



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Second Session

# Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, December 12, 2016

Day 61

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

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

Second Session

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

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

**Party standings:**

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

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Joe Ceci	President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance
David Eggen	Minister of Education
Richard Feehan	Minister of Indigenous Relations
Kathleen T. Ganley	Minister of Justice and Solicitor General
Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Municipal Affairs
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Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
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Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Human Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
Lori Sigurdson	Minister of Seniors and Housing

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Dang	Taylor
Ellis	Turner
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**Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future**

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Carson	Jansen
Connolly	Panda
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Kazim	

## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, December 12, 2016

[The Speaker in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Speaker:** Good afternoon. Season's greetings to you.

Let each of us reflect and pray, each in our own way. During this festive season many of the people of this province celebrate Christmas and the birth of the Christ child. The birth of the Prince of Peace in a stable because there was no room at the inn might serve as a symbol to all of us of our need to share with our brothers and sisters and celebrate our good fortune with our friends and family.

Hon. members, ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by Mr. Robert Clark. Feel free to sing in the language of your choice.

#### Hon. Members:

O Canada, our home and native land!  
True patriot love in all thy sons command.  
Car ton bras sait porter l'épée,  
Il sait porter la croix!  
Ton histoire est une épopée  
Des plus brillants exploits.  
God keep our land glorious and free!  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.  
O Canada, we stand on guard for thee.

**The Speaker:** Please be seated.

### Introduction of Guests

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Meadowlark.

**Mr. Carson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 37 students from Afton school in the wonderful constituency of Edmonton-Meadowlark. The students are accompanied today by their teacher, Mr. Scott Slatter. I would ask them to now please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other school groups today?  
Seeing none, the Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you to members of the Assembly Mr. Robbie Kreger-Smith. Robbie is the Alberta Party's Edmonton regional organizer as well as being the constituency association president in Edmonton-Decore, and I can tell you that as the Edmonton regional organizer Robbie is a very busy guy these days. I'd ask you to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Ceci:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly 16 hard-working staff from the marvellous Department of Treasury Board and Finance. I can't thank these staff members enough for their dedication to their work and for making sure everything runs smoothly. I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my privilege to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members of this House 26 members representing the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at in Calgary and Edmonton. This year marks the 50th year of the establishment of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at in Canada. I was fortunate to have been part of that celebration when the head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at world-wide visited Calgary last month. Alberta, especially Calgary, is home to several members of the Ahmadiyya Jama'at, and Baitun Nur, one of Canada's beautiful mosques, is also located in Calgary in my constituency. I would request the distinguished guests to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House as I call their names. There are 26 names, but I can just introduce the first five.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. The first five. We have a deal.

**Mr. Sabir:** Majeed Ahmad Tariq is the president of Ahmadiyya Jama'at Calgary, Shahrukh Abid is imam of the Baitun Nur mosque, Nasir Mahmood Butt is imam of the Edmonton Ahmadiyya mosque, Humayun Hafeez Ahmed is the regional president, and Sultan Ahmad Mahmood is the director of public relations, Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at in Calgary.

Thank you very much for being here. I guess they're already seated.

**The Speaker:** Thank you. Welcome.

The Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to the Assembly Samuel Williamson and his mother, Christine Williamson, who've been active in my constituency for quite awhile now. This holiday season Christine asked Samuel what he wanted for Christmas, and Samuel said: I want a pass to the government. He has some great ideas, starting with a guaranteed annual income of \$6,000 per person, so I will have to consult with him a bit after this. In light of this young man's great desire for an all-access pass I would ask them to rise and please accept the warm welcome of this Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome. Nice tie.

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

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's an absolute pleasure to rise today and introduce three constituents from the outstanding constituency of Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills. Amanda Hawman and her children, Alessandra and Bennett, have joined us today. Amanda is a passionate advocate for women's issues and an advocate for those who have been abused, and she does a wonderful job in the constituency. She is a super-fantastic mom. She also has the misfortune of working for me.

**The Speaker:** Welcome, and good luck with that.

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

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have two sets of introductions today. I'll be brief. As the members across the way know, I'm famous for being brief. First, I do look up today and see that the family of the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills is here today, specifically Ms Tanya Cooper, who is, of course, my good friend the hon. Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills' wife. I have to say to the Assembly that they did not travel with him last week, and he was absolutely miserable to live with up here. So I do want to say to Tanya: thank you for coming, and please do not send

him up here anymore by himself. With that, I'd ask that she rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

Second, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you and through you to the Assembly Paul and Brenda Chisholm from the wonderful community of High River. Paul and Brenda's daughter Haley has been fighting a severe kidney disease for seven years. Haley's doctor says that a rare drug could prevent further damage to her kidneys and may stop her from needing a transplant. The province is refusing to provide the needed medication to Haley, so her parents are here today to fight for her and do whatever they can to give their daughter the best chance at treatment. A little bit later my good friend the hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat will ask some questions about that, but for now I would ask that Paul and Brenda rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-South West.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you today two constituency workers from my constituency, the most wonderful constituency of Edmonton-South West. Marta Szylo and Amelia Van Hoffen join us in the members' gallery today. They do the great work of ensuring that I get to the right place at the right time most of the time. On top of that, they are the front line for my constituents to have access to this government. I do want to also point out that Amelia is going to be leaving me very shortly as she is due with her second child on February 27. If they'd please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**1:40**

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

The hon. Member for St. Albert.

**Ms Renaud:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Adrienne Webb and her service dog, Jellybean. She uses this important dog to navigate life. She deals with PTSD as well as other issues. Her problem sometimes is getting access to places because the laws and regulations are somewhat restrictive if a dog doesn't come from an ADI-accredited kennel. Please join me in welcoming Adrienne and Jellybean.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other guests for introduction today? The Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour along with the Member for Calgary-Greenway to introduce to you and to all members of the House Majeed Ahmad Tariq of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at in Calgary and Humayun Hafëez Ahmed, regional president of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at in Alberta. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at has been a very active member of the Alberta community, and their mantra is Love for All, Hatred for None. I would ask them to stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

**The Speaker:** Welcome.

### Members' Statements

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

### Mathematics Education

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As someone who taught math in junior high, nothing angers me more than reducing the concept of math education to one extreme or the other. I do not know a single math teacher who thinks about it in terms of discovery math or back to basics nor one who teaches to only one of these two extremes. All people learn differently, and what works for one child does not work for every other child. Most teachers I know use a variety of methods to ensure each child in their class understands a concept, be it multiplication or algebra, to the best of their abilities.

It is clear to me, however, that a return to the methods of our youth is not the solution. How many people do you know who tell you, "Oh, I'm just not that good at math"? This is common in our society and accepted, but it isn't okay. How would you feel if someone told you, "Oh, I'm just not that good at reading"?

It was with much excitement, then, that I read the report of the Mathematics Curriculum Review Working Group. The members of the group are mostly postsecondary educators who teach mathematics and are ideally suited to identifying gaps in knowledge of students who are taking math in university. The members identified key themes: that students need to have a more positive attitude towards mathematics, to develop perseverance, and to learn from their mistakes. "If we want students to be comfortable with messiness, then we [must] assess with messiness as well. Multiple choice doesn't allow for this."

I'm pleased to see our government moving on recommendations from the report last week. One key issue that was identified is that teachers themselves do not always feel comfortable with math, particularly in the elementary grades. The bursary program introduced by the government will allow current and preservice teachers to access up to \$2,000 to help cover tuition costs for postsecondary courses designed to strengthen their knowledge, skill, and confidence in teaching mathematics.

Math is important, Mr. Speaker, and we are moving forward to ensure that we are teaching it well so that in the future we won't have to hear about people who just don't like math.

### Protection of Children in Care

**Mr. Hunter:** Mr. Speaker, the safety of our children in care should be of paramount concern for all of us. I wholeheartedly believe that we have no time to lose and that now must be the time for action.

Last week the Deputy Premier said that she believes all parties want to see the system fixed, so why does this NDP government need to do another panel when we already have a plethora of recommendations from previous studies? In a report of the office of the Child and Youth Advocate, which detailed the tragic death of Serenity, the advocate renewed its call for the ministry to provide cultural, relevant support services for kinship caregivers. Kinship care means that the children are placed with someone who has a special family connection to the child. According to past studies these caregivers often receive less training and fewer services. Mr. Speaker, how has this not been rectified to date?

The advocate noted that potential kinship caregivers are self-vetted to determine their own suitability. In this self-vetting process caseworkers conducting the home study simply review a take-home assessment completed by the potential caregivers. How does this lend itself to objective evaluation and doing our proper due diligence when, literally, children's lives are at stake? In the case of Serenity she was neglected and abused in the kinship care program. How can time and time again no one be held responsible when these deaths occur?

Mr. Speaker, it's been two years now, and, that we know of, no one has been charged or fired. Children who are the responsibility of the state deserve to have someone who is accountable for them. Workers and the minister must start being held responsible. The system has failed Serenity, and it is still failing other children. We need to get to the root of this problem. The government needs to make sure that this ministry's priority is protecting the safety and well-being of our children, not absolving anyone of blame: unions, legislators, RCMP, or Justice. We all need to do better.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

### Carbon Levy Rebates

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In response to questions from constituents I've met while door-knocking in one of Alberta's most diverse ridings economically and culturally, Edmonton-McClung, I rise today to speak about our government's carbon levy and the rebates that will apply to 60 per cent of Albertans. Putting a price on carbon is a most cost-effective way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change. Alberta's carbon levy will reward families, businesses, and communities that take steps to lower their emissions. The levy will also help to diversify our energy industry and create new jobs and is already improving access to new markets and better prices for our traditional energy products.

Full rebates will be provided to Albertans who earn \$47,500 or less and couples and families who earn \$95,000 or less. An additional 6 per cent of households will receive a partial rebate. The rebate is solely tied to income and not energy use, so eligible recipients will have a financial incentive to reduce household emissions. You do not need to apply. You'll automatically receive a rebate if you file a tax return and meet the income criteria. You're not required to answer questions over the phone or give access to your home to determine eligibility. For a family with two children the carbon levy's total estimated costs in 2017 are around \$338, while the full rebate that will be provided to families earning \$95,000 per year will be \$360.

The carbon levy is the key tool that will pay for the transition to a more diversified economy. Over the next five years the levy is expected to raise \$9.6 billion, all of which will be reinvested in the economy and rebated to Albertans. Mr. Speaker, the carbon levy is good for Albertans, good for our environment, and good for our resilient economic future.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

### Mental Health Supports

**Ms Woollard:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are compassionate people who believe that when our friends and relatives are experiencing a mental health issue, either a mild and short-term or a more serious mental illness, they need our help. Some of the ways we can support good mental health are contained in the Psychologists' Association of Alberta's position statements regarding essentials of mental health.

One of the most important points presented is that Albertans have a right to work in psychologically healthy workplaces. Working in an environment in which people are not bullied or harassed but are valued and treated in a respectful manner is essential in enabling people to work productively and effectively.

As well, mental and behavioural health publicly funded services should be on par with funding for physical health publicly funded

services. The stigma against psychological illness often prevents people from accessing help, leading people to suffer longer than needed. All Albertans, regardless of income, should have access to psychological services. To address both these issues, the services of psychologists for the assessment and treatment of mental health problems and disorders require continued and improved supports.

Finally, as a former school psychologist I've heard from students that all Albertan students should have timely access to school counsellors who are able to support students in dealing with their concerns. School counsellors are able to assist students and link students to psychology services when needed. Many schools no longer have school counsellors on a regular basis, and some students have noted that there are few mental health resources available for youth.

Thank you.

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

1:50

### Oral Question Period

**The Speaker:** The Leader of Her Majesty's Official Opposition.

#### Investigation of Death of Child in Kinship Care

**Mr. Jean:** The NDP know that our children-in-care system is broken, but they have dropped this file altogether. The result is that Albertans are still waiting for a girl who was beaten and starved to death to receive justice. For years we've seen panels, committees, reports, inquiries, and recommendations sit on the shelf gathering dust, and now the minister in charge failed to give the RCMP critical documents on time and when asked. Premier, how can Albertans trust this government to fix this file when the minister who's been responsible for the last 19 months has failed so badly?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. They can trust this minister and this government because this minister and this government are committed to making progress on this very, very difficult file. Quite honestly, people who care about this issue know that it is complex and long-standing. The legacy of residential schools, the legacy of the '60s scoop, the legacy of firing social workers in the '90s, the legacy of fracturing our service delivery, the legacy of cutting funding to the OCYA: all these things contributed to the systemic problems that those providing services face. We are committed to working on them diligently.

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

**Mr. Jean:** The incompetence, secrecy, and negligence on Serenity's file is stunning. It's beyond belief that the death of a child has taken over two years to investigate. The Child and Youth Advocate got requests for information blocked at every single turn. I've asked this before, and I'm going to ask it again, Premier. Where was the report from the medical examiner's office, where was the report from the Justice department, where was the report from Human Services, and why did it take so long to complete an autopsy on this poor little girl?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, this matter has been discussed at great length, and as we know, there are complexities to this file and complexities, more importantly, to this tragedy and to the whole challenge that this matter presents us as legislators in Alberta. Our government has begun to take action; our minister has begun to take action. We brought in a \$340 million child tax credit to reduce

poverty, the very thing that threatens families at risk. We brought in additional funding to FCSS to help agencies that work with these families who are at risk. We've increased funding for women's shelters to help . . .

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

**Mr. Jean:** The Chief Medical Examiner took a full two years to complete Serenity's autopsy. Two years, Mr. Speaker. If a child death review committee had been established to review the deaths of all children in Alberta, as recommended by the 2014 implementation oversight committee, this may have actually been prevented. The chair of that committee, Tim Richter, says that this should have been a top priority of this NDP government. To the Premier: why have you allowed your minister to ignore this for 19 months, and when will you actually make the changes recommended by the last review committee over two years ago?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, as has already been indicated, we are establishing a panel with the very view to making changes to the child death review process in time for the next legislative session in the spring, so that is action. But – you know what? – not every recommendation is created equally, and it is important for us to look at these recommendations clearly to determine which are going to work best. Not every recommendation that was made in the 2014 report is one that we think is helpful, but we do know that we need to make changes. We will be working with members opposite to bring those changes forward in the spring.

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier.  
The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

#### Prescription Drug Coverage for Rare Diseases

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, Haley Chisholm is a vibrant teenager who has been living with a very rare kidney disease for seven years. Today I met with the Chisholm family, and I thank the Health minister for doing the same. The Chisholms are doing everything they can to secure funding for Soliris, a drug that has shown promise in treating Haley's rare disease. Her own specialist physician has said that this drug could help Haley's rare disease, but Alberta Health disagrees. Will the minister please review this file, the input of the specialist physicians, and available evidence to ensure that this drug is covered?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question as well as to Haley's family for their ongoing strength and advocacy on behalf of their daughter. I commend them, and I would probably do exactly what they're doing if I were in their shoes. As a politician I'm certainly not in the best position to be able to make determinations about a course of care. That's why we entrust physicians to bring forward recommendations to the physician panel that determines exceptional drug coverage, and that's exactly what's to happen in this case. We'll continue to monitor the science and the evidence, but I trust doctors to make the best decisions to support patient care.

**Mr. Barnes:** Mr. Speaker, time is very sensitive for Haley. She currently takes 18 pills per day to slow the advance of this disease, but the next step will be an experimental plasma-substitution therapy requiring constant appointments while she tries to complete her studies and live her life. Beyond that, she could require a kidney transplant. We only request short-term coverage to see if her disease

responds to the drug. Can the minister assure us today and the Chisholms that she will review this file and provide the information to them as soon as possible?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I am absolutely committed to making sure that the Chisholm family maintains contact with our office if we can be of support in that process. At the end of the day, politicians are certainly not in the best position to make determinations about care, and that's why we've created these systems, to make sure that they continue to move forward. Our office is happy to help connect the Chisholms' doctor, to provide the very best information and up-to-date information about ways that he might be able to continue to move forward in his advocacy and the parents as well. At the end of the day, we do have to trust that the health professionals make health determinations.

**Mr. Barnes:** We have been told that Alberta Health cannot approve funding this drug for an off-label use because there is a lack of clinical trial evidence. However, given the extreme rarity of her disease it is no wonder that full clinical trials to test this particular drug have not and cannot be done. The evidence that does exist is limited but very promising. If the short-term exceptional drug therapy program cannot handle this truly unique case, will the minister commit to reforming an unresponsive process?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again I want to commend the family for their ongoing work in supporting the very best possible health outcomes for their daughter. I'm proud of the fact that I was able to meet with them and share the frustrations that they shared around some of the concerns with regard to the drug manufacturer and some of the processes there. Certainly, in terms of the short-term exceptional drug therapy program, I'm proud to rely on the expertise of physicians. None of us on the floor is in a better position than the physicians on this panel to make the best determinations. Health Canada does determine what's on-label and not on-label. The trials continue to move forward, but I've been informed that there is an adult trial under way that . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.  
Third main question.

#### Carbon Levy

**Mr. Jean:** Well, Mr. Speaker, it's been another record-breaking week for Alberta under the NDP's economic mismanagement. Sales of Crown drilling rights in Alberta have fallen to the lowest level in 39 years. Here are some other records that the NDP has broken this year: highest unemployment rate in two decades, record deficit, record debt, piles of credit downgrades, and record job losses. Congratulations. How many more records does Alberta have to break before this Premier realizes that this carbon tax she's trying to implement will just make things so much worse for Alberta families?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the record that we will and indeed have broken is the record of the number of pipelines approved here in Alberta, and we are very proud of that. We are working to build the economy. We are not tearing down the economy. We're not criticizing Albertans. We're working with them to build our



economy on every layer. Instead of doom and gloom, we are looking forward to improvements, and we're already seeing them.

**Mr. Jean:** Well, two-thirds of Albertans who do not want a carbon tax were relieved to see a Premier in Ottawa last week tell Ottawa that their province will never sign on to a carbon tax. Unfortunately, that Premier was from Saskatchewan and not Alberta. Alberta's Premier was busy championing a \$50-per-tonne carbon tax for Albertans that will pillage charities, hurt businesses, and take \$2,500 every single year out of the pockets of Alberta families. Why was the Premier championing Ottawa's carbon tax instead of joining the millions of Albertans who don't want this carbon tax from the NDP?

2:00

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, if we look at the thousand people at the rally yesterday and then subtract the thirty grandmothers who were thrown out, that does not amount to a million people.

