loans – guarantees NDP loans, something the minister has indicated in her comments, from what I can tell, wasn't happening, but clearly the documents show that it is guaranteeing NDP loans, without a doubt – it is an interesting question as to whether every member of the NDP caucus has to recuse themselves from Bill 35.

I certainly think that, at the very least, they should adjourn debate on this and contact the Ethics Commissioner for themselves. That is our responsibility as elected members, to make sure we're not in conflict. I will not presume to speak for the Ethics Commissioner, and I encourage through you, Madam Chair, that the hon. minister not speak for the Chief Electoral Officer. They are independent officers, and that's what they are here for. I will be contacting them to get their feedback on this. My office has already spoken to them verbally. They're aware that that letter is coming.

They rise in this Assembly and say, "No; that organization doesn't exist," when, clearly, it exists, and clearly the minister is a member of that organization, and clearly that organization backs loans to the party. The president and the treasurer of the NDP Party are automatically on the board of the house society, documents show. Unlike a political party, the house society isn't audited by Elections Alberta. The house society is audited by the NDP. Three members of the NDP Party – or the New Democrat Party, would be a better way of saying that – finance committee are the only people who audit the house society. They're the only people who audit the house society. So there is no independence in its financials, which only the NDP members can see and then only once a year at their AGM and only if they know where to look.

Given the blank stares from half of the government caucus as I started to speak about this, most of them probably aren't even aware that they're backing loans in part of an NDP shadow party. The fact that the minister has admitted that they have even started to reach out to the Chief Electoral Officer in any way shows that they are at least

very aware that there may be potential conflicts here, that there may be a situation where they have at least had to seek advice. I would note again: no contact with the Ethics Commissioner, as far as I'm aware or from what the minister has indicated, despite the fact that this organization is backing loans and that every member of this government caucus is part of it.

As I said, Madam Chair, we will be writing to the Chief Electoral Officer. When everyone is concerned about PACs and third-party advertisers, the NDP needs to explain to the people of Alberta, they need to explain to this House why it owns an off-the-books shadow party that may be acting as a PAC. The Calgary & District New Democratic House Society isn't regulated. It isn't independently audited. It is allowed to receive unlimited corporate and union donations. It has no limitations on the activities it undertakes, and we have to take the NDP's word for it now for what the house society is or is not doing despite the fact that it is a complete mirror of their political party. Complete mirror. Same membership automatically, same leadership of the party across the way from me as in the leadership of this organization.

The NDP are telling us that they've been upfront with Elections Alberta about the house society, but we can't believe that Elections Alberta has said that the society and the NDP, which have the exact same membership – I suspect they might not even know that the society and the NDP have the exact same membership or that the society is only being audited by the NDP. I suspect they don't know how many loans may be being guaranteed. It would be interesting to know that. I can say that when we checked with Elections Alberta, they did not characterize it the same way that the minister did. Now, we'll have to talk to them in more detail, and I look forward to their response.

We will ask the Chief Electoral Officer to order the NDP's auditor to audit the Calgary & District New Democrat House Society going back for at least seven years. For all practical purposes, since it has exactly the same membership, the house society is the NDP, and it has never been properly audited or properly disclosed to the people of Alberta. We will also be asking the CEO when the NDP disclosed the details of the house society's peculiar structure to him. Albertans deserve to know where the house society got its money, where it spends the money, and what activities it undertakes. They also deserve to know why the house society has not been transparently disclosed. Albertans deserve to know when this government finally decided to talk to the Chief Electoral Officer about this shadow organization.

#### 11:10

The reason that we bring this amendment forward is that clearly there needs to be a prohibition on any political party having an off-the-books shadow party. I don't think that we want to see that across the board. The ability to create an unregulated shadow party is an affront to the intentions of the first bill of this Legislature, a bill that was passed unanimously with the support of every party. Fortunately, the government has crafted Bill 35 in such a way that we are able to try to make an amendment to deal with shadow parties and make that glaring loophole the size of a 747 go away. We have an opportunity to do that. I'm afraid that if the loophole continues to exist, other parties will have to consider taking advantage of that loophole, quite frankly, Madam Chair, not because they want to, but because they'd have no choice because they would fall behind the NDP.

Putting transparency into our political process is a noble goal and something that I support. Having shadow parties that make people automatically the members of it, that exactly mirror a political party, and then using that organization to back the loans of that political party and then not disclosing what's going on, the same

leadership, the same membership, having people automatically become members of an organization that they may not even know they're members of – do they know that they're backing your loans? Does all of your membership know that they've automatically been made members of the Calgary house society and that they are backing massive loans to the New Democratic Party? Do they know that? That is a very important question.