But to be clear, Mr. Speaker, the Saskatchewan Premier fought for the right to have a made-in-Ottawa plan imposed in Saskatchewan. He fought for a right to make political points, and that is all. What we fought for was to have a made-in-Alberta plan, working with industry, moving forward with Albertan business because that's the way we build a progressive, effective . . .

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

**Mr. Jean:** Over 100,000 Albertans have lost their jobs in the last year and a half, and that's her answer?

The Premier can't ignore the millions of Albertans upset by this carbon tax. Albertans are hurting. They're anxious and frustrated that every level of government seems more concerned about how to tax them than getting Albertans back to work. Seeing as the Premier gave the thumbs-up to Ottawa's carbon plan, will she release her government's economic impact study, how much it's going to cost Alberta's families, how much indirect costs will go up, and how much money it will take out of our economy?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I think the members opposite are capable of reading in the newspaper the number of reports that have been produced which talk about how many economists believe that pricing carbon is actually the way forward, because there are a lot of them. In addition, we know that the pipeline that just got approved – which, by the way, happened because of our climate leadership plan, the very plan these folks would want to walk away from – will create 22,000 construction jobs. It will add at the very minimum \$3 per barrel. This is going to grow Alberta's economy, and we are proud to have made that happen. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** I'm not sure if you've shared season's greetings with each other or not today.

The leader of the third party.

#### Child Death Review Ministerial Panel

**Mr. McIver:** Mr. Speaker, the veil of secrecy over the ministerial panel promised for Serenity's death is wrong. The Deputy Premier patting your government on the back for a public-facing piece, which is a final report, while keeping everything else behind closed doors is pitiful. All panel deliberations except necessary confidential information must occur in public. To the Premier. Legislative committees regularly move in camera when the need arises, but otherwise they do their work in public. Will you please direct this panel to follow the same procedure?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, when the member opposite first asked us to consider this, he began it by premising it with reference to the work that had been done by the former Minister of Human Services Mr. Bhullar. As we know, the work that he did and the panel that he created was not an all-party committee. It was a party that consisted primarily of experts, and it was a panel to which opposition members were invited to come to observe. What we are proposing instead gives tremendous opportunity for engagement of members opposite. It will allow for excessive public opportunity, high levels of transparency, but it will also not provide a platform for politicians . . .

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

**Mr. McIver:** Well, the Premier promised an all-party committee in public, and she's broken that so far. The terms of reference for the ministerial panel are narrowly focused on the death review process in the child intervention system. While those issues are critical, the lack of protection and follow-up for Serenity runs into an abysmal depth. It includes looking at the ME's office, the RCMP, Human Services, and the minister's office itself. To the Premier. Serenity's case points to a failure of multiple agencies, offices, and public employees. Under the Public Inquiries Act you can order a public inquiry. Will you do so, please?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the member opposite ought to read the terms of reference more carefully. In fact, it is within those terms of reference that the issue of the death review process will be addressed. It will address all the actions of all the agencies that the member opposite just spoke of. That's the way to go forward. That's the way to get to a solution quickly. That's the way to get to a point where next spring we bring in legislation to remove a lot of the barriers and to streamline this process and to ensure that there is a much higher level of transparency in terms of how these investigations proceed.

**Mr. McIver:** The problem, Mr. Speaker, is that the minister could throw a blanket over all that information if he wants to under the terms of reference. Serenity's abuse and subsequent death suggest a shocking lack of concern for the welfare of our indigenous children. All of Alberta has seen in recent weeks the Minister of Human Services fail to use the authority of his office to take control of a terrible situation. They no longer have faith in him. Premier, when you were in opposition, you called for resignations based on what you saw as a lack of ministerial accountability. This case is clear cut. Will you replace your two ministers?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, our minister has worked diligently – diligently – on supporting the work of his ministry and supporting child intervention. You know what was the first thing he did when he became minister? He looked at what had been proposed under that member opposite's proposed budget. You know what it was? It was \$600 million a year coming from child protection; \$600 million per year was proposed to be taken out of child intervention by those folks over there. This minister over here said no. He restored that funding. He brought in a \$37 million increase because he is committed to making this . . .

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

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

#### Protection of Children in Care

**Mr. Clark:** I thank you, Mr. Speaker. Nearly two years after Serenity's death major problems persist in Alberta's child welfare

system. These are not new problems. Report after report after report have identified the issues. A committee chaired by Tim Richter was established to implement past recommendations, but this work has been ignored by the minister. It's clear we don't need another panel. We need action. To the Minister of Human Services. We all know what's wrong; we all know the answers. How can you justify yet another repetitive panel?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The stories of Serenity and other children are tragic and can't help but make you recommit to take action. That is why we are taking action. As we move forward with the committee, we will look at the work that has been done previously. In the short term, for spring session, we will bring in a process that will look over the death review, which was ignored by the previous government. We will bring that legislation next spring. Thank you.

**Mr. Clark:** This is on you, Mr. Minister. I expect you to have implemented the damn changes. That's what's needed here, Mr. Speaker. Some of the recommendations made by the implementation committee include benchmarking outcomes for children in care, creating a joint child death review panel, conducting and releasing internal reports into all child deaths. These are just a few of the many clear, actionable recommendations you have had on your desk for more than 18 months. Again to the Minister of Human Services. You've been in charge for a year and a half. Why haven't you implemented a single one of Tim Richter's recommendations? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** I want to remind all of the House. You've been very good at it, but, again, particularly on sensitive topics like this, please direct your comments through the chair.

The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The death of Serenity represents the systemic issues that have been there for decades, and there is no simple solution. There is the legacy of residential schools, there is the legacy of '60s scoop, there is a legacy of laying off social workers, there is a legacy of fractured systems . . .

**Mr. Mason:** Point of order.

**The Speaker:** Point of order is noted.

Minister, your comments through the chair. Are you finished your comments?

**Mr. Clark:** Mr. Speaker, this minister is responsible for two catastrophic failures. First, his inaction means that whoever murdered Serenity is walking free today, and second, we have no assurance that other Serenities aren't at risk in the system right now. I do lay blame, and I have no faith in this minister. The Richter report says that, quote: at the end of the day no amount of external review, oversight, policy, or process can replace leadership. To the Premier: will you immediately replace this minister with someone willing and able to fix the system?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I have said before, not all recommendations are created equal. There were a number of elements of that previous report which, quite frankly, will not help us move forward in terms of dealing with the problems that were reflected in the case of Serenity. For instance, the idea of having the OCME investigate every death of every child in Alberta will result

in the critical issues that impact children in care being lost. It would result in us failing to make the kinds of focused changes that we need to move on. That is why we are reviewing this. We will move forward . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Glenmore.

2:10

### Energy Industry Update

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In the past few weeks there have been calls for optimism in Alberta's oil patch; however, I'm still hearing from my constituents in Calgary-Glenmore that they're concerned about jobs. They still can't find work and are having a hard time paying their bills. To the Minister of Energy: what will the production cuts from OPEC mean for working families here in Alberta?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Minister of Energy.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. We certainly are cautiously optimistic about the OPEC production cuts. More balance between supply and demand is going to lead to oil price increases, and we will continue to monitor that situation. Higher oil prices will make it easier for industry to make those investment decisions and to create jobs. It will also mean more revenue for Alberta to put towards the social programs that our families rely on. There is still work to be done, and that's why we're moving into diversifying our economy with our petrochemical industry.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that OPEC cuts may be good news but many oil and gas projects are still on the shelf, to the same minister: when will companies here in Alberta start announcing capital investments?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the question. Certainly, many companies are showing cautious optimism. Last week Cenovus did announce that it would proceed with the expansion of their Christina Lake oil sands project. Recently CNRL announced it would resume its Kirby North oil sands project, and to date we have over 140 wells that are being drilled on the new modern royalty framework.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Ms Kazim:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that so many Albertans are struggling due to the drop in oil price, again to the same minister: when will families in Alberta start to see real benefits from the approval of Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipeline?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms McCuaig-Boyd:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, there's been lots of good news lately with two pipelines. The CEO of Kinder Morgan expects that shovels will be in the ground within the year in 2017. Trans Mountain has announced also that there will be 22,000 new construction jobs. That means that once it's completed, there'll be at least \$3 a barrel more to Albertans, and without this additional pipeline access, the companies would be losing between \$8 billion to \$13 billion annually in revenue by

2022. Without additional pipelines we would lose \$1 billion annually in revenue to the government.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Airdrie.

### Protection of Children in Care

*(continued)*

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week we heard of yet another review panel into the current state of our children in care. Multiple reviews have been done on this issue, hundreds of recommendations authored, countless reports, several official panels and committees, and reviews of reviews of reviews. Albertans are sick of hearing of tragic and avoidable stories like Serenity's, and they want action. To the minister: what are you doing in the meantime to take action on the hundreds of already existing recommendations?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. What we are doing: we have put forward an action plan of which we will see the changes in the immediate future.

At the same time we have taken steps to address the root causes. We are dealing here with historical injustices, generational trauma, residential schools, the '60s scoop, and the firing of social workers in the '90s. That's why we are making important investments, like investing \$340 million so that families can bear the costs of raising the child. We have invested \$25 million in FCSS so preventative measures can be put . . .

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

My apologies to the hon. member. I called you Calgary-Airdrie. I meant to say Airdrie.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Given that this panel was announced last week and was flaunted as the action being taken and given that everyone in this Assembly granted an emergency debate because the safety of the children in government care must be addressed now and given that the minister cannot even be bothered to post the details of this panel on the government website, is the Premier still proud of this minister? [interjections]

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and to the member for highlighting the important work that we're doing as we move forward . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Quiet, please. [interjection] Hon. member, quiet, please.

The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The members opposite said that they wanted to be a part of the solution, and we certainly take them at their word when they say that. That's why we've moved forward with a ministerial panel, and we look forward to seeing the work that they do. Absolutely, we have the full confidence in our minister, and we continue to have his back because he has the backs of children.

**Mrs. Pitt:** Mr. Speaker, given that the NDP's only answer to children dying in care is a minister-run panel and given that this leads to serious questions of trust, that the minister will ignore valid

ideas in favour of an NDP world view, and given that this side has called for a fully independent committee of the Legislature, will someone please tell me why the government wants to put the fox in charge of the henhouse?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As I've said repeatedly, we are committed to establishing a committee that involves people – a panel that involves experts on the matter so that we can come up with the best solutions, the best distillation of the many recommendations that have proceeded over the last many years, and bring it forward in an effective way in time for this spring. We have invited members opposite to be part of that committee. We are not going to create a platform on which they can score political points, like they are trying to do today, rather than trying . . . [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Thank you, hon. Premier. Thank you. [interjections] Could we have a little order, please.

The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that an all-party panel has been established to fix Alberta's child intervention system and given that the Minister of Human Services said in question period last week that if the panel members "care about these issues, which I believe they do, they will work with me to find solutions," to the hon. Premier. Albertans care about all of the Serenities out there. How are you going to protect them in the interim while this panel does its work?

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. I'd like to first take this opportunity to correct a piece of information I gave in answer to a different question when I was talking about the proposed budget cuts of the last government. It was roughly a \$30 million cut to a \$600 million child intervention budget, one that was expected to happen over a couple of years, that was reversed and, in fact, increased. I needed to correct that because I was incorrect previously.

As I've said before, the minister and our government are doing a number of things to try to work to prevent the risks that are presented to children at risk throughout our province every day. One of the key issues, Mr. Speaker, is poverty. We have worked quickly to ameliorate that, and we will continue . . .

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

First supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Mr. Speaker, thank you. Given that I have a proposal for Serenity's law, which amends the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act to make it the lawful responsibility of adults to notify police of a child who needs intervention – and I will table this today – and given that this is my private member's bill but that because it is at least a year away, I recommend that we act on it now, to the Premier. More Serenities are being victimized as I speak. Are you willing to ask for unanimous consent of this House to stay one more day to pass legislation that can start saving children's lives immediately?

2:20

**The Speaker:** The hon. Premier.

**Ms Notley:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the member's effort to put forward a substantive recommendation like that. Indeed, that's exactly the kind of thing that I anticipate having

us work on with the panel to bring forward legislation in the spring because that's exactly the kind of practical solution that could help close some of the gaps and loopholes that we know exist. I look forward to working with him should he be the nominee from his caucus on the panel. It's exactly the kind of idea that we need to move forward on, and I thank him for it.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is so simple. We could do it today.

Given that last Thursday the Deputy Premier made the following statement in QP, "All of our children deserve an opportunity to have the very best life, and I challenge everyone to help us do that" – Mr. Speaker, I took that challenge – and given that I cannot go home for Christmas knowing that more Serenitys are out there being victimized while we wait for a panel to start its work, to the Premier: please put the politics aside for the love of Alberta's children. Do not allow this House to recess before Serenity's law is passed.

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, it is really kind of rich to hear the member opposite talk about putting the politics aside. I think it is a good idea, but for the member to come in today 10 minutes or 20 minutes before the House begins with a request for somebody else to draft a bill that is not yet drafted and to then suggest that we should somehow change the rules to run it through today in one go when it's not ready and it's out of order, after 44 years of failing to address it in the past – I have committed to having these kinds of . . .

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

#### Minister of Human Services

**Mr. Loewen:** In 2007 there were reports of foster children kept in unsafe or inappropriate foster homes because there was nowhere else to place them and that alleged sexual abuse victims were left in homes with their alleged attackers. That's horrible, but unfortunately it sounds familiar. It sounds familiar to the failure of this government with Serenity. I'm going to ask the Minister of Human Services the same thing our present Premier asked the minister in 2008. "You clearly have no idea what's going on inside your ministry. You failed your staff. You failed Albertans. You failed these children. Why won't you resign?"

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Human Services.

**Mr. Sabir:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. I have stated that we have failed these children for decades. Folks over there are the only ones who think it's time to step down. I think it's time to step up. That's why I came with an action plan, and we will move forward with that.

**Mr. Loewen:** Given that at that time the Premier said, quote, I think the minister has to take responsibility for not fully keeping the advocate accountable, for keeping her ministry accountable, and for keeping the children of Alberta who are in the government's care safe, end quote, and given that the Premier asked at that time, "So Albertans have no reason to have any faith in your assurances. You've lost all credibility. Why won't you resign?" to the Premier: what message does this send to Albertans if this minister is not held accountable?

**Ms Notley:** Mr. Speaker, the minister has been working diligently since taking over this file in May 2015. There have been a number of issues that he has had to deal with, and he has done them well. In addition, he has moved forward on a multiplicity of initiatives that

are helping children in care. He has moved forward on funding women's shelters, absolutely fundamental to ensuring that kids are kept more safe. He has increased funding to FCSS. He has moved forward on child poverty funding. He has . . .

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

**Mr. Loewen:** Say one thing; do another.

Given that at the time the Alberta NDP leader, who is now serving as the Government House Leader, said, quote, it is our view that she should resign immediately from her position as children's minister and that if she doesn't resign immediately, the Premier should fire her, end quote, and given that these questions are as pertinent now as they were when the Government House Leader asked them, to the Premier: what makes this situation any different?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm not going to get into a detailed comparison of the three situations, but I would commend a detailed comparison of the three situations to anyone who is interested in this matter because I will tell you that they are not remotely comparable. This minister has worked to protect children since he was first elected. He will continue to do so. We will bring in legislation in the spring to deal with the matter of child death reviews. We will continue to work on how to improve the system overall and to prevent these things in the future, and we will . . .

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

#### Government Advertising

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** In 2014 the Premier characterized ad spending of the Redford government as pre-election campaigning. She labelled Redford's 214 communications staff as a waste of taxpayers' money. In the same year the now Government House Leader on multiple occasions accused Premier Redford of excessively spending taxpayers' dollars to, quote, control the message. He passionately denounced wasting taxpayers' money on advertising the policies of the party in power. Does the Premier still agree with herself?

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, I guess I could ask the same question of the member opposite because – you know what? – while his leader was in the federal government, over 10 years they spent \$750 million on advertising. [interjections] In one year they spent \$115 million on advertising for a political plan. It's jaw dropping how much money the member opposite's government spent on political advertising, yet we spent \$4 million. I assume that their real concern is that we're not spending enough. [interjections]

**The Speaker:** Folks. Calm it down, folks, please.

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** The inability of the Premier to answer a question is jaw dropping, Mr. Speaker.

Given, Mr. Speaker, that the most corrupt Premier in the modern history of Alberta spent \$4 million over three years on self-serving partisan propaganda while the new boss is just like the old boss, actually nearly three times worse than the old boss – to date the NDP have spent \$10.5 million in half the time – and given that Albertans were disgusted by this waste of money when Redford did it and they're disgusted now, will the government do the right thing and put an end to this taxpayer-funded partisan propaganda?

**Ms Notley:** Well, Mr. Speaker, speaking of bosses, the member opposite's boss was part of a government that in one year spent \$113 million on political advertising. I believe that's – ah, let's see – 30 times more than we've spent. Thankfully, we will not be following their example.

2:30

**Mr. Fildebrandt:** More non answers from the Premier.

Mr. Speaker, the overwhelming majority of Albertans oppose the carbon tax. The NDP didn't dare put it before Albertans in the last election because they knew that they would lose. The NDP don't have the guts to put it before Albertans now in a referendum because they know that Albertans will reject it. The writing is on the wall. The Premier told Albertans that the carbon tax would help them make better choices, and in 2019 I'm sure they will. Is the Premier so incapable of convincing Albertans to support her carbon tax that the only option is to outspend Alison Redford on partisan political propaganda?

**Ms Notley:** Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite's boss was part of a government that spent \$5 million on the War of 1812. Five million dollars advertising the War of 1812. What our advertising does is that it informs Albertans about the single biggest public policy change that's been made in this province in years. It will tell them about the rebates that over two-thirds of Albertans will be receiving soon, it will tell them about the energy efficiency grants that they'll be eligible for, and it will tell them about how the plan helped to get them a pipeline.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Greenway.

#### **Dental Profession Oversight Amber Athwal**

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It has been two weeks since the Alberta Dental Association and College referred Amber Athwal's case to a hearing tribunal. The ADAC is blocking her family from knowing what happened to their daughter. Other parents are concerned about the safety of dental services for their children. Dentists have told me that they're concerned that a hearing tribunal will take years to complete. Dentists and patients are still waiting for decisions about complaints filed in 2012 or earlier. To the minister: what will this government do to ensure that the Athwals and all Albertans can learn from this tragedy to prevent similar future incidents?

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the important question. I, too, share with all Albertans in wanting to make sure that we get to the bottom of this. That's why I was so pleased, when we were announcing the dental fee review outcomes on Thursday, to stand beside the incoming president for the association and college, who said that this is why it's important that we have a fair process to make sure that everyone is held accountable and, at the end of the day, that we make sure we're doing everything we can through the college and association to make sure that Albertans are protected and that best practices are guiding the industry as we continue to move forward.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that dentists have reached out to me demanding separation of the Alberta Dental Association and College into two distinct professional and advocacy bodies and given that such separation is required for a profession to be both transparent and accountable and given that the same dentists have also requested whistle-blower protection so that they can address serious gaps in the regulation of dental professionals in Alberta, to the Minister of Health: when will Alberta's dental professionals receive the same protection, accountability, and independent advocacy as professionals in Alberta's other health professions?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. There are a number of professions which have both a college and association combined. The teachers, for example, come to mind and the nurses. There are a number of different professions where it works well together, and there are a number where they've been separated. I think that we have an opportunity as we move forward in reviewing this process and watching how it unfolds. The president of the association and college said that his college hat is the biggest, that public interest is always his number one priority. We'll be able to see that unfold through this review and determining the next steps.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the family of Amber Athwal is continuing to experience a full fallout from the tragedy and that providing care has become a full-time job for both parents and given that they are now facing a \$2,800 per month bill to rent a wheelchair-accessible vehicle to transport their daughter to much-needed medical and other support services and given that this is yet another high-profile tragedy where Albertans expect their government to be there for them, to the Minister of Human Services: why is your department letting yet another Alberta child fall through the cracks by not providing enough support when the Athwals need it most?

**The Speaker:** The Deputy Premier.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I continue to be committed to working to support the family in helping them liaise with the system and making sure that we provide opportunities for Amber to live as inclusive a life as possible as she continues to progress in her recovery. We'll continue to work side by side with the Athwal family to do everything we can to connect them with the important programs and supports that exist both through the government and through the not-for-profits in our province.

Thank you.

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

#### **Student Achievement in Mathematics**

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The 2015 OECD PISA results were released last week. Alberta is known for an excellent education system, and this is something that we are all very proud of. However, my constituents were very concerned with the declining math scores that our students were receiving. To the Minister of Education: how did Albertan students do on these tests overall?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Education.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, overall Alberta students did quite well on the PISA exams. Where we saw that we needed improvements, we've taken immediate action. In science, for example, Alberta did the second best in the world, behind Singapore, and in reading we were third best in the world. We know that we will not rest, however, to ensure that we've learned from where we've made these marked improvements but also learn from where we can make specific gains in a place like mathematics.

**The Speaker:** First supplemental.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Parents in my riding of Edmonton-South West view the education of their children as a top priority, and we are very concerned about the math results that are going on. To the same minister: what is the ministry actually doing to address parental concerns and improve achievement in math?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Eggen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Three points. We are reinstating the written portion of the diploma exam for 30-1 and 30-2. This was removed as a cost-saving measure by the previous government, and we believe that it should be there. We also are adding a no-calculator portion to the grade 9 PAT exam, which I already did for the grade 6 PAT exam. Finally, perhaps most interestingly, we are introducing a bursary program for current and preservice teachers to help cover tuition costs to help strengthen their knowledge and confidence in teaching mathematics in our schools.

**The Speaker:** Second supplemental.

**Mr. Dang:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that math and math skills are increasingly important in this technology-driven world, to the same minister again: how does the ongoing education review address concerns around math?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Mr. Eggen:** Yes. Well, thank you very much. Further to the announcement last week we are looking to develop new curriculum, of course, in all subject areas but specifically for mathematics and looking for the continuity of instruction, let's say, with fractions or linear equations right through the different grade levels. So you'll see continuity there, and people can move from one strength to another. Of course, we built a very large public survey and feedback on our curriculum in general, the largest of its kind in the history of Alberta Education. We have our working groups. We have people consulting in the consortium with public meetings. I believe we've built a strong case to build a strong curriculum.

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

#### **FireSmart Community Grant Program**

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, when I toured northern Alberta this year, one thing I noticed was that very few communities had fully implemented FireSmart. Winter is here, the muskeg is frozen, people are unemployed and need jobs. It is time to get out there and cut trees and brush. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: what have you done to implement FireSmart, and can you name specifically in which communities?

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Municipal Affairs.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, the devastating Fort McMurray fire reminded us of the importance of continuing to invest in programs that help reduce the risk of wildfire to Albertans, like the FireSmart program. Certainly, Wood Buffalo has received \$465,000 in grants to work on things like clearing out vegetation that can fuel fires and education for the community. We'll be working with communities to help with more vegetation management and educational programming. We've allotted more than \$1 million to the Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta to allocate for just such programs.

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, whereas sources indicate that the beast is sleeping, as in that the Horse River wildfire has gone underground

into the peat of the muskeg, and will surface again at the right time, Minister: with so many people unemployed, what's being done to ensure Fort McMurray and other vulnerable communities across Alberta have FireSmart completed in time for the spring 2017 fire season? Not just Fort McMurray, all of the communities.

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The safety and well-being of our communities and our forests are of utmost importance. FireSmart has made significant progress to reduce the fire risk in communities across Alberta. Many recommendations of Flat Top, including additional resources like more firefighters, are well under way. Again, we will continue to work with communities. We will continue to provide funding for FireSmart programs. The opposition's reckless cuts would have meant fewer resources for communities to prepare for wildfires and fewer resources to fight these fires when they happen.

**2:40**

**Mr. Panda:** Mr. Speaker, given that the holdouts of forest management agreements like Tolko and Al-Pac are partners in making sure that FireSmart is implemented and given that the forest management agreements require 10-year plans signed off by the minister, to the minister: how many forest management agreements and plans are being held up, waiting for authorization to allow timber cuts and the continued implementation of FireSmart, and is the caribou management plan holding them up?

**The Speaker:** The hon. minister.

**Ms Larivee:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, due to the profuse amount of noise coming from the other side, I actually had great difficulty hearing that conversation. However, I have to stress once again that the safety and well-being of our community forests are of utmost importance, which is why we've continued to provide funding. We've allocated more than a million dollars to the Forest Resource Improvement Association of Alberta, which ensures that funds for FireSmart programs are disbursed across this program, ensuring that the government continues to work with the communities of this province to not only ensure the safety of our communities and forests but ensure those important jobs during these tough times. I'm proud of the work we do in supporting those programs.

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

#### **Members' Statements**

*(continued)*

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

#### **Sturgeon Foundation Seniors' Housing**

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. For many families in our province access to services for our seniors is one of the biggest challenges. Whether finding affordable housing, independent or supportive living options, many families are forced to look outside of their communities. This is especially true in our rural areas, where the nearest opening may be in the city.

Many communities respond to this problem with a variety of solutions, but I would like to highlight just one of the solutions found in my community. Established in 1962, the Sturgeon Foundation is governed by a board of directors composed of officials from St. Albert, Sturgeon county, Bon Accord, Gibbons,

Legal, Morinville, and Redwater. Together these are the supporting communities.

The Sturgeon Foundation is only one of the ways that these communities come together in co-operation. Currently operating at least one facility in each community, the Sturgeon Foundation is continuing to see growth. Phase 2 of the North Ridge Lodge in St. Albert began construction in November of this year.

Earlier this fall I had the opportunity to attend the Sturgeon Foundation's Better Living Fundraiser, where we were entertained by none other than former Senator Tommy Banks. This fundraiser saw widespread support from the community, and it was truly an honour to attend.

Mr. Speaker, Albertans owe a lot to our seniors. They built this province. As we look forward to returning to our communities, let us all remember that and do what we can to return the favour.

### Official Opposition Sessional Retrospective

#### Mr. Loewen:

'Twas two weeks before Christmas and all through the land,  
The NDP were passing legislation getting way out of hand.  
The Dippers were all proud of their world-saving bills,  
But Wildrose was worried about the jobs they'd kill.  
They meddled with oil sands by installing a ceiling.  
Our fragile economy, it will be left a-reeling.  
They couldn't resist twisting their electricity act.  
They had no good excuses, so they made up the facts.  
Now, messing with something you know nothing about,  
Can leave Albertans and investors with nothing but doubt,  
Not to mention the costs that surely will rise,  
Proven by an electricity price cap twice the original size.  
Now phasing out coal has Santa upset.  
Naughty children rejoicing, you surely can bet.  
Now these young 'uns who have been misbehaving,  
When they hear of no coal, they'll surely be raving.  
The joy they feel will have them hopping,  
But renewable options will be reindeer droppings.  
Now the reindeer had heard what the caribou plan did.  
Many forestry and other jobs, it surely will rid.  
The millions of dollars they have spent on their cousins,  
And killing hundreds of wolves, just to save a few dozen.  
Now there were some things upon which we could agree:  
Ukrainian day, economy, health, fires, and ABCs.  
Now the elves are feeling all smug, of course,  
As minimum wage the NDP did endorse.  
But Bill 6 was tough for Santa's reindeer farm,  
Because it will cost him a leg and an arm.  
Elections financing act or re-elect the government law,  
Has opposition parties feeling like they've been rubbed raw.  
Nine million bucks wasted to sell carbon tax spent,  
So no one was surprised when they were found in contempt.  
Now, a big part of the problem is the people they've hired.  
A history of anti-oil activism should have them fired.  
So in order to bring sanity to this great place,  
We need to solve the problems, right from the base.  
So off, Premier, off, ministers, off, backbenchers, too.  
Goodbye, radicals like Tzaporah, Karen, and Topp's B.C crew.  
You're no help to Albertans because of the things you do.  
Pipelines might be built, but no thanks to you.  
[interjections]

**The Speaker:** Order, please.

### Notices of Motions

**The Speaker:** The Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I have two notices of motions. The first motion that I will make is as follows.

Be it resolved that the following changes to

- (a) the Standing Committee on Families and Communities be approved: that MLA Miller replace MLA McPherson, that MLA Aheer replace MLA Smith, that MLA Aheer replace MLA Smith as deputy chair;
- (b) the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future be approved: that MLA van Dijken replace MLA Hunter, that MLA van Dijken replace MLA Schneider as deputy chair, that MLA Smith replace MLA Panda, that MLA Drysdale replace MLA Jansen;
- (c) the Standing Committee on Legislative Offices be approved: that MLA Drever replace MLA Jabbour, that MLA Pitt replace MLA Cooper;
- (d) the Standing Committee on Public Accounts be approved: that MLA Cyr replace MLA Fildebrandt as chair, that MLA Panda replace MLA Hunter;
- (e) the Special Standing Committee on Members' Services be approved: that MLA Orr replace MLA Fildebrandt;
- (f) the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship be approved: that MLA Hunter replace MLA Aheer, that MLA Hunter replace MLA Loewen as deputy chair.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to give oral notice of a motion for the next Order Paper, the motion being as follows.

Be it resolved that:

- (1) a special select Ombudsman and Public Interest Commissioner search committee of the Legislative Assembly be appointed, consisting of the following members, namely MLA Shepherd as chair, MLA Home, MLA Littlewood, MLA Malkinson as deputy chair, MLA Kleinsteuber, MLA Woollard, MLA Ellis, MLA Pitt, and MLA van Dijken for the purpose of inviting applications for the position of Ombudsman and Public Interest Commissioner and to recommend to the Assembly the applicant it considers most suitable to this position;
- (2) reasonable disbursements by the committee for advertising, staff assistance, equipment and supplies, rent, travel, and other expenditures necessary for the effective conduct of its responsibilities shall be paid subject to the approval of the chair;
- (3) in carrying out its responsibilities, the committee may with the concurrence of the head of the department utilize the services of members of the public service employed in that department and of the staff employed by the Assembly;
- (4) the committee may without leave of the Assembly sit during a period when the Assembly is adjourned or prorogued;
- (5) when its work has been completed, the committee shall report to the Assembly if it is sitting. During a period when the Assembly is adjourned or prorogued, the committee may release its report by depositing a copy with the Clerk and forwarding a copy to each member of the Assembly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Government House Leader, is this the time for your requesting a notice of motion on a question of privilege?

**Mr. Mason:** Sorry? Points of order and points of privilege now? What do you wish, Mr. Speaker?

2:50

**The Speaker:** Government House Leader, did I understand correctly that you rose on a point of privilege during the discussion earlier today?

**Mr. Mason:** Yes, I did.

**The Speaker:** Would you like to do a notice of motion with respect to that matter now, that you will be dealing with it at the end of the Routine?

**Mr. Mason:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I would like to do that. How much information do you require?

**The Speaker:** Just the notice of motion that you will be speaking to a point of privilege, as I understand it, at the end of the Routine.

**Mr. Mason:** Yes.

**The Speaker:** Is that for the record clear enough? Yes?

I'm being asked, hon. member, the substance of the question, the point of order.

**Mr. Mason:** Three points of order, one point of privilege.

**The Speaker:** Hon. Government House Leader, the substance of the point of privilege.

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, the point of privilege is directed against the Member for Calgary-Elbow and his allegations that the negligence of the Minister of Human Services resulted in a murderer walking free. I believe that that transgresses the privilege of the House and of that member.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

### Introduction of Bills

#### Bill 210

#### Protection of Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2016

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Stier:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce a bill being the Protection of Property Rights Statutes Amendment Act, 2016.

I'd like to begin by thanking Parliamentary Counsel for their assistance with this bill. It wouldn't have been possible without them.

This bill is a culmination of years of advocacy dating back to 2009, when the Alberta Land Stewardship Act was introduced. The legislation limited property rights without notice or adequate compensation. Bill 210 proposes to correct this by amending the Alberta Land Stewardship Act and the Responsible Energy Development Act to ensure that Albertans will once again have the right to a fair hearing if their rights are affected and have recourse through the courts when their lands or interests are affected by a regional plan.

I look forward to discussing this bill with my colleagues in the House, Mr. Speaker, and ultimately winning their support for this important piece of legislation.

[Motion carried; Bill 210 read a first time]

#### Bill 212

#### Employment Standards Code (Volunteer Firefighter Protection) Amendment Act, 2016

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod on behalf of the hon. Member for Highwood.

**Mr. Stier:** Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Unfortunately, the hon. Member for Highwood is currently suffering a medical setback, but I'm honoured to rise on his behalf today to request leave to introduce a bill being Employment Standards Code (Volunteer Firefighter Protection) Amendment Act, 2016.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to begin by thanking Parliamentary Counsel again because without their assistance this bill would not have been possible.

I was surprised and disappointed, actually, today to discover that volunteer firefighters can lose their jobs for responding to emergencies. It's my hope that this bill will close that loophole and prevent anyone who volunteers their time and energy to protecting their communities from having to worry about whether or not they will have a job to come back to.

I look forward to discussing this bill with my colleagues in the House and ultimately winning their support for this important piece of legislation. Thank you.

[Motion carried; Bill 212 read a first time]

### Tabling Returns and Reports

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Yes. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite number of copies of a peer-reviewed journal article which I expect to refer to in debate of a motion this afternoon.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table five copies of a report submitted on February 4, 2015, by the Child Intervention Implementation Oversight Committee, which was formed to guide action on Human Services' five-point plan to improve outcomes for children and ensure action on priorities and recommendations for improving the child intervention system. I referred to this report in my question earlier today.

**Mr. Schneider:** Mr. Speaker, I have the requisite number of copies of seven articles and letters from producers that refute the statements that the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry made last week when I asked him about agribusiness and the impending carbon tax legislation. Unlike the government, the Chicken Producers did an economic analysis of how the carbon tax will affect their bottom line.

**The Speaker:** The Member for Calgary-West.

**Mr. Ellis:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies of the request for a private member's bill that I referred to in my question earlier to make it the lawful responsibility of adults to notify police if they are aware of a child in need of intervention through the following amendments to the Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act.

Thank you.

**The Speaker:** I believe we have two points of order. The Government House Leader.

### Point of Order Interrupting a Member

**Mr. Mason:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. All of my points had to do with the disorder created in the House today by various opposition members who were loudly interfering with the answers to questions



that they themselves had asked of the Minister of Human Services. I would ask that in future this disorder restrained and ended. It doesn't fit the dignity of the House for members to ask questions and then shout so loudly that they cannot hear the answers.

**Mr. Cooper:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to rise to speak to the point of order, which clearly isn't a point of order. There have been some very, very sensitive and passionate topics that have been discussed in the House this week, including the death of children in care, particularly the case of young Serenity. Obviously, members on this side of the Chamber feel passionately about this particular issue. I know that the Government House Leader has a track record of trying to call the House to order, but clearly that job resides in your chair.

**The Speaker:** Well, hon. members, I know that the pages get a lot of exercise when I stand up and sit down and, it seems to me, far more often than necessary. They're all very healthy people, and they don't need the kind of exercise that the other people in this room do.

However, I have from the outset reminded each of you – and I hear both sides of the House talking to me in individual meetings about your desire to exchange across the hall. Some might even call it heckling, but the requests seem to be a shared desire. My request is simply with respect to volume and, of course, at specific times the use of certain words. If I've learned anything in this House, it's context. Today and last Thursday was one of context, a very sensitive matter that I think virtually everyone in this House is concerned with, but short of sending a number of people to take a turn outside of this Chamber, I think that the responsibility for the volume and for the substance of your words rests with each of you individually. Noted, and I'm sure that as we all take this long-overdue break, you'll remember those words and begin to practise this as we come back in the future.

Does that cover two points of order?

3:00

**Mr. Mason:** That was all three of my points of order, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Okay. Was there a point of privilege that you were making as well?

**Mr. Mason:** Yes.

**The Speaker:** I'll seek guidance from the table. I have a point of privilege from last week that I would like to rule on.

**Mr. Mason:** Go ahead. I'm waiting for my notes. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** You're not ready to make your point of privilege now, hon. member?

**Mr. Mason:** I can, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Well, I'm being suggested that we should do it that way.

The Government House Leader.

### Privilege

#### Obstructing a Member in Performance of Duty

**Mr. Mason:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I'm happy to raise this matter of the House. I'm citing *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, 2009, and I want to refer you to page 108. It says:

Members of Parliament, by the nature of their office and the variety of work they are called upon to perform, come into contact with a wide range of individuals and groups. Members

can, therefore, be subject to all manner of interference, obstruction and influences. *Maingot* states:

Members are entitled to go about their parliamentary business undisturbed. The assaulting, menacing, or insulting of any Member on the floor of the House or while he is coming or going to or from the House, or on account of his behaviour during a proceeding in Parliament, is a violation of the rights of Parliament. Any form of intimidation . . . of a person for or on account of his behaviour during a proceeding in Parliament could amount to contempt.