I believe that there are concerns on whether the members across the way from me, Madam Chair, can even participate in this debate, and I think that those concerns should be addressed with the Ethics Commissioner. I think that the easiest way to handle that, of course, would be to adjourn debate and let that process go through. I want to make sure that if the members are in conflict, they be given an opportunity to be able to address that properly. And I will not presume how that should be dealt with. We have an Ethics Commissioner for that.

I eagerly await feedback from the Chief Electoral Officer on some of the questions that we've raised. But I strongly urge the government to show that they are truly interested in closing loopholes, that they are truly interested in making our political process better, that they're not going to keep using shadow parties on the side that have exactly mirrored membership between both parties – the minister kind of skirted over that in her remarks, exactly mirrored membership – and, according to the documents from the NDP Party and the secret shadow organization, have a financial relationship in the loans. This is a serious issue.

The Member for Edmonton-Whitemud recused himself, rightly so, because he was backing New Democratic Party loans. He recused himself, and good for him. I have some questions on why he didn't do that in committee, but he did recuse himself in this Chamber. He recused himself. He stated the conflict, and it was clear that it was about backing loans for this party. And then we come to find out that every member that is across from me right now and every member of the New Democratic Party is backing loans as well.

So, Madam Chair, how can this government justify continuing to participate in this debate until they know what is appropriate and until they declare all of their conflicts and check with the Ethics Commissioner of Alberta on whether they're in conflict? Certainly, the second part of it, what's really relevant for the debate that we're having here today, is: what are they going to do to make this better for Albertans? What are they going to do to make sure the legislation won't allow shadow parties to continue? What are they going to do to fix the conflict that currently exists? And then, lastly, are they going to tell their members that they have automatically made them members of an organization that is backing large amounts of loans to their political party?

Our number one goal with the electoral reform legislation that we have dealt with in the 29th Legislature of Alberta is to get big money out of politics and to make the process more transparent. And here we come to find, at the very least, an organization that is controlled and, you know, owned by the New Democratic Party, that nobody knows about except for maybe some of the hon. members in the government.

Its own documents show that there is a financial connection between the parties, that, at the very least, according to the minister there were concerns enough in the party across the way that they're trying to communicate with the Chief Electoral Officer to address those concerns and to check where the concerns were at, but they're not communicating with the Ethics Commissioner. [interjections] Well, it's not about that; it's about making sure, one, that you're not in conflict and then, two, that we close these loopholes in the future. We don't want every political party all of a sudden to start making shadow parties that are the exact mirror of them, completely

controlled by the political party but off the books, unaudited, unaccountable to the people of Alberta. That goes exactly against everything these members say that they stand for, Madam Chair, exactly against everything these members say that they stand for.

I will yield the floor shortly, Madam Chair, and close with this. I highly encourage all the members who are members of the secret society – and some of them may have just found out today – the secret shadow party, to consider whether they should vote for this legislation or whether they should at least adjourn and contact the Ethics Commissioner.

**The Chair:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Gray:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Again, the member does not understand and does not have the details on this. This is something that we have worked with the Chief Electoral Officer on. I would like to thank the member for his concern because we are equally concerned about making sure that there are no loopholes; that there are no undeclared goods, services, costs; that there are no benefits to other parties that are not equally available to all and transparent to the people of Alberta. The Calgary house society does not fulfill the purpose that the member opposite appears to think it does. The amendment that he has put forward does not address any real or existing problem with elections financing, so I will not be supporting his amendment. I thank the member for his concerns.

**Mr. Nixon:** Madam Chair, the documents that I referred to in my comments on this are audit documents associated with both societies. The minister has risen now twice, and at no time has she referred to the fact that loans are being guaranteed. We can't skirt over that fact. There are tremendous other questions with what's going on with the society. I'd like to hear the answers so that, at the very least, Albertans can know what's going on because it looks fishy, without a doubt.

The facts produced in their own audit documents say that this nonprofit group, or society, is backing the loans of the New Democratic Party – backing the loans – and one of the members has already recused himself from the debate for doing the same thing. So that conflict – at the very least, there are many other serious issues that will have to be addressed, and we'll use the independent officers of the Legislature for that. But specifically to the bill that we're on right now, this organization is backing the debts of the New Democratic Party, and judging by the minister not wanting to comment on it or not commenting on it, obviously, then, their audit reports are correct. I assume the audit reports of the party are correct. I think that if the audit reports of the party are not correct, then we would have a completely other issue that we would have to deal with.

You have one member who recused himself and the rest of the members that are in this Assembly participating in a debate on the same thing that that member had to recuse himself for. Rising up and over and over saying, "Oh, no, it's not like that; it's not like that," when their own reports show that there is a financial connection between the two organizations, at the very least for backing debt. At the very least for backing debt: an organization that is completely and one hundred per cent controlled by the governing party.