O'Brien and Bosc state that members should be free to perform their duties free from intimidation. Today, Mr. Speaker, in question period the Member for Calgary-Elbow made a comment, a very offensive comment, which could impact the ability of members and specifically the Minister of Human Services to dispose of their duties. The member made a comment that the minister's negligence had allowed a murderer to walk free or was allowing a murderer to walk free. It is completely inappropriate for members to make such allegations in this Assembly. I would suggest, first of all, that the use of a murderer walking free presupposes the decision of an investigation and a court proceeding that has not yet taken place and could therefore have impacted people outside this House.

In particular, I am concerned about the member's reference to the minister and the impact that such a statement made in the public could have on the minister and his ability to conduct his business. If, in fact, the public believes this nonsense that is spewing from the Member for Calgary-Elbow, that his negligence allowed a murderer to walk free, then that in fact places that minister in a very, very difficult position and may in fact threaten his very safety, Mr. Speaker. There's an ongoing RCMP investigation. My understanding is that no charges have been laid at this point, and the investigation is very much alive. It is inappropriate and wrong to assume which charges may be laid and, in particular, to state that a murder has occurred and that it was directly the fault of a member in this Chamber.

Members of the Assembly are expected to be well informed of the matters of which they speak. Comments such as these could impact or influence the RCMP's ongoing investigation, including impacting witness statements or later in the trial, if there is one, jury decision-making or test bias, Mr. Speaker. It is completely offensive and inappropriate as members opposite ramp up the rhetoric in this place, each trying to outdo the other in making wild accusations and grossly exaggerating the situation and pointing the blame at one person for their own political benefit. It's unacceptable, and the statements of the member, in my view, represent a direct interference in the ability of members on this side of the House to do their job and I believe must be treated as a contempt of Parliament and a matter of privilege.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**Mr. Clark:** Mr. Speaker, I will ask for your indulgence in deferring my detailed arguments until tomorrow on this matter.

I will just say today here that it does surprise me that the Government House Leader feels that a single MLA from not even a recognized party in this House . . .

**The Speaker:** Could I ask you to sit a moment, please? I'd like to consult with the table officer.

Hon. member, you may recall a point of privilege that was dealt with last week, and at that time the Government House Leader was asked the question as to whether or not he was prepared at that time. He did prepare. So I want to say the same thing to you that I said to him last week, that you either speak now, or you speak your argument tomorrow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will defer until tomorrow. Thank you.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The House leader of the Official Opposition.

**Mr. Cooper:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Without the benefit of the Blues and passions being high, I think it would be advantageous if I could also defer till tomorrow, but I would like to provide comment then.

**The Speaker:** Any other members? The House leader for the third party.

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you, sir. We would also like to defer until tomorrow.

**Mr. Bilous:** Mr. Speaker, I, too, would choose to defer until tomorrow.

**The Speaker:** I'm advised that the government has spoken in terms of the Government House Leader. I don't believe I have the prerogative of recognizing another representative of the government.

I'm sorry. What did you say, Government House Leader?

**Mr. Mason:** I'm sorry, Mr. Speaker. It's my understanding that you do in fact have that discretion although you may have been advised not to use it.

**The Speaker:** Well, I will go back and do further study, and at the time that I deal with the point of privilege, I will indicate whether or not, in fact, it is admissible for another member of government to speak.

Are there any other matters today, any other points of order? We've got a point of privilege.

### Privilege Misleading the House

**The Speaker:** I would now like to deal with the point of privilege from last week. I am prepared to rule on the purported question of privilege raised last Thursday, December 8. I'd like to start by stating that I concur with all my colleagues in this Assembly who have commented on the tragic and horrible nature of this young child. We, I believe, all need to remember that phrase that we have heard, that it takes a village to raise a child.

With respect to the formalities of the purported question of privilege my office received notice from the Official Opposition House Leader on December 8, 2016, at 11:16 a.m. of his intention to raise a question of privilege under Standing Order 15; therefore, the member satisfied the requirement for two hours' notice as per Standing Order 15(2).

The debate on this matter occurred on December 8. The arguments can be found on pages 2486 to 2489 of *Hansard* on that day. In his arguments last Thursday the Official Opposition House Leader alleged that on a number of occasions from November 22 until December 6, 2016, the Premier, the Minister of Human Services, the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General, and the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation made statements that deliberately misled the Assembly with respect to the tragic death of the child in care.

3:10

He stated in his arguments that the government led the Assembly to believe that it had provided all information vital to the investigation to the RCMP when he knew it had not been done so. He stated

on page 2487 of Thursday's *Hansard* that the government "didn't ensure that the RCMP had the information until . . . December 6."

Both the Minister of Human Services and the Government House Leader made statements on Thursday outlining the timing of events concerning the communication of that information to the RCMP. The details of the events can be found in the December 8 edition of *Alberta Hansard*. Therefore, I will not go into these details except to say that both the Minister of Human Services and the Government House Leader indicated that the Ministry of Human Services sent the case file to the RCMP on November 22. In the words of the Minister of Human Services as found on page 2478 of the December *Hansard*:

Human Services received a written request on November 18. A few days later, on November 22, we provided the file, the password, a secure file. There were some issues. As of yesterday the RCMP has confirmed that they have received the needed material.

Hon. members, this is the first time during the 20th Legislature that a purported question of privilege concerning an attempt to deliberately mislead the Assembly has been raised. This type of question of privilege, which purports that members made a statement to deliberately mislead the Assembly, is treated as a contempt of the Assembly. *Erskine May's Treatise on The Law, Privileges, Proceedings and Usage of Parliament*, 24th edition, on page 254 states with respect to the United Kingdom: "The Commons may treat the making of a deliberately misleading statement as a contempt."

The second aspect to be noted is that there is a test for deliberately misleading the Assembly. The test was referenced last Thursday in the arguments made by the hon. Government House Leader, and it is found in *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, on page 86. It's a three-part test, first articulated by the former Clerk of the New Zealand House of Assembly, David McGee. It can be found in the third edition of his book, *Parliamentary Practice in New Zealand*, at pages 653 to 654. The three parts of the test are: firstly, "it must be proven that the statement was misleading"; secondly, "it must be established that the Member making the statement knew at the time that the statement was incorrect"; finally, "that in making the statement, the Member intended to mislead the House."

In the words of the former Speaker Kowalski of this Assembly, which are found on page 1367 of *Hansard* from November 24, 2011, "Deliberately misleading the Assembly is an extremely serious allegation, which seldom satisfies the test for constituting a prima facie [case] of privilege."

Similarly, in his November 20, 2014, ruling with respect to meeting the test of deliberately misleading the Assembly, Speaker Zwodzesky quoted a 2002 ruling by former Ontario Speaker Carr. Those comments can be found on page 88 of *Hansard* for that day. The ruling by Speaker Carr summarizes the issues surrounding allegations of meeting the test of deliberately misleading the Assembly. This ruling also explains the role of the Speaker in adjudicating such purported questions of privilege.

On June 17, 2002, at page 996 of the Ontario *Hansard*, Speaker Carr said:

The threshold for finding a prima facie case of contempt against a member of the Legislature on the basis of deliberately misleading the House is . . . set quite high and is very uncommon. It must involve a proved finding of an overt attempt to intentionally mislead the Legislature. In the absence of an admission from the Member accused of the conduct, or of tangible confirmation of the conduct, independently proved, a Speaker must assume that no honourable Members would engage in such behaviour or that, at most, inconsistent statements were the result of inadvertence or honest mistake.

Hon. members, in the matter that our Assembly has before it, I must apply the test. The question is whether the statements made by the Premier, the Minister of Human Services, the Minister of Justice and Solicitor General, and the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation were in fact deliberately misleading. I have reviewed the statements that the government made in this Assembly from November 22 to December 6 with respect to this issue. Hon. members, I can find nothing in these statements to indicate that the minister did not provide the file to the RCMP on November 22, 2016, and conclude that the ministers in question did not deliberately mislead the Assembly. There is no prima facie question of privilege here. This concludes the matter.

Orders of the Day. The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Yes. Before that, I would like to seek unanimous consent to waive Standing Order 8(1) such that Motion 511 be called at the beginning of Orders of the Day and that following the conclusion of 511 Government Bills and Orders be called.

[Unanimous consent granted]

## Orders of the Day

### Motions Other than Government Motions

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

#### Downstream Water Security

511. Mr. Westhead moved:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to increase its efforts to conserve and manage public lands in Alberta's headwater regions to optimize downstream water security for future generations of Albertans.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to move Motion 511. Before I begin, I'd like to start by thanking everyone who has written to my office expressing their support for the motion and those who helped me craft it. I'd also like to thank the members of this Assembly for granting unanimous consent to discuss this very important issue.

Mr. Speaker, it is a true honour to be discussing the topic of water here in the Legislature again today. Previously in this Chamber, I described water as a common denominator. The United Nations has declared that clean drinking water "is indispensable for leading a life in human dignity . . . [and] is a prerequisite for the realization of other human rights."

Mr. Speaker, here in Alberta most people would say that our water comes from rivers originating in the majestic Rocky Mountains, but, more accurately, as author and naturalist Kevin Van Tighem points out, water doesn't come from the river; it comes to the river, which is an important distinction that the motion we have before us is predicated on. That is, a river is a product of its watershed. It is the landscape that produces the water, which in turn determines water quantity, quality, and its rate of discharge. Therefore, the way we manage our public lands has a direct relationship to Alberta's water security.

The eastern slopes of our province are where nature lives and also where the water we all rely on begins its journey. Indeed, the gravel-bed river is the ecological centre of nature, and its resilience relies on the degree to which this ecosystem remains intact. Members can refer to the research paper that I tabled earlier today on this topic for more information on the importance of gravel-bed rivers.

One of the world-leading experts on water security is Bob Sandford, a constituent of Banff-Cochrane. Mr. Sandford is the EPCOR chair for water and climate security at the United Nations

University Institute for Water, Environment and Health. For many years Mr. Sandford has clearly and unequivocally articulated that in order to effectively respond to a changing climate, we must take the domain of water management seriously; that is, climate change mitigation is about carbon, but climate change adaptation is about water, and therefore we must follow the water. When I spoke to Mr. Sandford about this motion, he also suggested that not only does the way we manage and conserve public lands relate to water security; it also relates to climate stability.

3:20

Our opposition colleagues across the aisle remain skeptical about the scientific consensus of anthropogenic climate change, but there is a significant cost if we were to accept the Wildrose's do-nothing approach. You see, Mr. Speaker, water and climate are reflections of one another. Management of one of these aspects effectively means we are managing the others. The energetic processes involving climate are intimately coupled with the water cycle. A case in point is the way in which our glaciers act as a thermostat for North America.

Alberta is fortunate to have some of the most significant headwaters in western Canada, with many of those located in Banff-Cochrane. This presents Alberta with an unparalleled opportunity to demonstrate leadership not only in taking action to confront climate change but also in terms of following land-use management best practices. These crucial watersheds also represent a massive responsibility that we owe to future generations, who will judge us by the decisions we make today to ensure their water supply is secure in the future.

During my consultation on this motion I had the opportunity to meet with Dr. John Pomeroy, who conducts his research in Kananaskis Country. Dr. Pomeroy is the Canada research chair in water resources and climate change, professor of geography, and director of the Centre for Hydrology at the University of Saskatchewan. The basis of Dr. Pomeroy's research is that alpine catchments receive and produce a disproportionately large fraction of global precipitation and runoff. Given that snow and ice dominate the behaviour of alpine hydrology, these indicators are especially sensitive to climate warming. The significance of his research is based on the understanding that the sensitivity of alpine hydrology to changing high-elevation climate is of disproportionate importance to downstream water resources.

Indeed, Dr. Pomeroy has demonstrated that the ongoing climate change in mountain climates has resulted in shorter snow cover duration, earlier spring hydrographs, greater rainfall as a fraction of total precipitation, glacier volume decline, ground thaw, and woody vegetation increase in many alpine catchments, with some alpine catchments contributing to a higher frequency of floods and/or droughts. A conclusion that can be drawn here is that a concerted global effort is needed to address how changing high-mountain hydrological processes will mediate the influence of atmospheric change in alpine catchments. Furthermore, mountain streamflow is shifting in timing and magnitude due to complex interactions of climate change with hydrological processes governed by vegetation, geology, and topography.

A valued partner in the stewardship of Alberta's mountain ecosystems is the nonprofit organization Yukon to Yellowstone, with its headquarters located in Canmore. Y2Y does this work in part because they know that Alberta's mountain headwaters provide water for millions of people, deliver important natural services such as flood and drought control, provide critical habitat for wildlife, and offer abundant recreation opportunities. Y2Y points out that while some of our headwaters and surrounding habitat are protected, many are not. Y2Y founder Harvey Locke and Alberta

program director Stephen Legault would like to see the Alberta government increase its efforts to keep our mountain watersheds healthy and intact.

Mr. Speaker, as the world experiences and prepares for the effects of a changing climate, it is also critical for our continued economic prosperity that we ensure that Alberta's supply of freshwater can meet our future demands. To illustrate the importance of this in a global context, I'd like to once again turn to the work of Mr. Bob Sandford, who points out that the primary response to climate change has been to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Of course, while this is necessary, it is also inadequate by itself. In concert with reductions in greenhouse gas emissions we must also make efforts to adapt to the current and anticipated effects of climate change as it relates to water.

Mr. Sandford goes on to describe that the convergence of trends relating to both global food shortages and water scarcity will have implications for Alberta's economy. Climate change impacts can extend rapidly far beyond ranges of variability and can also become permanent. The term to describe hydrological patterns in relation to geography is known as stationarity. The lesson for Alberta in all of this, Mr. Sandford proposes, is that "we should take neither water demand nor hydrological stationarity for granted." In the future the favouring of virtual water exchanges in the form of food exports could greatly advantage Alberta's agricultural sector but – and this is the crucial point – only if we are able to address issues relating to land-use practices as they relate to water. Clearly, this is an important policy matter whereby we can position Alberta to continue to be a leader in agricultural exports in addition to taking action on climate change and water security.

To do that, we must ensure that our decisions are consistent with long-term water security in order to respond to a changing climate. "What is required, however," Mr. Sandford implores, "is proactive, well-informed, and visionary political leadership." Mr. Speaker, we have the opportunity to provide that type of visionary political leadership here in the Chamber today. Climate change is real. This government has positioned itself as a leader in taking action against climate change through our climate leadership plan. That is something to be proud of, but there is more that we can do to ensure that our province remains prosperous as our climate changes. We simply must ensure that Alberta's water future is secure. There's no question that our public lands and watersheds play a key role in determining water quantity and quality. Therefore, conserving and managing our public lands in Alberta's headwater regions with a view to optimizing downstream water security for our future is a critical and worthy pursuit.

I look forward to the debate on this motion this afternoon and urge all members to support the motion. Thank you very much.

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

**Mr. S. Anderson:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As members of this Assembly know, water security is vital to the health and well-being of Albertans and to our long-term environmental sustainability. The mission of our watershed resiliency and restoration program is to build "long-term watershed resiliency for flood and drought mitigation by improving natural watershed functions and engaging stakeholders in the conservation, restoration, enhancement, and stewardship of priority watersheds."

The grants will go towards such projects as the restoration of riparian areas, creation of wetlands, installation of rain gardens in urban locations, soil bioengineering, implementation of agricultural best management practices, and the increased use of beaver structures. This program has provided \$18.5 million in funding to 35 projects which support healthy watersheds, many of which are

located in Alberta's headwaters and help to optimize downstream water security for future generations of Albertans.

The program has supported Western Sky Land Trust's Bow and beyond initiative to meet with over 200 riparian landowners this year in the Bow River basin upstream of Calgary, which has led to 1,660 acres of riparian land being secured for conservation in the Ghost watershed; 4,565 acres are in the stage of negotiation and will be secured for conservation; and an additional 11,700 acres are being considered for conservation by riparian landowners. Over 12 kilometres of riparian lands are being restored and enhanced in the Jumpingpound Creek watershed and in the headwaters of the Oldman River basin.

Through Cows and Fish and forest research institute research we are assessing the riparian areas in the southeastern slopes, which will help us target effective land restoration and conservation in future grant rounds. Through the ALCES watershed simulation model we are identifying areas where conservation and restoration will have the best results for watershed resiliency. Further, our drinking water safety plans address risk associated with source water. Mr. Speaker, a healthy watershed is our first and, arguably, best defence against flood and drought. If appropriately managed, Alberta's natural watershed systems will help mitigate severe natural events and will provide many other ecological benefits.

Improving natural watersheds is an important part of our plan to help vulnerable communities like Calgary and others across the province adapt to a changing climate. These projects will enhance our natural environment and reduce the impact of both floods and drought. The director of water resources at the city of Calgary affirms:

The City of Calgary is pleased to hear that the province is moving ahead with additional Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program projects in the Bow and Elbow River watersheds. We are grateful for the support Calgary received in the previous round of funding, which recognizes the important role riparian areas play in the health of the rivers, streams and creeks we all depend on.

3:30

Mr. Speaker, our government is working to ensure that Albertans have confidence that amidst a changing climate our most essential water resources are protected and managed for current and future generations. I think that regardless of whether we believe in man-made climate change or not, we can't deny that the world's supply of water is dwindling. Our lakes, rivers, and aquifers are getting lower and lower, and there is extreme drought all over the world, especially in areas that didn't cause climate change, like Africa. There are areas in Africa where people have been living for thousands of years, and now because of the lack of water their families can't live there anymore. It's not sustainable. The land is like sand or ash. Nothing will grow there, and it just blows away in the wind. What this also does is cause massive climate migrations, hundreds of thousands of people who have to leave their homes because they can't survive on their traditional lands.

Mr. Speaker, we are lucky because we live in a land that has a lot of fresh water. We have an abundance right now, but we need to be careful. We need to manage our resources properly, and I think that this motion speaks to that. I am very much in favour of it. It's a balancing act when humans are dealing with our watershed issues. It's something that we need to conserve over time. It's not just about us. It's about all the species that we have, to be honest, under our care in this province and in this country.

Thank you very much for your time, and thank you to the member for his motion. I support it wholeheartedly.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Very pleased to rise in support of this motion. It's an easy motion to support. It's our lifeblood, after all. The eastern slopes provide all the water to Alberta and to the rest of the prairie provinces, in fact, and it's the source of all life and productivity, whether it's agricultural or industrial. So it's very clear that this really should be a higher priority than it has been for decades.