**The Chair:** The hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

**Mr. Hanson:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Regardless of the fact of whether the members opposite knew about this previous to this morning or not, we are now going to be voting on this amendment. You now have knowledge of that, so it's going to be

up to you to decide how you vote on this and whether you actually vote on this amendment. Think very carefully before you do.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A8?

**Mr. Nixon:** The last thing I will ask, Madam Chair, through you to the minister, is: will the housing society at the very least make its books transparent immediately to the people of Alberta?

**The Chair:** Any other speakers to amendment A8?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A8 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:20 a.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Loewen	Schneider
Fildebrandt	MacIntyre	Strankman
Fraser	Nixon	van Dijken
Gotfried	Orr	Yao
Hanson	Pitt	

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Ganley	McPherson
Babcock	Gray	Payne
Carlier	Hinkley	Phillips
Connolly	Hoffman	Piquette
Coolahan	Kazim	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinstauber	Schmidt
Dach	Larivee	Schreiner
Dang	Littlewood	Shepherd
Drever	Loyola	Sucha
Eggen	Luff	Westhead
Fitzpatrick	Malkinson	Woollard

Totals:	For – 14	Against – 33
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[Motion on amendment A8 lost]

**The Chair:** We're back on the main bill. The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Carlier:** Yeah. Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to move to adjourn debate on Bill 35 and that when the committee does rise and report progress later this morning, they do so on Bill 35.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

## Bill 27 Renewable Electricity Act

**The Chair:** We are on amendment A6. Are there any members wishing to speak to this amendment? The hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity this morning. When we are talking about an act such as Bill 27 and the significant impact that such an act is going to have upon our province, it is important that we take into account a very fulsome and thorough consultation process and that that consultation process not just be left to chance but that there be some prescription contained within the act to ensure that proper consultation is carried out with all stakeholders that are responsible.

One of those stakeholders, of course, is the landowner. The landowners, especially when it comes to utility-scale renewable projects such as wind and solar, become an extremely important part of the process here. Landowners are going to be required or asked at least, hopefully asked, in a voluntary way to participate in the development of utility-scale renewable projects that are going to require massive amounts of land area and, quite literally, thousands of landowners. I believe that it is vitally important that when we have a bill such as this, that is going to be requiring that 30 per cent of our electricity come from renewables by 2030, which is only a few years away, really – in the grand scheme of massive projects 14 years isn't that far away, not really. It's kind of almost tomorrow already when you're talking about really massive infrastructure builds. I believe that it's extremely important on the front end of this bill that we get some things very right, and one of those is consultation, specifically consultation with landowners.

So I would like to propose an amendment.

**The Chair:** Hon. member, we are already on an amendment.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** We are? Which amendment?

**The Chair:** We're considering amendment A6, moved by yourself.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** Well, as you can tell, I have a few more. We're on A6: unless the minister is satisfied that reasonable consultation in respect of the proposal is taking place with any affected municipalities.

**The Chair:** No. That's not the amendment.

**Mr. MacIntyre:** No? Can you read the amendment that you're on?

**The Chair:** The Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake 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:** Right. Thank you, Madam Chair. The "shall" instead of "may."

Well, here we have a situation, as I mentioned, I believe, yesterday, where the minister is not under any compulsion to actually do the minister's job in ensuring that something takes place specific to proposals and the objectives and goals of those proposals. I would hope, Madam Chair, that the members of this House would realize that it's vitally important, when we're talking about this scale of project, that the minister set out specific goals and specific criteria. For example, if you have very large corporations that are going to be involved in these projects and municipalities as well, who are going to be asked to participate in a very real way, especially when we're talking about utility scale, it's going to be vitally important that the minister has laid out the specific goals and objectives for this particular development. If we don't have those, if the minister is not required to make those specific objectives and make them public, then what exactly are we going by?

**11:30**

Does that mean, then, that developers are just going to be throwing proposals at the minister and that the minister is going to somehow choose the best one? We have a process here that is going to be incorporating the consultation of municipalities, possibly user groups. It only makes sense that the minister actually be required. I realize that in some pieces of legislation you don't want to be really overly prescriptive in the legislation, but when it comes to something like this, where the minister doesn't even have to set

forth a specific target, it just seems to me that that is a hole in that piece of legislation.

Now, we have some other bits of legislation that this government has run through this House. Specifically, I'm referring to Bill 20, where we attempted to put forward a couple of friendly amendments from this side of the House requiring a certain measure of measurement to quantify results. It met with significant opposition from the government side. The government did not want to actually have measurement and verification of verifiable greenhouse gas reduction on account of Bill 20 before increasing the carbon tax in 2018.