Peter Lougheed back in the '70s established an eastern slopes policy that actually restricted industrial and commercial activity on the eastern slopes. Somehow over time that has gradually fallen away, and we're in a state now where the designated areas for protection have not only become – what would I say? – thwarted or incompletely implemented but certainly misunderstood and certainly violated by past governments since Peter Lougheed. All manner of development has gone on now on the eastern slopes that not only threatens the quality of our water and the cost of cleaning the water, in Calgary for example, but all urban areas downstream of the mountains have to spend more and more dollars to clean the water because of not only more depositions from erosion but also from industrial and agricultural, even recreational use up there. Certainly, logging has added to the erosion and the loss of capacity to control high levels of flow or, as the hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane mentioned, control the flow for drought circumstances as well.

Dr. Brad Stelfox is a neighbour and has been an adviser to me for a decade. He has visited most environment and agriculture ministers since I got into this Legislature and has presented his ALCES model, which is recognized around the world as a wonderful visual indication of cumulative impact over many decades of development and has helped us get a sense of just how the pace of our development is threatening not only our water supplies but our industrial activities and all manner of activities that we are associating with economic development. By failing to manage the eastern slopes, we are failing to manage our economy in a very fundamental way. It's a reminder that the economy is a subset of the environment. It's not the other way around. If we don't preserve the environment, we do not have an economy, and certainly we do not have our health.

Three levels of importance to water: not only the quality, not only the quantity of water but the in-stream flow needs, the so-called adequate volume that has to be maintained in streams and rivers for life to be supported there. Fish life, plant life, animal life: all of these require a minimum in-stream flow, which is threatened every fall. With the glaciers being limited further and further as years go by, there is a real threat, especially in southern Alberta, which has been known as the desert part of Alberta in past generations. The area that early explorers felt was uninhabitable and potentially desert has been close to that, especially through the Depression. We cannot assume anything for our future, especially with the unpredictability of climate change and the extremes that we can expect in terms of rain and water loss.

Those are some of the key elements of this. It's one thing, though, to pass a motion that is motherhood; it's another thing to actually put in place clear limits to activities and zones of development and protection against development. I applaud the hon. member's efforts to highlight this yet again. In my time, 12 years in the Legislature, this is probably the fourth or fifth time that it's been highlighted. It needs now to move on to much more substantive protection measures: bills, I would argue, regulations.

Off-highway vehicles have been a big issue in the eastern slopes that continue to be a damaging factor, especially in southwestern Alberta. But I think that on up the eastern slopes it's going to be a

growing problem as we get – I think Alberta has the most off-highway vehicles per capita of anywhere in Canada if I'm not mistaken, perhaps not including the Northwest Territories. We are increasingly using off-highway vehicles for recreational use in the mountains, and it's causing very substantial impacts.

I would welcome the chance to move this forward in the next phase to some very clear guidelines, beyond what the South Saskatchewan River basin plan has done. It has made some steps towards limiting development and identifying protection areas like the park and wildland that have been established in southwestern Alberta, but I think it's clear that we have to do more in relation to better logging practices, designating trails for off-highway vehicles instead of letting people go wherever they want, wherever there's a trail, and designating recreational use, which is a tremendous possibility for our future economic development. Recreational tourism and the film industry out in the mountains have to be long-term economic drivers for us, which will have that as a side benefit, the primary benefit being, of course, protection of quality and quantity of water for all of us and indeed for recreational activities such as fishing and so on.

If any area of the province is absolutely dependent on better eastern slopes management, it's the south part of this province. We don't have a lot of water here. Most of our water is in the north. Most of our population and demands are in the south. It's very clear, from all the reports that this member has referred to and others, that we neglect this at our peril. There have been no new water licences issued since 2006. It's 10 years ago that we realized we'd reached the limit of our water capacity. Surely that's the writing on the wall that says: folks, we've gone too far too fast. Especially in southern Alberta, what has to be the primary focus of policies on the eastern slopes is water protection for the future.

With that, I'll take my seat. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

3:40

**Mr. Rodney:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to rise to speak to Motion 511 as brought forward by the Member for Banff-Cochrane. On the surface this motion seems fairly innocuous. Everyone wants to protect public lands, and water security is extremely important. I think we can all agree to that.

However, the concern of our caucus and Albertans beyond these walls is that unintended consequences are once again quite reliably rearing their ugly heads. While I expect that the member has the best intentions in mind – and I truly believe that – there are serious implications if the government starts to go down a road such as this, and that's because a motion such as this, if acted upon and turned into government policy, could have serious implications for the mining of metallurgical coal in Alberta. This is because the eight metallurgical coal projects in Alberta are primarily along the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains. I'm sure everyone in this House and beyond knows that there's a huge difference between metallurgical coal and thermal coal, at the feet of which this government lays many societal ills.

Metallurgical coal is used in steel making and is a significant export product sold around the world to economies that are growing and urbanizing at an increasingly rapid rate. Ironically enough, because metallurgical coal is needed to make steel, it's also needed to make wind turbines, which this government would so desperately like to see in every field across Alberta.

These eight metallurgical coal projects on the eastern slopes have the potential to generate between \$10 billion and \$13 billion in government revenue. Now, along with these dollars, which are obviously significant, these projects are able to directly employ

between 3,000 and 4,000 people, and there's a potential for an additional 8,000 to 12,000 indirect jobs as well. Like so many Albertans who care about both the economy and the environment at the same time, I feel that we can balance these by enforcing very strict environmental standards while also creating the jobs that Albertans so desperately need now and on an ongoing basis. Mr. Speaker, these are thousands of good, mortgage-paying jobs, and these projects often form the main source of direct and indirect employment in their respective communities.

I just wonder if the member has taken the opportunity to speak with any of the companies which mine metallurgical coal or perhaps the Coal Association of Canada to inquire about the impacts that this motion potentially has on their operations. I'm wondering this, Member: what is not currently being done that the member would like to see being done going into the future? I know that companies that work in headwater regions are already subject, as they should be, to very stringent regulations, sets of them, which govern how they're allowed to operate in these areas. By stating that the government should "increase its efforts to conserve and manage public lands," the member is clearly calling into question what is being done at this moment in time. Has the member indeed consulted with the ministry of the environment? I would have thought that it would have been within her purview to act upon this already within regulations currently set. What additional steps need to be made that are not already being made? I think we need to know that. We all want to protect the water.

Again, Alberta has very strict environmental regulations. Albertans expect that, and they have every right to, Mr. Speaker. So I am interested to know what additional actions the member is calling for and what specific problems he is looking to remedy. If there are instances of compromised water quality, Albertans already expect that the Department of Environment and Parks is doing everything that is in their power – and they have great powers – to remedy these situations already. Now, these individuals, who up until May 2015 included an individual who is now a minister of the Crown if I'm not mistaken, do great work – that's an honest, sincere compliment – and I have the deepest of confidence in their abilities, as I had confidence in their abilities when they were with the previous government, to take action when it was needed and to suggest policy and legislative changes when they were deemed necessary.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, this motion – definitely, credit where credit is due – is well intended, but the problem is that it has potential to prevent the creation of thousands of jobs in Alberta at a time when our province desperately needs them while respecting the environment with the regulations that are already in place.

Metallurgical coal, as I've said, is required around the world, especially in economies that are growing at an accelerated rate, and this motion has the potential to cut all of that off at the knees, selling a high-quality product into a market that already has an increasing level of demand. That is nonsensical in my understanding, Mr. Speaker, and when I say the word "redundant," it is not meant as an insult at all. Some would say that the motion is redundant because there is all sorts of great work that's already being done by ministry officials with the capacities that they already possess.

So for these reasons and more, Mr. Speaker, the motion falls short. I can't support it, and I encourage all other members of this Assembly to vote against it and do something different and better on a different occasion.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

**Ms McKittrick:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know that well-managed land and water systems will help our communities and industries to adapt to a changing climate where severe weather will be more common. I've had the privilege to see a lot of the world's great rivers. I've seen how destroyed and how polluted the Chao Phraya River going through Thailand has been, how the Mekong is becoming a cesspool, and how the Ganges is already polluted. I've also seen what happens to some of our great rivers in the north like the Mackenzie River and how we fought really, really hard to protect its source and all of its riverbank.

Water is one of the most important resources that we have. Alberta has some of the most significant headwaters in western Canada. Protecting those headwaters will ensure our environmental and economic prosperity well into the future. Alberta's three top industries – oil sands, agriculture, and forestry – rely on having a stable and secure source of water. If we put our water security at risk, then we are putting our most important industries at risk as well, and we just can't afford to do that.

I think that all MLAs were gifted with a book called *Living in the Shed*, authored by Billie Milholland, which details the headwaters of the North Saskatchewan River within Banff national park to its watershed up to the border with Saskatchewan. I would urge all MLAs to read the book and to discover the importance of our agricultural, forestry, and oil and gas industries along this river. The book also details the fauna and flora, the important settlers, the indigenous settlement, and trading and trapping areas that have depended on the river. I personally learned a lot about the importance of this river through this book and how important the preservation of our public land and watershed is through the research by this author. I also know how important the river is to industry and how they value the preservation of water through the action that they take in how they build the industries along the North Saskatchewan River.

Along with three other MLAs I was privileged to go down the North Saskatchewan headwaters. The trip was organized by the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance Society. We were asked to meet in Rocky Mountain House so that we could meet our hosts and guides. I was looking forward to a wonderful day, drifting down the river in a canoe powered by the river and my guide. Instead, myself and the other MLAs had a wonderful day learning to paddle, ride rapids, learn about the currents, the conservation challenge for the river and its watershed, and the work of community groups who watch out for the river.

We learned also the way the river changes year by year and the erosion of the cliffs. The MLA for Edmonton-South West and myself had a very close call with finding out how cold the river was when a tree, whose roots had been eroded from the cliff, started to fall just as we were underneath. There were some jokes among the canoes. We were wondering if someone, maybe from the opposition, had been watching our canoes and had caused the cliff to fall.

The importance of the trip was that we learned about the history and the importance of its watershed and we discovered who had been the first settlers down the river. I know that I can speak for the other MLAs who were on this trip about how impressed we were with community groups' initiatives to preserve the watershed. In particular, Clearwater county has begun a program to limit the use of OH vehicles in sensitive areas by using the sasquatch program to indicate which areas were off limits to OH vehicles. On the canoe trip we also met with Environment and Parks staff who talked about ongoing planning to manage conservation of our water source and the river watersheds.

3:50

The motion will support local counties' and municipal governments' ongoing efforts to preserve the headwater regions in their area. It will also support the work of groups like the North Saskatchewan Watershed Alliance Society, whose mandate is to ensure our water security in areas like the capital region. There is also a group called RiverWatch that works hard on our river, working with youth groups and the education sector to make sure that all young people understand the importance of the headwaters and the river and how to preserve water for our use.

Mr. Speaker, I would really like to urge all members to support this motion and to support the government in increasing its efforts to conserve and manage public lands in Alberta's headwater region to optimize downstream water security for future generations of Albertans. I think that this motion is going to go a long way toward supporting groups like the watershed alliance, RiverWatch, Clearwater county, and all of the groups that have worked really, really hard to preserve the headwaters and our rivers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to Motion 511, brought forward by the Member for Banff-Cochrane. Our government is committed to building long-term watershed resiliency for flood and drought mitigation by improving natural watershed functions and by engaging Albertans in the conservation, restoration, enhancement, and stewardship of our priority watersheds.

Water is one of the most important resources, and Alberta has some of the most significant headwaters in western Canada. Our eastern slopes watersheds are the source of water for three prairie provinces. Water flows from the Rocky Mountains eastward to the Hudson Bay, with legal agreements between our provinces for how we share this life-giving natural resource. Water connects us all.

Mr. Speaker, we depend on our eastern slopes watersheds to provide water of good quality in sufficient quantity with suitable timing of flow. Timing of flow relates to the right quantities of water arriving at the right time rather than a flood of too much or a drought of too little. Water is the common denominator for life, and timing of flow is of special concern to millions of Albertans.

When we speak of headwater conservation, we typically think of water as being in our rivers. Yet the water in our rivers actually comes from the landscape. Precipitation makes its way over and through the landscape on its way to our rivers, and this water runs off the surface or percolates through soils. It picks up traces of whatever is occurring on that landscape, delivering the effects of land use into our rivers, where they can be carried downstream to millions of Albertans depending on this water supply. Whatever we do to the landscape, we do to the water. And whatever we do to the water, we do to ourselves. This is the reason for headwater protection.

Our watersheds are under increasing pressure to serve a growing population, a population that uses more water for domestic and industrial purposes than ever before while that same population frequents our headwater landscapes with a heavier footprint than ever before, a footprint that includes both industrial and recreational uses. Most of our headwater landscapes are found on Alberta's public lands, lands heavily used by Albertans in three main industries, lands also heavily used by Albertans seeking recreational opportunities. Public lands are held in trust by the government for all Albertans. Activities on this landscape matter, particularly as they relate to watershed health. The management of human

behaviour in headwater regions has a direct connection to securing our water quality, water quantity, and timing of flow.

The government of Alberta is currently taking action to care for our public lands and, in a way, our headwater landscapes through an increased enforcement and educational presence upon public lands, an increased commitment of fire risk management, investment into campgrounds and other much-needed infrastructure on public lands, recreational trail repair and bridge-building, management of linear densities, recreational management planning, subregional land-use planning, completion of a biodiversity management framework, and ongoing oversight of forest management planning activities. Our government continues to fund the watershed resiliency and restoration program, providing \$18.5 million for 35 projects furthering healthy watersheds, many located in Alberta headwaters, to help optimize downstream water security for Albertans.

At a time when climate change threatens to disrupt our reliance on known precipitation patterns, it is especially prudent to optimize the health of our headwaters. Well-managed landscapes with healthy watershed systems will help Albertan communities adapt to climate change, in which severe weather and unexpected precipitation patterns become more common. Protecting our headwaters and ensuring our future water security is absolutely necessary for us, the residents in Calgary-Northern Hills, the ridings downstream from the eastern slopes, and, in addition to that, our economic prosperity.

Mr. Speaker, I'll be voting in favour of this motion because protecting our land and water is the right thing to do for ourselves and for future generations. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to this, and thank you to the Member for Banff-Cochrane for bringing it forward.

**The Speaker:** Thank you.

The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

**Mr. Loewen:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Motion 511 reads:

Be it resolved that the Legislative Assembly urge the government to increase its efforts to conserve and manage public lands in Alberta's headwater regions to optimize downstream water security for future generations of Albertans.

Mr. Speaker, we certainly agree that managing water is a very important issue and that we can always strive to be more effective in how we manage our water. Now, the suggestion from the Member for Banff-Cochrane that the Wildrose has a do-nothing approach on this matter couldn't be further from the truth. In fact, it is of such great importance that it is something that the Wildrose has always stood for.

I will be only too happy to outline how so; namely, our caucus's existing environment policy, which includes the following points under the heading Clean Water:

- Implement independently conducted water quality testing for all industrial projects to ensure downstream water quality is unaffected . . .
- Ensure all groundwater connected to fracking and other drilling is independently tested before and after to ensure landowners are not adversely affected
- Develop a comprehensive on and off-stream fresh water plan to ensure Alberta's agricultural producers, developers and residents have access to the clean water needed for quality of life and economic growth
- Promote improved water conservation by eliminating regulations that make it impossible for developers to implement new conservation technologies such as grey water recycling for residential or commercial use

- Design and implement a “Water Use Strategy” that ensures adequate supplies of water for food production and enables our small urban and rural communities to develop and grow as they see fit
- Ensure that all Alberta municipalities are able to provide safe and reliable drinking water to their population and that proper sewage treatment practices are followed.

Now, the crux of the motion is to urge the government to optimize downstream water security, and that’s good. In our caucus quite a few MLAs are active in the outdoors. We have a love of fishing and hunting and believe that, like us, the tens of thousands of Albertans that support fish and wildlife through the purchase of hunting and fishing licences are strong stewards of the land. This point has been reiterated by government members many times over the last 18 months as well. All of us know that protecting our headwaters is not only crucial for maintaining healthy fisheries and their ecosystems but for clean water for our communities and the businesses that rely on it.

While our position seems to closely align with what I believe the member opposite is trying to achieve with this motion, I would be remiss if I was to neglect bringing up some of our concerns. Several of my colleagues have expressed a certain unease with some of the vagueness in the language in this motion, in particular where the motion speaks to government increasing “its efforts to conserve and manage public lands in Alberta’s headwater regions.”

As I said at the outset, we can always improve the effectiveness of our efforts, but too often with this government their approach to every issue is to throw red tape and more bureaucrats at it with no regard for what it does to kill jobs in Alberta. I’ll note at the outset that, in general, current environmental regulations, the Alberta land-use framework, and even the federal Fisheries Act are world leading, and I would certainly like to hear what exactly this member finds deficient.

4:00

Now, if you look at the Alberta Water Act, it says:

- 2 The purpose of this Act is to support and promote the conservation and management of water, including the wise allocation and use of water, while recognizing
- (a) the need to manage and conserve water resources to sustain our environment and to ensure a healthy environment and high quality of life in the present and the future;
  - (b) the need for Alberta’s economic growth and prosperity;
  - (c) the need for an integrated approach and comprehensive, flexible administration and management systems based on sound planning, regulatory actions and market forces;
  - (d) the shared responsibility of all residents of Alberta for the conservation and wise use of water and their role in providing advice with respect to water management planning and decision-making;
  - (e) the importance of working co-operatively with the governments of other jurisdictions with respect to trans-boundary water management;
  - (f) the important role of comprehensive and responsive action in administering this Act.

That’s all under the Alberta Water Act.

Now, the federal Fisheries Act says this on ecologically significant areas.

- (1.1) If a person proposes to carry on any work, undertaking or activity in any ecologically significant area, the person shall, on the request of the minister – or without request in the manner and circumstances prescribed by regulations made under paragraph

3(a) – provide the Minister with any prescribed material and other information relating to the work, undertaking or activity, or to the water, place or fish habitat that is or is likely to be affected by the work, undertaking, or activity.

Now, in the same federal Fisheries Act under the powers of the minister:

(2) If, after reviewing any material or information provided under subsection (1) or (1.1) and affording the persons who provided it a reasonable opportunity to make representations, the Minister or a person designated by the Minister is of the opinion that an offence under subsection (40)(1) or (2) is being or is likely to be committed, or that the work, undertaking or activity results or is likely to result in harm to fish in an ecologically significant area, the Minister or the designated person may, by order, subject to regulations made under paragraph 3(b),

- (a) require any modifications or additions to the work, undertaking or activity or any modifications to . . . plans, specifications, procedures or schedules relating to it that the Minister or the designated person considers necessary in the circumstances, or
- (b) restrict the carrying on of the work, undertaking or activity.