If you remember that particular debate, I said something in the order that we have a carbon tax coming into play in January 2017. The government claims that that carbon tax is going to result in greenhouse gas reductions. Okay. Furthermore, in 2018 that carbon tax is going to increase substantially and result in even more greenhouse gas reductions. However, for the alleged greenhouse gas reduction the government claims is going to take place as a result of the carbon tax coming into play in 2017, the government balked at any idea of actually measuring and seeing if, in fact, that initial carbon tax results in any genuine greenhouse gas reductions.

I will say this also, Madam Chair. It's one thing to say that your carbon tax is going to result in greenhouse gas emissions within the borders of the province of Alberta. However, we have at great length explored the reality of carbon leakage and that carbon leakage is the Achilles heel of carbon taxation. Carbon leakage does result in no net greenhouse gas reductions globally. When we are talking about measurement and verification of results, it's going to be very important that this government prove their climate action plan and, specifically, carbon taxation because that is the mechanism they claim will result in a change of behaviour amongst us Albertans, to the point where we will be reducing our greenhouse gas footprint. All right. Fine. Prove it. Put some measurements in place. Demonstrate the truth of that allegation.

Furthermore, is it actually resulting in a net global reduction? Frankly, carbon leakage has a unique phenomenon to it in that in the alleged reduction of greenhouse gas emissions here in this province, carbon leakage has a unique ability to actually increase the amount of greenhouse gas emissions in another jurisdiction beyond the level of greenhouse gases that would have been emitted here had we kept that business here. That's why in some cases you're going to see carbon leakage resulting in higher greenhouse gas emissions globally than if the government in question would have simply left things alone. That is a very real reality in the phenomenon of carbon leakage, and this government refuses to acknowledge the reality of carbon leakage and has proposed nothing whatsoever to address the reality of carbon leakage.

In fact, when members from this side of the House attempted to shield our greenhouse industry in this province, the government side of the House unanimously voted that amendment down. That one little industry proves my point in that every greenhouse operator in this province cannot survive this government's carbon tax in 2017 and 2018.

That lost production of locally grown, fresh, often organic produce is going to be replaced by produce from jurisdictions as far away as Mexico and Central America and Florida, and those items are going to be trucked all the way up here – all the way up here – emitting greenhouse gas emissions all the way here. We put a bunch of greenhouse operators and their staff out of work, there are going to be no taxes paid by those people, and now we're having to buy food from another jurisdiction. We're actually creating jobs somewhere else, creating carbon emissions somewhere else on account of an act and a tax that was supposed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions but, in fact, does not.

I think I kind of understand why this government is so shy of measurables. They haven't done their homework to actually do the analytics on the impact of this carbon tax throughout a very complex economy like Alberta's. It's like they're denying the science of economics and economic realities. If they would simply perform those analytics, they would come to a similar conclusion, I believe, to what the government of Australia and the government of France have come to that has led them to cancel their carbon tax. Just one reason they're cancelling it is the adverse economic impact and the adverse greenhouse gas emission impact of carbon taxation.

I would hope that at the very least this government would not be so shy of putting their money where their mouth is, so to speak, and allow for some actual measurable objectives that the minister has to put in place so that we can see what the targets are and that the minister not be simply given an option to do those sorts of things but that the minister be required to provide that and make it public. Transparency is a problem with this government, and this is a friendly amendment to help that situation and to give Albertans at least something they can look to, something that they can see. They can see a public document that says, "Here are the targets; these are the specific objectives of what the minister wants to accomplish" rather than just saying: well, the minister may or may not.

I would hope that every member in this House will support this I think friendly amendment.

**The Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A6?

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A6 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 11:39 a.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Gotfried	Orr
Drysdale	Hanson	Schneider
Fildebrandt	Loewen	van Dijken
Fraser	MacIntyre	Yao

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Goehring	McPherson
Babcock	Gray	Payne
Carlier	Hinkley	Phillips
Connolly	Hoffman	Piquette
Coolahan	Kazim	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Kleinsteuber	Schmidt
Dach	Larivee	Schreiner
Dang	Littlewood	Shepherd
Drever	Loyola	Sucha
Eggen	Luff	Turner
Fitzpatrick	Malkinson	Westhead
Ganley	Mason	Woollard

Totals: For – 12 Against – 36

[Motion on amendment A6 lost]

**The Chair:** Pursuant to Standing Order 4(3) the committee shall now rise and report progress on bills 35 and 27.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bills: Bill 35 and 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 Deputy Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? Say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Opposed, say no. So ordered.  
The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Carlier:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I wish to move that we adjourn this morning and reconvene at 1:30 this afternoon.

[The Assembly adjourned at 11:57 a.m.]

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