The minister or designated person may also direct the closing of the work or undertaking or the ending of the activity for any period that the Minister or designated person considers necessary in the circumstances.

So we can clearly see there’s already a pretty good amount of regulation and restrictions on things happening that could affect the water in Alberta. Yes, we can always be more effective, but effectiveness means doing better for both the environment and jobs. We know how crucial access to water is for our farming and ranching communities. Any changes that may come forth from this motion cannot mean breaking existing grazing leases or water licences, and it must be said that we will fight hard against any attempt by the NDP government to take any such action.

While on the subject of business I should point out that we also have a tremendous amount of resources in our mountains, and there is no reason we can’t develop them responsibly and be responsible stewards of our headwaters. Let me be perfectly clear. I hope this motion does not mean any kind of future blanket ban on development near the headwaters, be it agriculture, forestry, or industrial. There must be a proper balance between the environment and Alberta’s economy at all times. This government is already killing jobs every time they announce a new economic policy, and I certainly hope that any policies developed from this motion are cognizant of that fact.

Our forests in particular need a responsible management plan, and that plan includes harvesting trees even if it is a select harvest in conjunction with FireSmart or even pine beetle strategies. Protecting a forest from responsible harvesting is not protecting a forest. It’s quite the opposite. The pine beetle population in B.C. exploded because it was in a protected forest. The trees got old and weak and were vulnerable to infestation. In addition, our mountain forests are vulnerable to forest fires. Old forests that are not harvested will burn eventually and will burn big, not only just as we’ve seen in that fire in Fort McMurray and in Slave Lake but in the eastern slopes near Hillcrest and the Crowsnest Pass. That happened not too long ago also. This could be devastating to many of our most vulnerable areas, and forestry should be based on proper modelling and not ideology. As we have seen in the Castle area not far from the Crowsnest Pass, we have a case of logging companies being forced out of contracts with little recourse at the whim of government.

Any future strategies should not mean turning wilderness areas into parks. We have a lot of protected park areas in our mountains.



Companies also need to have access to parts of the mountains to responsibly develop our natural resources. For instance, the Alberta export of metallurgical coal is some of the best in the world. It's essential for steel and an export that we need to responsibly develop. There are concerns that this motion is but a prelude to further actions against Alberta's already reeling coal industry. I hope that this is not the member's intent.

Development of resources and the environment can occur in concert. In fact, a business in my area is exploring new techniques to make sure that in any encroachment sensitive ecosystems are impacted in a less intrusive way. We can develop resources and maintain healthy headwaters. The place that I've discussed, I'm talking about here is the Evergreen Centre for Resource Excellence and Innovation. Here they have a part of the area just outside Grande Prairie set apart just for studying the effects of industry on stream beds, on wetlands, and on soils.

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

Are there any other members who would like to speak to Motion 511?

Seeing and hearing none, I would offer the Member for Banff-Cochrane five minutes to close debate.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In closing debate today, I'd like to thank members for their input on this critical policy issue. I'd also like to thank all of those who helped me fully appreciate the way that land-use practices affect water quantity and quality and assisted me in crafting this motion. These are people like Sharon MacDonald, Kevin Van Tighem, Bob Sandford, Dr. John Pomeroy, Harvey Locke, Stephen Legault, Gord MacMahon, Bill Motherwell, Heinz and Marilyn Unger, Fritz and Hanna Seidel, Hugh Pepper, Judy Stewart, and groups like Yukon to Yellowstone, the Nature Conservancy, the Ghost Watershed Alliance Society, the Bragg Creek Environmental Coalition, the Elbow River Watershed Partnership, and all of the others who I haven't mentioned who have made water their life's work. These individuals and groups worked tirelessly to raise awareness that the way in which we manage our landscape affects the common denominator that is water.

Just in response to some of the comments that were brought up during the debate today, people asking what kinds of things that I would like to see as a result of this motion, I can name two that are quite salient. I think one would be the protection of Westslope cutthroat trout, which are an endangered species, and there is a federal protection order for those fish. You know, some of the practices that occur in our headwaters can place those fish at risk, and I would like to make sure that we don't lose another species that's at risk here.

Another one is that there is an international goal for countries to reach 17 per cent of their land base as protected spaces. Alberta is quite short of that. We know we're doing good work, and we have a little ways to go. Looking at some past reports, I'm surprised to hear the Member for Calgary-Lougheed say that he won't support the motion, but it's not surprising to me because the action of his government, when they were in government, was described as dismal when it came to conserving protected spaces, so we've got a long way to go there. I know that the previous government really watered down their commitment to protecting spaces, but we've shown action on this file. We've protected the Castle wilderness area, and there are lots of other activities that we can make sure that we're doing to add and work towards that 17 per cent goal.

I'd like to just talk about the way that water is a prerequisite for a strong economy. I know the Member for Calgary-Mountain View pointed this out, that if we're not managing our water, we're not managing our economy. I think that's a very powerful statement, Mr. Speaker. One example that we can turn to here in Alberta that

demonstrates that quite clearly is the example of the town of Okotoks. Now, I know that the town of Okotoks has done a very good job in managing the water that they've got, but they have reached the limit of their water allocation. They're worried that their economy can't grow, so they've taken real concrete steps to address this issue. They're looking at solutions, and I applaud them in their work, but this is a situation that illustrates to us that if water is restricted, we can't grow our economy. That's a state that I don't want to see Alberta in, which is why I proposed this motion. I'm hoping that down the road, 100 years from now, someone will say: Hey, I'm glad we took water seriously because our economy and our environment are better for it today.

4:10

I also think that the Member for Calgary-Mountain View mentioned the side benefits of this motion, and one of those is tourism. Tourism is one of our top economic drivers in the province, and the type of places that tourists like to go are these protected spaces and national parks and provincial parks. This is something that we can be very proud of, Mr. Speaker, that we have these places that people from all across the world want to come to Alberta to see. Not only does this help in terms of water, but it also helps our economy in terms of tourism.

With all that said, Mr. Speaker, I think we've had some really good debate here today. I'm a little bit surprised to see that the Official Opposition isn't going to be supporting the motion, but it doesn't surprise me because the Leader of the Official Opposition when under Stephen Harper – they took away protection from hundreds of lakes and rivers across Canada. It doesn't really surprise me that they don't take water seriously, and there's certainly not any kind of advice that I want to take from them.

Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for the debate today. I look forward to voting on this.

[Motion Other than Government Motion 511 carried]

## Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

### Bill 32 Credit Union Amendment Act, 2016

**The Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills on behalf.

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of the President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance to move third reading of Bill 32, the Credit Union Amendment Act, 2016.

As noted by other hon. members in this House's previous readings, this legislation was developed using input from stakeholders of Alberta's credit union system. This government is committed to ensuring that Alberta's credit unions have the business tools necessary for their work and to encouraging them to support small and medium-sized businesses in their communities.

By modernizing aspects of our province's credit union legislation, consumer choice will be expanded for regular Albertans. Membership rules are being clarified to create more opportunity for small and medium-sized businesses to access loans, which supports job creators and encourages economic growth in our province. Increasing transparency, facilitating access to information, and enabling all shareholders to better influence the direction of credit unions will enhance governance and accountability within the credit union system.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

Finally, some technical changes are being proposed to update provisions and promote the flexibility necessary to keep the framework current. These changes have the support of Alberta's credit union system and are generally consistent with best practices and directions in other jurisdictions.

In closing, our credit unions are a vital part of Alberta's economy, and these amendments will modernize and strengthen this legislation so that these important institutions can continue to be a viable alternative for Albertans. I would ask all members of this House to support third reading of this bill.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, I will ask the hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills to close debate.

**Mr. Kleinsteuber:** I move to close debate.

[Motion carried; Bill 32 read a third time]

### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**The Deputy Chair:** I would like to call the committee to order.

#### Bill 35 Fair Elections Financing Act

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move an amendment to Bill 35, the Fair Elections Financing Act, and I have the appropriate number of copies to circulate before I speak to it.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member. Your amendment will be referred to as A9.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Let me know when you'd like me to proceed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Please go ahead.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that the bill be amended in section 43 in the proposed section 44.1 by striking out subsection (1)(c)(i) and substituting the following:

- (i) the production of an election advertising message or political advertising message in the format in which the message is to be transmitted, and

by striking out subsection (1)(d)(iv) and substituting the following:

- (iv) the transmission by a person, corporation or group, on a non-commercial basis on the Internet, of the political views of that person, corporation or group,

next, by striking out subsection (1)(g)(iv) and substituting the following:

- (iv) the transmission by a person, corporation or group, on a non-commercial basis on the Internet, of the political views of that person, corporation or group,

and by adding the following after subsection (2):

- (3) The Chief Electoral Officer may issue guidelines respecting the application of this Part and shall publish any guidelines on the Chief Electoral Officer's website.

Madam Chair, I think this amendment is helpful for clarifying what should be captured under third-party advertising by doing three things. First, the amendment would clarify that the definition of production of election advertising should be focused on expenses that are directly associated with the making of a third-party political or election advertisement. The reason I believe this is necessary is that I don't think we want to hamper organizations who perform work that is not meant to be captured. Civil society is important, public discourse is important, and these things should be protected. I also believe in making sure that we provide as much clarity as possible within our legislation, and I hope the government will agree with this approach.

Second, this amendment offers clarity to ensure that third-party advertising does not include the noncommercial transmission of political views expressed by individuals or organizations on the Internet, where there is no paid expense. We don't want to inhibit that. We know that regulating third-party advertising helps improve transparency and confidence in the electoral system. However, we do not want to restrict individuals or organizations from engaging in public discourse through the Internet where election or political advertising is not in fact taking place. Some may argue that this intent is already clear in legislation, but I would submit to the House that we should be as strong and clear as possible in our language. This amendment clarifies that we intend to capture paid advertising where the third party, an individual or organization, is engaged in an advertising buy that comes in an expense, whether the expense is in-house or from a hired individual or firm.

The third rationale, Madam Chair, is that in order to ensure that third parties understand fully the letter, spirit, and intent of the legislation, I'm proposing that we make a change to allow the Chief Electoral Officer to issue guidelines with respect to this part from time to time. This will follow the common practice in federal elections financing, which allows the Chief Electoral Officer to work with the parties and issue important guidelines from time to time with respect to the application of these new rules.

4:20

Madam Chair, these are big changes, and I believe these amendments will help to ensure the smooth transition to a more transparent system, which will provide clarity and balance to our electoral system and public discourse. I encourage all members to consider this amendment.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

Are there any members wishing to speak to amendment A9? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to rise today. Actually, I probably have a couple of questions for the hon. member through you about his amendment. I do think that this emphasizes the concern that the opposition has had the entire way through this piece of legislation. As you know, Madam Chair, the work that the government members did during the Ethics and Accountability Committee to try to bring forward amendments to be able to get their campaign expenses paid for and the party expenses paid for ultimately derailed the entire process before it could complete its work on third-party advertisement.

Now, third-party advertisement was one of the most important things that the committee was undertaking. There are some constitutional issues with that. As well, there are some clear examples across the country and across North America, for that matter, where things like PACs have had some serious issues that we have to make sure that we get right. I think the member is touching on some of

those areas that it would've been nice to have seen completed to make sure that we did get it right and that we were understanding the issue completely.

I probably will have some more to say in a second, but first I would like to ask through you, Madam Chair, to the member if the intent of this is to make sure that individuals could protect their right to free speech on concerns they have through things like social media and mechanisms that they may have on this. First, I would support that intent, and I believe the committee made it clear that they support that intent. But my concern in the way that I'm reading this right now – and I've only had it for a short time – is that this would allow a PAC to complete their \$150,000 cap on billing content of some sort for a general election, let's say, and then we allow something like a trade union or a corporation to be able to unlimitedly use social media and their resources to push that content out across the sphere, which I think would be counter-productive to what we're trying to do on third-party advertising.

If the member is trying to make sure, again, that an individual or an individual corporation could share something on Facebook or say that they agree with something, that would be freedom of speech, something that I think we should protect. But the way I'm first reading this right now, Madam Chair, is that this will leave a bit of a loophole and allow trade unions and corporations to be able to use their financial resources, et cetera, to push this out on social media.

So I'd like to get a little feedback on that, and I'll probably have a few more comments to make after that, Madam Chair.

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

**Dr. Swann:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I'm puzzled as to why that would be the interpretation. I think it's relatively clear in the amendment that what we're trying to do is ensure a level playing field for all in a non-writ period, especially, to express themselves, their views, their political views, their economic views freely. This amends the original bill in order to ensure that we include corporations and not exclude them from their rightful role in society, again limiting that role in the writ period but allowing it in the pre-writ period so that everyone is indeed on the same level playing field, social media notwithstanding.

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

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak to the proposed amendment to the Fair Elections Financing Act. Let me just begin by saying that I appreciate the Member for Calgary-Mountain View's amendment and consideration on this. This bill, as we know, aims to provide a system of transparency and fairness to the electoral system, and in that spirit I believe this amendment actually helps clarify what will be considered an advertising expense and what will not. I think, as all of us understand, the progression of the way our technology is moving has quickly surpassed the lack of movement in election financing and updating election financing, so it doesn't include things like social media and the possible considerations there.

In terms of Internet usage we need to be careful, and I agree with that. The Internet is a powerful tool for public discourse and conversation, and we need to respect that. This amendment, from what I'm reading, will make clear that third parties are able to express themselves on the Internet in a normal way, just like average Albertans do. In short, it clarifies that individuals and organizations can indeed feel free to use social media. We want to be clear that if

a third party posts something on their website, this would not be considered advertising because they did not incur advertising expenses. That is the distinguishing piece: where you incur advertising expenses.

Finally, I would like to speak on the proposed new subsection (3). This seems to be well reasoned as it allows the CEO to provide clarification when issues arise around third-party advertising. Providing these guidelines will also assist with the nature of communications as it's evolving. In general, the amendment helps and adds clarity and assurances to Albertans that we are striking a balance between transparency and encouraging a healthy participation in the democratic process. I believe that we definitely have to look at ways of making sure that the guidelines are continuously upgraded as social media moves forward but making sure that we're also protecting the capacity for organizations to engage in the same ways Albertans do.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thanks, Madam Chair. Again, I agree with the need to make sure that people can use their ability through social media and things along those lines to exercise their right to free speech, including corporations. We've only had this amendment for a short time, unfortunately, but what I'm receiving feedback on is that this amendment would provide an exemption that would allow unions and companies to circumvent the reporting rules that are currently under the EFCDA by having third-party advertisers produce content, let's say a \$100,000 video. This amendment means that the union or corporation could then promote this content via social media without accounting for the costs incurred to produce the video. This exemption should only be limited to individuals, in our view, rather than corporations and unions, who can use their particular reach and their significant financial resources to be able to reach multiple thousands of people.

Again, during committee this was discussed in great detail, the need to make sure that people can still exercise their ability over social media to free speech. The question now becomes between commercial and noncommercial. Clearly, I would think, Madam Chair, through you to the hon. members across the way, commercial would be something like TV advertisement or something along those lines, which this amendment would clearly not allow. The question then becomes: is Facebook commercial? The different social mediums that we use in our political world: are those commercial? It probably depends on whose hands they're in. If an individual at home or throughout their day is sharing their political thoughts on Facebook, that probably wouldn't be commercial. But our political organizations, when they're spending thousands of dollars promoting Facebook ads, promoting content on Facebook, unions when they're doing that, that starts to come into the realm of political advertisement. That ultimately is my concern with this amendment.

Again, I want to clear. We're all for protecting free speech. I think that's really, really important. It's one of the important issues that should have been dealt with in committee with regard to third-party advertising, stuff like this, so we could discuss it in detail and make sure we get it right.

At this point, at first glance, without a doubt it appears that this is just another attempt by the NDP government to continue to stack the deck to their advantage during the next election, and that's unfortunate.

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

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A9? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. When the hon. member from the government side was speaking, she used an interesting phrase, that I did my best to write down. I hope I got it right or close to. She said that this is about “protecting the capacity for organizations to engage.” I’m sure that the hon. member was sincere about that. Part of the problem with this legislation is that some of the organizations that are being licensed and enabled to engage are third-party organizations, and right now under this legislation there is the ability for an unlimited number of third-party organizations to spend \$150,000 each. Of course, that leads to a whole bunch of other issues about: what if those organizations know each other or are related to each other and have reason to work together on common grounds? Then, of course, you multiply that \$150,000 worth of influence by an unlimited number when the political parties are only allowed to spend \$2 million, and what you have is injecting big money into the elections.

4:30

What you have is allowing exactly the opposite of what the government wants: organizations whose donors, I’m sure, will be known, but likely not well known until after the votes are counted, to influence the results of an election. This just adds more flexibility for that to happen, and it is, as my worthy colleague from the Official Opposition said, one more way in which the government is trying to tip the scale in their favour.

Madam Chair, it’s why I won’t be supporting this. What this legislation is doing, while it tries to tip the scale in the NDP’s favour, is actually going to make it less transparent. It’s going to make it harder for Albertans to know who’s giving money to elected parties and elected people. It’s actually building a maze, a whole matrix, of inconvenience for people who want to know who’s supporting elected parties rather than keeping it simple and straight-forward.

This is, unfortunately, one more sad example of how this government is misusing their majority in this House to tip the political scales in their favour, and as such, I can’t be supporting it.

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

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A9?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[Motion on amendment A9 carried]

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

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I have an amendment that I would like to introduce, but there’s a certain volume to the amendment, so I’ll perhaps wait until the pages have had an opportunity to distribute it in full, and then I’ll discuss both the subject matter of the amendment and the actual gist of the amendment.

**Mr. McIver:** Does it include pictures?

**Dr. Starke:** No, sadly, it does not include pictures.

**Mr. McIver:** Crafts?

**Dr. Starke:** No crafts either, to answer the question of the interim leader.

Madam Chair, the amendment, which is now being distributed, is somewhat voluminous, as you note. It’s four pages long, and that’s not typical for an amendment, but in this case an amendment of that length is required . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, if you could just stop for two seconds to make sure we have the appropriate . . .

Hon. member, please go ahead.

**Dr. Starke:** We’re good?

**The Deputy Chair:** Yeah. You’re good. Thank you.

**Dr. Starke:** Thank you.

Madam Chair, this amendment is an attempt to correct what I felt was one of the most egregious parts of the bill. I mentioned it in the debate on second reading, and I mention it again here now. During the course of our committee’s discussion – and, specifically, most of this discussion happened on September 9 – the government members on the committee put forward the notion that the state should become involved with the process of how political parties decide who their candidates are. That is something that the state has never become involved with before.

While some may view the placing of both contribution limits and spending limits on nomination contestants as being a small step or a small entry into the overall process of choosing political nominees that represent political parties in our system, I would suggest that it is representative of something considerably more onerous and considerably more dangerous to our democratic system. Political parties should run relatively independently of the state, and government should not become directly involved with the internal operations of political parties. That principle was, in fact, upheld in a decision which was quoted by the Chief Electoral Officer on September 9 in our committee hearings, in which he quoted from the 2007 decision of the Ontario Court of Appeal in Longley versus Canada. I’ll quote this again.

It deals with discussing the Chief Electoral Officer’s restraint from involvement in political party affairs and specifically states that any regulatory regime governing political parties must interfere as little as possible with the autonomy and internal affairs of political parties.

Now, Madam Chair, I object to this particular inclusion of nomination contestants into the EFCDA on two bases. One, on principle: I don’t think the state, the government, should be getting involved with how political parties run their internal operations. We’ve talked at length in this House about how there are different models for how political parties operate. The NDP operates on a centralized model. That is fine. The NDP has a system whereby one person is the president of 35 different constituency associations and the CFO of 36 different constituency associations. I don’t think that’s a model that I would necessarily support, but it doesn’t really matter what I think. What matters is that that is the way they choose to run their party, and they have the right to do so. I especially don’t think it is the right of the state to decide that that shouldn’t happen. If that’s how they decide to run their party, that is just fine.

But, by the same token, Madam Chair, other parties may decide to run their parties and run their nomination processes completely differently. For the state to specifically get involved with fundraising by nomination contestants and for the state to come out and say that they are going to set specific spending limits for nomination contestants opens the door to the state becoming involved in a wide variety of other parameters that are decided by political parties in terms of how they decide who their nominees are going to be. I can say that, for example, in the Progressive Conservative Party our different constituency associations all have specific

guidelines and rules that they abide by in terms of advertising requirements, in terms of a deposit that is required to be put down by a candidate in order to help defray some of the costs of running a nomination meeting, the requirements for the number of ads, and the number of signatories they need for nomination papers.

There are a wide variety of different parameters that are involved in the nomination process. To become involved in any aspect of that, to me, is a gross overreach of the state into the internal operations of a political party. Personally, I think that should send a shiver down the spine of anybody who is interested in a free and democratic society.

Now, I try to avoid, Madam Chair, wherever possible, some of the hyperbole in the description of the NDP in terms of them being so far to the left side of the political spectrum that they could be in any way equated with some of the more leftist totalitarian regimes that we have seen in the history of the world. So I'm not going to go to that extent, but I am really concerned when we see a government that sees absolutely nothing wrong with delving into nomination contests.

In fact, during debate on this issue on September 9 the hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung, who was in attendance on that day at the committee meeting, made a passionate argument as to why it is indeed the state's business and that it is indeed the state's business to get involved right from the earliest stages of the electoral process. I think that is something we should all be very, very concerned about because if they can get involved with the nomination process in terms of spending limits and in terms of donation limits, how long before other parts of the nomination process are dictated by rules from the state? I think that's a question that we should legitimately ask ourselves.

So, to begin with, on principle I don't feel that the state has any role whatsoever in terms of regulating or legislating nomination contests. That is an issue that is completely up to the political party, not up to the state, and different political parties will decide on it in different ways.

#### 4:40

Let's perhaps turn the tables on this. Before the last election many of the nominees that ran for the New Democratic Party did not face nomination contests. In fact, they were appointed or acclaimed. What if, in the next Legislature, we were to decide that, no, all candidates, all nominees should have to face a contested nomination and that acclaimed candidates would be disqualified? What if we decided to do that? I think that that would be complete overreach. I think that would be completely out of bounds, and I'd be a little upset myself because I was acclaimed for both of my nominations.

Nonetheless, the fact remains that it is a complete and total overreach on behalf of the state. The state has no business in telling political parties how they are to choose their nominees. None. Once a person becomes a nominated candidate, then the state has a right to get involved with ensuring that there is equity in the playing field between the various representatives of different political parties, but up until that point that is the sole purview of the political party, and the state should have no involvement with it.

My second objection to this is one of practicality, and that is that I asked, specifically, the Chief Electoral Officer at committee whether this is something that they currently have the resources to take care of, whether they currently have the resources within Elections Alberta to take care of the extra workload that would be required. The Chief Electoral Officer unequivocally said no. They don't do any of this right now. This is completely new. They don't have the resources to handle this right now, and it would require the hiring of additional staff. And I said: "Well, how much? You know,

how many additional staff?" His estimate was that it would include five new full-time equivalents at a cost of about \$350,000, new office space, and that it would require developing a new platform for the reporting of these expenses and also for the monitoring of these expenses.

You know, to start something that would require additional expenses at a time when we're running close to an \$11 billion budgetary deficit seems to be very counterproductive, especially when we have to ask ourselves a question: what problem are we trying to solve here? What is the burning issue that we need to bring this rather dangerous measure into our democratic system? In reality, there is no answer to that because there is no problem being solved here.

In addition to the cost, estimated by the Chief Electoral Officer at something in excess of \$350,000, the other one is a very practical consideration. If we have 87 constituencies and if each of, say, four or five political parties runs five candidates in each nomination, we could be looking at upwards of 1,300 nomination returns that require auditing, and on many occasions the nominations happen almost immediately before the dropping of the writ. In some cases the nomination even happens after the dropping of an election writ. How on earth are 1,300 forms, 1,300 returns, going to be completely audited to ensure that whatever problem some people feel seems to exist out there, that whatever problem is in fact detected by the excellent people at Elections Alberta? There would have to be a period of time set out whereby after a nomination contest is completed, the provincial election could not be held simply because of the required processing time for these 1,300 forms.

I ask the question: what would happen if in the processing of these forms it was determined that a nominee had in some way violated the rules within that are set out? Would that candidate then be disqualified? What if the form hadn't been audited until after the election and that candidate had now been elected? Would that candidate now be required to withdraw and resign the seat that they won in the election and force a by-election?

You see, these are all questions, Madam Chair, that I think are legitimate. They are all questions that very much speak to the impracticality of including nomination contestants in this bill.

The amendment I've proposed – and it's long because "nomination contestant" appears several times throughout the course of the legislation – would remove nomination contests from the purview of the Election Finances and Contributions Disclosure Act. We should be doing this if for no other reason than that it may not even be constitutional. It may not even hold up in court. In Ontario it was very clearly stated that the state should interfere as little as possible with the autonomy of political parties. This very clearly interferes with that autonomy. To pass a piece of legislation that includes clauses that may not even be constitutional I think is a dangerous thing for us to be doing.

But beyond that, even if we say, "Well, no, that is a principle we want to get into," I would urge members to pass these amendments because of the cost saving. We simply don't have an extra \$400,000 lying around to hire extra staff at the Chief Electoral Officer's.

The second issue is the practicality of it, that because of the timing of a nomination contest, generally happening shortly before a general election, there simply won't be time for the processing of some 1,300 returns or thereabouts prior to the dropping of the writ and prior, in fact, even to the election being held. There would be some requirement for a nomination period, then, sort of a cooling-off period, of maybe three to six months while all of these nomination contestant forms are audited and reviewed to ensure that none of the nomination contestants, in fact, violated the rules, and then the election could be held.

I think you'll agree, Madam Chair – and I hope members agree – that this is a gross overreach of governmental authority into the affairs of political parties. In order for our society to have a functioning democracy, we should have as little interference with the function of those parties as possible. I would encourage members on all sides of the House to support these common-sense amendments to remove nomination contests from the purview of the state.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

The amendment will be referred to as A10.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak in favour of the amendment brought forward by my colleague from the third party, and I do thank him for bringing it forward. I think he did a good job of articulating the concerns around the silliness and the gross overreach of reaching into individual political parties' nomination processes, the fact that this may not even be constitutional, and that this may not hold up in court.

I rise, actually, just to add two more points to what he spoke about, and I think he touched on them a little bit. The first is around the fact that just the very idea of this will make it harder for certain people to enter into our political process. That's something that concerns me very, very much. Something that the government members in the committee said, as you know, Madam Chair, because you were there often, was that they were concerned about making sure that people from all different walks of life inside Alberta could participate in the political process.

Most people, the large majority of people, that seek a nomination, even the large majority of people that win a nomination, are not fortunate enough to be able to come to this Assembly here, but they still have a tremendous amount of value to our political system. To put your name forward on a ballot for any political party in any constituency takes a tremendous amount of courage, and it is absolutely essential to our process, so that we can have an active democracy, that people are willing to put their names forward and stand up on the ballot to discuss what they believe in.

By making the process more restrictive for people to be able to seek a nomination and to receive a nomination inside a party will actually just make it harder. Fewer people will probably want to participate in certain circumstances, particularly candidates that run for and get nominations for parties to run in ridings where they really often do not have a significant opportunity, where their parties traditionally have gotten a low percentage of the vote, and they're truly just running to be able to make sure that they can voice the views of the party.

The last thing I want to bring up is the taxpayer, who seems to have been forgotten in this process. As you know, Madam Chair, the governing party often forgets the taxpayer, which is greatly disappointing. I know it's disappointing to my constituents and many of the constituents that belong to the members on this side of the House.

4:50

The fact is this. During committee not one example was provided by the government members on why this was needed, not one example of a situation that took place in the past or any sort of situation that would justify why this was needed. When asked – and the hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster discussed this briefly – during that committee about this, the Chief Electoral Officer made it clear that this will cost the taxpayer a lot of money, significant,

significant increases that will have to continue not just for one year, though there will be some capital upgrades required to computer systems and that type of stuff to track it, but it will be an increased cost to staffing and an increased cost to their budget.

Now, from sitting on the Legislative Offices Committee, I could tell you that we're already seeing and hearing from the Chief Electoral Officer that as a result of this bill there will be drastic, drastic increases of 12 per cent to 25 per cent or more to that budget because of this bill. This is one section of the bill, as the Member for Calgary-North West spoke about passionately in committee, that is not needed, and there was no example at all provided to justify taking taxpayer dollars to pay for this.

This will not stop one thing that the government has presented that needs to be stopped. There is no problem to be solved. All it will do is make it harder for certain people to be able to participate in the political process, which is a shame and something that these members say that they were concerned about. It will cost the taxpayers more money, and it will not prevent anything except for making it harder for parties that use constituency associations and a more detailed nomination process, which I know that you know, Madam Chair, as a general rule the governing party really doesn't do. They just appoint their candidates. I don't know if it's because nobody wants to run for them or what the situation is. You may know. I don't know.

The fact is that this will make things harder for people that participate in the process, and again, Madam Chair, it's sad. It's just another example of this party across the way trying to stack the deck in their favour, as was passionately pointed out by the Member for Calgary-North West during committee. I think we should stand and support what she said and vote for this amendment.

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

The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I, too, stand in support of this amendment. You know what? There are a lot of things we know about this. We're about as sure as you can be without actually testing it in court that this won't stand up to a Charter challenge. Government members particularly should be worried about this because with all this paperwork in the middle of a nomination it would make it almost impossible – almost impossible – for people to become accidental MLAs in an accidental government. Maybe not impossible, but it'll make it a lot harder for people to be accidental MLAs in an accidental government. You would think, knowing that, that members of the current government wouldn't even consider voting against this amendment because this would actually make it possible in the future for accidental MLAs to become part of an accidental government.

The other thing that I think is really important . . .

**Connolly:** So people accidentally voted for me just like they accidentally voted for you?

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, if we could just listen to the speaker, please.

**Mr. McIver:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate that.

Madam Chair, the other thing that I think will occur to . . . [interjection]

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member.

**Mr. McIver:** The member on the other side: I invite him to get on his feet at some point and actually defend why he's going to vote

for or against this rather than chirping from the sidelines constantly. But I'll try to continue despite the racket.

Madam Chair, what occurs to me when I look at this piece in the legislation – and I thank my colleague from Vermilion-Lloydminster for bringing this really important amendment up – is that the government is sticking its nose into the business, essentially, of a private club, of several private clubs called political parties. Now, I realize they're public facing, but in terms of the point of nominating people, it's figuring out members of a private club.

You know, members of the public might, if the government won't support this amendment, be looking forward to the government having the next piece of legislation deciding on whether the chess club pieces are made of plastic or metal or stone. They may be looking forward to the government passing legislation to determine what colour of soccer balls the soccer club uses and how long the sleeves are on their uniforms because that's about as much business of the government as these pieces on the nominations. They might look forward to the government deciding how long the needles can be in the quilting club and what colour and what type of thread it could be because that's about as much of the government's business as it is getting into the minutiae of a political party's nomination.

I like the fact that the government members are rolling their eyes because I think they're starting to realize just how ridiculous these sections of their legislation are, and I think they're thinking: "Wow. How did we let that get in there? This is none of our business." It's (a) none of their business, and (b) they already know that it probably won't stand up to a court challenge. So they could probably keep a lot of egg off their faces, save themselves a lot of embarrassment, and save the taxpayers a lot of money if they were to support this amendment.

On that basis, I think that there's probably room for this if the government goes ahead with this. You know, they had #trudeaueulogies. I could think of NDP government club advice or things that they could legislate for private clubs because this is very much along those same lines.

**Mr. Nixon:** Have you ever been to an NDP club meeting?

**Mr. McIver:** I have not been to an NDP meeting although I'm sure they're wonderful.

Madam Chair, particularly for the government members that want to keep it open for accidental MLAs to become part of an accidental government in the future, they should absolutely be supporting this amendment, as I shall, and I hope all members of the House do the same.

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

The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

**Cortes-Vargas:** Thank you, Madam Chair. You know, as I'm listening to this conversation, I really reflect on how we got to this point. I think all of us can agree that Albertans want transparency and accountability. They know it; we know it; everyone knows it. The way we do that is by making sure that information is accessible to Albertans, especially in the democratic process, and one of the very first ways that that starts is a nomination.

As the legislation currently sits and by keeping it as it is, we're making sure that backdoors where big money can come through are stopped. We're not getting involved in internal nomination matters. However, if you want to flip a coin to pick your nominee, you can still do that. What this includes is that nomination candidates have to register with Elections Alberta, and this goes back to my first point. Albertans want to see a transparent process for their democratic processes and their political system, and one of the ways in

which we do that is by reporting. I believe that, you know, to make claims that we're getting involved in internal party matters when we're asking for reporting and information is quite inaccurate. I think we need to continue moving forward with the bill as it is.

It was four pages, but the premise was simple: just remove that. Having read the amendment, it doesn't go with what was originally presented and the intention of the bill, and it doesn't take into account the ability to have these loopholes built into our democratic process. That's what our government is committing to closing. We are committing to Albertans that we will make sure that they have the information they need in order to understand who is making donations to nomination candidates, to leadership candidates, and we will continue doing so, Madam Chair.

Thank you.

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

I'll recognize the Member for Calgary-Mountain View and then Calgary-Elbow.

**Dr. Swann:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I, too, remember this discussion in committee and felt at the time that this was a solution in search of a problem. I don't think we've really seen the evidence that the cost of this relative to the benefits of this is really a reasonable approach. I'm quite convinced by the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster, with his very passionate and clear argument, that this a step too far, that this is a bridge too far. We have not seen this as a significant problem. It's going to cost very substantially in terms of manpower and dollars, and as far as I'm aware, no other jurisdiction is following this guideline.

5:00

Yes, indeed. After someone is nominated, after someone is running for election, we have every right to know everything about where this potential new member of the Legislature or Parliament is receiving their support, but I think it's just a step too far. And I hope the members in the government will consider this in terms of the balance between the right to know everything and the costs to the public purse and the relevance of nomination processes. In the vast majority of cases for Albertans it's simply not substantive enough to require this, what I would also echo as an overreach in terms of what is a legitimate concern about transparency and accountability. I have yet to see the evidence that it is a problem that requires this magnitude of intervention and solution.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

**Mr. Clark:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair, for the opportunity to speak in favour of this very reasonable, thoughtful amendment brought forward by the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster. Yes, I also remember the conversations we had in committee on this. I would concur with the member who brought this amendment forward that the role of the state is to govern our democracy and to disclose information relevant to the continued functioning of democracy. I think government has no place trying to control matters which clearly belong internally to parties.

I do have a concern that this may not withstand a court challenge. That will require individuals, parties, and the government to spend a tremendous amount of money on something that solves a problem we don't have. I've seen very little evidence presented, if any, from the government as to what problem this provision of the bill seeks to solve.

What I'm curious about is perhaps their fear that some of what they perceive to have happened in the past with nomination contests

will happen again. Does that mean that they feel that we're going to return to some form of one-party state in this province, and if so, do they believe that they would be the ones who would be in charge of that one-party state? I suspect they wouldn't because this doesn't impact the NDP because they rarely have party nominations. I'm not sure there were any contested nominations. Perhaps there were some in the provincial NDP in the last general election, spring of 2015. Probably not.

They seem to be seeking to solve a problem that perhaps by perception, if not reality, existed in the past, but I certainly have seen very little evidence of it. Even if there were challenges in the past, those are challenges to be dealt with by the political party in question, not the government, because anyone who wins a nomination is then subject to disclosure rules. Albertans have an opportunity to know who has donated to a political candidate who seeks elected office.

Now, I want to raise another very important point as to why I believe it's very important that we all support this amendment, and that is that the NDP talks constantly about removing barriers for women, for people of colour, for indigenous peoples, for people with lower incomes, people who are underrepresented in the political process from participating in the political process.

Well, I know many people who will seek a party nomination in perhaps a contested nomination to learn about the process, to just give it a try, to see what it means to go out and campaign, to find out what it means to go door-knocking, to find out what it means to raise a bit of money, to put a platform together, to give a speech in front of a church basement full of people. They may or may not prevail in doing that, but what this does by forcing these folks to register with Elections Alberta, to file all of their paperwork is that it creates an administrative barrier that people who are underrepresented in the system already have a difficult time overcoming.

For the NDP – the NDP – of all people to be putting this in place is unconscionable. They are disadvantaging minorities, women, indigenous people, people of colour. The impact of this change is exactly what's happening. This change means the NDP are skewing politics to the elite and those who can follow processes because they already know how. That is not in the spirit of democracy. That is not in the spirit that I would expect this government to be following.

Those are things, Madam Chair, that I believe passionately in. I believe that we as legislators need to ensure that this place is truly representative and to remove barriers from people running for office, not to increase and add barriers. This adds barriers, so by supporting this amendment, we remove those barriers.

I think it's a very important and essential point that I would in all genuine sincerity ask the government private members to think very hard about, whether you believe that this, in fact, makes it easier or more difficult for people to seek office. The answer is that it makes it more difficult. That is an indisputable fact. So I would ask you, please, to really consider that. If you believe that this amendment is consistent with your values of representative democracy, I would ask you to consider supporting this amendment. Irrespective of what your party whip may say or may tell you to do or what the message on your computer screen may say, look in your heart and decide whether you think this is a good idea or not. I think you'll find it is.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

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

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A10? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

**Mr. van Dijken:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I was fortunate to be able to be part of the Ethics and Accountability Committee and to

participate in discussions all summer long with regard to the elections financing act. I remember this meeting in particular very clearly based on the fact that technology had allowed me to participate in this meeting from a distance while I was harvesting my crops. I was in the combine, and the GPS was allowing me to participate in a committee meeting while harvesting my crops.

I find it interesting that the NDP are delving deep into political party business here. I do understand that there is a need for transparency and accountability within our electoral system. We have processes in place that once you become an MLA, once you become a candidate even, you are then covered by the processes in place to address any unethical behaviour that could arise. I do believe that moving in this direction, where we create barriers that stand in the way of individuals wanting to possibly get involved in the process and wanting to test the waters, is a negative impact of this part of Bill 35.

In that meeting I remember very clearly – and I looked it up here – the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster asking the Chief Electoral Officer:

Now that, you know, this has been changed around a little bit, we have a clearer picture as to what is being proposed, and this is a completely new area of involvement for Elections Alberta. Elections Alberta previously has had no involvement whatsoever in the nomination process at the party level. Sir, if you'd be able to outline for the committee what your estimation will be of the required additional resources in your office to administer these stipulations in terms of personnel, in terms of things like support staff, IT, reporting mechanism, that sort of thing.

The Chief Electoral Officer essentially replied: on an annual basis we'd be probably looking at an additional five staff members.

**5:10**

Also, having to accommodate that, there would be capital costs of upgrading the IT and all that goes along with it and, likely, in excess of a million dollars for at least the first year trying to implement this and in continual costs for what I believe is an issue where the government, the governing members have not been able to identify that there is a problem. I believe that it would be prudent for the governing party members to identify the problem and let us know where the problem actually exists and show us that there truly is a problem that Albertans need to be concerned with. If they're not able to actually identify that, then, if there's no problem identified, there is no solution that is necessary.

I stand in agreement with the MLA for Vermilion-Lloydminster, and I will be supporting this very reasonable amendment. Thank you.

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

Are there any other hon. members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I feel I do have to rise in support of this amendment. I think it's carefully thought out. I think the reasons for it are very well stated. You know, as we look at the actual bill itself and the need for these amendments, the truth of the matter is that this is a bill that's meant to try and manipulate the system, and the amendment is an attempt to somehow try and reduce the impact, or the effect, of that. The truth of the matter is, though, that as Albertans see how this Bill 35, I think, questionably called a Fair Elections Financing Act – when they begin to discover how entirely unfair it is and how much it's intended to actually stack the system in favour of one party, Albertans will not be pleased.

This is an act that utterly disrespects democracy. It's an act that has no respect for the freedom of the people to create political parties and then put themselves forward as they feel they should.



This really is an act that seeks to dismantle the constituency associations that we have, to dismantle their structure and their function and somehow bring it under the control of a single socialist idea. The people of Alberta are not going to be in favour of this. It is disgraceful. It is legislative interference with political parties in our province. As already has been stated, the courts of Ontario have been very clear that this kind of interference is inappropriate, it is not to be supported, and it in fact could be challenged in court, not to mention the very practical issues of the fact that it won't work.

Elections Alberta is not able to accomplish these numbers of audits in the amount of time that's provided. They don't have the staff; they don't have the space. We are going to end up in a complete disaster in the next election if we go through with this.

What this bill presents is the reality that the NDP don't care about the people in Alberta. At this very moment there's not a single minister opposite even here to pay attention to any of this. [interjections]

**Mr. Westhead:** Point of order.

**Mr. Orr:** Oh. Pardon me. I'm sorry, deputy whip. My apology. I retract that. Definitely no one on the front bench.

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, if you could please sit down while we address the point of order. Please sit down while we address the point of order.

Thank you.

#### Point of Order

#### Referring to the Absence of Members

**Mr. Westhead:** Madam Chair, I just have to point out that the member has indicated the presence or absence of members. It's against parliamentary tradition, and I would ask him to cease and desist from doing that and apologize.

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

Please continue.

#### Debate Continued

**Mr. Orr:** The reality is, though, that we need this amendment because the bill, quite frankly, makes it very clear that the NDP are not democratic, that this is not a level playing field, and that it doesn't create equal opportunity. I think Albertans will not appreciate that when they are given the time to vote on it. It really is an attempt to solve a problem that doesn't exist, and I think the Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster has brought forward a very important amendment to this bill which, in fact, everybody in this House should support.

Thank you.

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

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A10? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

**Mr. McIver:** Yeah. The only, last point I'd like to make on this, Madam Chair – and thank you for recognizing me – is that this again goes back to the fact that we have supporters of our party that say that they've been told by the government that if they get seen on a list of supporters giving money or on our boards, they won't be considered for government contracts for being on their boards. This reach into the nominations is just one more way for the government officials to try to intimidate supporters of other parties, one more reason to support this amendment.

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

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A10?

Seeing none, I will put the question on the amendment.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A10 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:16 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms. Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	MacIntyre	Rodney
Barnes	McIver	Starke
Cyr	Nixon	Swann
Drysdale	Orr	van Dijken
Loewen	Panda	

Against the motion:

Babcock	Gray	McLean
Bilous	Hoffman	McPherson
Carson	Horne	Miranda
Connolly	Kazim	Payne
Coolahan	Kleinsteuber	Piquette
Cortes-Vargas	Larivee	Renaud
Dach	Littlewood	Rosendahl
Dang	Luff	Sabir
Drever	Malkinson	Shepherd
Eggen	Mason	Sigurdson
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Ganley	McKittrick	Westhead
Goehring		

Totals: For – 14 Against – 37

[Motion on amendment A10 lost]

**The Deputy Chair:** We are back on the original bill. Are there any other amendments, comments, or questions to be offered in respect of the bill? The hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I believe we're back in Committee of the Whole.

**The Deputy Chair:** We are.

**Mr. Nixon:** Excellent. I have listened to and participated in the debate over the last several days in the Legislature in regard to this important piece of legislation. I discussed in great detail, as have many of my colleagues, both the positive and the negative portions of this bill, particularly the negative effects that this legislation will have on certain other people within our political process, negative effects which I strongly believe are being purposely done by the government. We talked a lot about what is clearly the effort of the government to use this legislation to stack the deck in favour of themselves during the next election.

We talked a lot about the campaign subsidy situation and the reason that this bill should have stayed in committee. We should have got the work done, just like all the members from the NDP that were on the committee voted to do. The reason that it derailed in committee was the fact that government members continued to try to put forward motions that would get their campaign expenses paid for and the party campaign expenses paid for . . .

**An Hon. Member:** Shameful. Just shameful.

**Mr. Nixon:** . . . which was shameful. You know, that was the main reason, of course, that this process derailed, as you know, Madam Chair. You were there to witness that unfortunate behaviour.

We also talked a lot about the attack on the political structure, that the NDP are going out of their way to be able to rig the system to make it better for them and to hurt other political parties. What's so disappointing about that, Madam Chair, is that it's going to hurt volunteers, people that participate in our political process that don't make money off it, that just do it for the good of our democracy. It's going to hurt smaller parties, not the large parties. I know the government is probably hoping that it'll hurt the larger opposition parties. I can assure you that they're wrong and these parties will replace them in 2019, but there are other, smaller parties that will struggle because of this. I can't help but wonder why the government would do that.

Now, we've talked about that in great detail. We've even brought forward amendments during Committee of the Whole that were the exact amendments brought forward by members opposite during committee, one of which was brought forward by the government whip, who somehow have changed their minds since committee, from a few short weeks ago till now, similar to, as you know, Madam Chair, all the hard work that was spent over the whole summer by the government whip and other members that were on there trying to get their campaign expenses paid for, which is extremely disappointing.

Now, I have said from the very beginning that I suspected that this legislation was about stacking the deck in favour of the government. I talked about that in great detail, my concerns with this legislation and the fact that it was clearly, in my mind and in many people's minds, designed to try to give the incumbent government an advantage over the opposition in the next election. I've seen their poll numbers. I understand why, but it does not make it right to be able to do that. Now, members opposite, Madam Chair, as you know, each time that I rose in this Assembly and talked about that, would heckle back and say no. They would rise in their seats occasionally and say no to that.

I and members from all parties in this Assembly have given them opportunity after opportunity after opportunity to rise up and do the right thing and show that I'm wrong and that this is not about stacking the deck to the advantage of the government. But each time as those amendments came forward, the government got up and gave often very ridiculous arguments to try to defend their position and clearly proved over and over and over that this is not about making the election system fair, that it's not about getting big money out of politics because that has already been done and everybody is in agreement about this. At its core, this is about giving the government an advantage during the next election because the government is concerned, obviously, about their election chances.

Now, this summer they got caught with their hand in the cookie jar trying to manipulate the system to get their campaign expenses paid for by taxpayers, which was appalling.

**An Hon. Member:** I thought it was a pickle jar.

**Mr. Nixon:** Maybe it was a pickle jar, Madam Chair.

Now here we are. After days of debate inside Committee of the Whole, with many reasonable amendments being brought forward, many of which, just previously, members across the way, before they were told that they weren't allowed to support them, did support and actually, in some cases, even moved inside committee, it is clear now that they have been caught again. It is without a doubt

to anybody watching this that this is about the government and making things easier for the government, and it's extremely disappointing.

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

It makes me think about the name of this piece of legislation. Mr. Chair, welcome. I do note that there is long history in this Assembly of naming bills not for political purposes, of not using political stunts to name bills, and it is disappointing, as we look at the names of bills that we've seen so far from the government, that members that sit across from me, in their legislation, over and over and over use the act, the name of the bill for political purposes.

It's extremely disappointing, you know: Bill 1, Promoting Job Creation and Diversification Act; Bill 4, An Act to Implement the Supreme Court Ruling Governing Essential Services; Bill 9, An Act to Modernize Enforcement of Provincial Offences; Bill 15, An Act to End Predatory Lending. That's not political at all, Mr. Chair. An Act to Ensure Independent Environmental Monitoring, Bill 18; Bill 19, Reform of Agencies, Boards and Commissions Compensation Act; Bill 20, Climate Leadership Implementation Act; Bill 21, Modernized Municipal Government Act; Bill 22, an act to provide for reparation – no, that's a different one. Bill 30, Investing in a Diversified Alberta Economy Act; Bill 36, An Act to Enhance Off-highway Vehicle Safety; Bill 1, An Act to Renew Democracy in Alberta; Bill 2, An Act to Restore Fairness to Public Revenue; Bill 4, An Act to Implement Various Tax Measures and to Enact the Fiscal Planning and Transparency Act; and Bill 6 – this is one of my least favorites – the Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act. That is not political at all.

Now, I look at this, and I look at the situation that we've seen over the last few days inside this Chamber, where over and over my point has been proven by the members across the way, that this has absolutely nothing to do with the people of Alberta, this has absolutely nothing to do with making our elections better, and it has everything to do with them attempting to stack the deck at the expense of Albertans. It is extremely important. That is all that this bill has to do with. I know that you know that, and I know that you, Mr. Chair, are just as concerned as I am with that. Now, I thought, when I looked at it, that maybe what I should do – it should be probably named the unfair elections act, or how about the kneecapping the opposition act, or the incumbent election act, or the NDP election act, or the act to stack the deck? But I would not want to do the same as the NDP and use political purposes in names. It's disappointing that they continue to do that.

As such, I am going to move an amendment. I have the appropriate copies of the amendment. Can I continue, Mr. Chair, or would you like to see the amendment first?

**5:40**

**The Acting Chair:** I just need to see it first. This will be amendment A11.

**Mr. Nixon:** Clearly, we have reached, you know, the stage with this bill, during Committee of the Whole, where it is clear that the government is not prepared at all to work with the opposition. It is not prepared to try to prove us wrong, to make the system work better, and is going to continue down the path of rigging the system to their advantage. I will tell you, Mr. Chair, that Albertans will remember that during the next election. They will not be successful. This government will not be the government after the next election. They know it, and this last-ditch attempt to manipulate the election system to their advantage is shameful.

With that said, I would encourage every hon. member of this Assembly to at least rename the bill for what it is and to remove the

name that has been put in place by this government to continue their political propaganda.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

**The Acting Chair:** Are there any members wishing to speak to amendment A11?

**Cortes-Vargas:** I'm reading the amendment. Absolutely, it looks like the change that he wants to do is really to make a point, that he's in disagreement with the bill. But what we know is that the previous government really has mentioned on the record multiple times that they didn't do anything about election financing, that it was there beforehand, and therefore it wasn't them.

Really, what we're doing here today is making sure that we're introducing the Fair Elections Financing Act, and the part about that that we need to remember is that this act is giving Albertans Alberta back in their hands and taking it out of corporations and unions that have been part of this democratic process in a way that allows pay-to-play. That is something that Albertans know and Albertans want to see changed. The statement that is being made by calling it the Fair Elections Financing Act is a statement to enhance that this is about Albertans. This is about increasing accountability and transparency. This is about making sure that we get big money out of politics, and it is time for change.

Mr. Chair, at the end of the day, we want to make sure that elections are about ideas and not about money. What we need to make sure of is to put the things in place that will allow that to happen, and that's what we mean when we say, "Fair Elections Financing Act." This is about Albertans. This is about contribution limits, about introducing campaign spending limits. All of that contributes to a fair election process.

I am strongly in agreement with the fair elections act, and unfortunately I won't be supporting the amendment.

**Mr. Nixon:** Well, Mr. Chair, what the hon. member for the government, the last speaker, has right is that I am one hundred per cent in disagreement with the government on their attempt to rig and to fix the next election, in 2019. They do have that a hundred per cent correct.

Again, every member of the government who rises on this bill continues to rise and say that this is about contribution limits, about donation limits, about spending caps. Mr. Chair, they will continue to gloss over the fact that every party has already agreed to that. The argument that has happened in Committee of the Whole over the last few days is over their attempt to rig the system to the advantage of the NDP – that's where the argument is at its core – their attempt to attack the structure of opposition political parties, their attempt to attack our volunteers who make our political process work. They want to gloss over that every time that they rise, just like they want to gloss over the fact that the committee was derailed by them as they continued to try to get their campaign expenses paid for. That's a fact. It's disappointing.

Now, the title of this bill is one hundred per cent political. It is disappointing that the government continues to do that with their bills. This bill is far from fair. The facts have been completely established on that, and the government should be ashamed of itself for continuing this sham.

**The Acting Chair:** Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A11?

**Mr. McIver:** I just wanted to stand and say how much I support this amendment. I appreciate – even a government member suggested, and I agree with him on this much – that this is symbolic. But this is an important symbol because the title of this act suggests

that somehow this is going to make things fair when we all have demonstrated through our debate and our discussion that exactly the opposite is the truth. This is the government's attempt to put themselves in a position to intimidate other parties' supporters and donors. It's an attempt to put themselves in an advantageous position. It's an attempt to actually disguise who the different political parties are getting their money from by making it so there's an unlimited number of third parties that can spend \$150,000 each when each party can only spend \$2 million in total.

The government hasn't put limits on government spending. As we've talked about, they've spent \$9 million selling a carbon tax that nobody likes, which is more than four parties can spend combined during the next general election under their legislation. They didn't even wait till the ink was dry. They didn't even wait until we voted on this to start abusing their own legislation and taking unfair advantage of everybody else in the House.

You know what? Taking the word "fair" out of the title is obvious, and any government member that is the least bit honest about how they feel about their legislation should be voting for this amendment, as I intend to do.

**The Acting Chair:** Any other hon. members wishing to speak to amendment A11?

Seeing none, I will call the question on amendment A11 as proposed by the hon. Member for Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A11 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:48 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Loewen	Panda
Barnes	MacIntyre	Rodney
Cooper	McIver	Starke
Cyr	Nixon	Taylor
Drysdale	Orr	van Dijken

5:50

Against the motion:

Babcock	Gray	McPherson
Carson	Horne	Miranda
Connolly	Kazim	Payne
Coolahan	Kleinsteuber	Piquette
Cortes-Vargas	Larivee	Renaud
Dach	Luff	Rosendahl
Dang	Malkinson	Sabir
Drever	Mason	Shepherd
Eggen	McCuaig-Boyd	Sigurdson
Feehan	McKitrick	Westhead
Goehring		

Totals: For – 15 Against – 31

**The Acting Chair:** We are back on the main bill. Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 35?

Having seen none, are we ready for the question on Bill 35?

**Some Hon. Members:** Question.

[The remaining clauses of Bill 35 agreed to]

[The voice vote indicated that the title and preamble were agreed to]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:52 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

For:

Babcock	Gray	McPherson
Carson	Horne	Miranda
Connolly	Kazim	Payne
Coolahan	Kleinsteuber	Piquette
Cortes-Vargas	Larivee	Renaud
Dach	Luff	Rosendahl
Dang	Malkinson	Sabir
Drever	Mason	Shepherd
Eggen	McCuaig-Boyd	Sigurdson
Feehan	McKitrick	Westhead
Goehring	McLean	

Against:

Aheer	Loewen	Panda
Barnes	MacIntyre	Rodney
Cooper	McIver	Starke
Cyr	Nixon	Taylor
Drysdale	Orr	van Dijken

Totals: For – 32 Against – 15

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Acting Chair:** Opposed? That is carried.

**Mr. Mason:** I would move then, Mr. Chair, that the committee rise and report on Bill 35.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Sucha in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 35. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

**The Acting Speaker:** Does the Assembly concur in the report? All in favour, say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Acting Speaker:** All opposed, say no. That is so ordered.  
The hon. Government House Leader.

**Mr. Mason:** Mr. Speaker, in view of the progress that we have made and the proximity of the time to our adjournment time, I'll move that we call it 6 o'clock and adjourn until 7:30.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:59 p.m.]





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