



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Third Session

Alberta Hansard

Wednesday afternoon, April 19, 2017

Day 23

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 29th Legislature

Third Session

Wanner, Hon. Robert E., Medicine Hat (ND), Speaker

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

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Anderson, Hon. Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)
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Deputy Government House Leader
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),
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Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (ND)
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Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),
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Government Whip
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Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)
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Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)
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Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)
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Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)
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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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Wednesday, April 19, 2017

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Let us reflect and pray, each in our own way. Today marks the 101st anniversary of women receiving the right to vote, a milestone that should never be forgotten. Allow that event to serve as a reminder of the power of equality and that we are stronger when we are equal.

Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

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

Loyola: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you 22 amazing students from Meyokumin school in the beautiful and ethnically diverse constituency of Edmonton-Ellerslie. They are accompanied today by their teacher, Susan Rehacek, and one of the parents, Dennis Baleja, who I've had the pleasure of meeting and discussing policy with at community events. I'd ask them all to please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Labour and minister responsible for democratic renewal.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 28 students from the excellent Meyonohk school in Edmonton in the greater community of Mill Woods. This is one of the handful of schools in Edmonton that offers a Mandarin bilingual program. Meyonohk school incorporates Chinese culture into their learning, and students in the grades 4 to 6 regular English program also receive French as a second language. Meyonohk, translated from the Cree language, means a nice place to be. I can assure you that it is. With them is their teacher, Ms Danielle Woodman. I'd like to request all of the students and their teacher to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my honour today to rise and introduce to you and through you to the rest of the Assembly 23 students who come from the wonderful St. Martha school in Edmonton-McClung. I'm pleased to announce they are accompanied by teachers Paul McNeely, Sylvia Franklin, and Nicole Aasgard as well as chaperone Dolores Sandalo. It's a very active school, which has featured movie nights, pyjama dance nights, a silent auction soon to happen, a very active parent council, and I'm happy to participate with them. I wish for them to be welcomed by the Assembly in the traditional way now.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other school groups? The Member for Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Schreiner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the House the grade 6 social class from G.H. Dawe public school in my riding of Red Deer-North. With the help of great educators such as Deanna Labranche and Daryl Puzey, these students are here today to gain first-hand experience regarding provincial governance to assist in understanding the context of their curriculum. I ask my guests to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Peace River.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you to the members of the Assembly Dale Smith. Dale was a page in this Assembly from 1994 to 1996. He currently resides in Ottawa and is a freelance journalist in the Canadian parliamentary press gallery. Dale has written for the *Ottawa Citizen*, the *National Post*, *Maclean's*, *Canadian Business*, *Canadian Press*, *iPolitics.ca*, and *The Hill Times*, and he's recently released a book titled *The Unbroken Machine: Canada's Democracy in Action*. Dale is seated in the members' gallery, and I ask that he now rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you an amazing group of community leaders from the fabulous constituency of Edmonton-Castle Downs. They are members of the Castle Downs Recreation Society, also known as CDRS, and I will be speaking about this later in my member's statement. Please rise as I say your name: Lynnette Thompson, president of CDRS; Nadine Meads, president of Castle Downs Variety Show; Lorna Lewis, chair of the CDRS bingo; and Vini Buecken, member of CDRS International. Thank you so much for making it here today, and please accept the warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce guests who are leaders in the Ukrainian community involved in a cross-country project to raise awareness of the Holodomor. The Holodomor mobile classroom arrived in Alberta to educate and engage students and visitors about this tragic period of Ukrainian history. This classroom on wheels is at our front steps today until 4 p.m. and will be visiting a number of schools throughout Alberta thereafter. I ask that Mr. Bohdan Onyschuk, Canada Ukraine Foundation president; Mrs. Roma Dzerowicz, Canadian executive director of the Holodomor bus; as well as Ms Olesia Luciw-Andryjowycz, president of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress Alberta Provincial Council; and Mrs. Slavka Shulakewych, provincial co-ordinator of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress Alberta Provincial Council, please rise and receive the warm welcome of this House and our appreciation.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Service Alberta and Minister of Status of Women.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you today Julia Hayter, my fabulous

constituency assistant. It is very fitting that she is here today. She is also a very strong feminist and an excellent role model to her three children. She always has a friendly face, and she has boundless energy. I would certainly be lost without her. I am also proud to call her my friend. Here with her today is her son Liam Hayter. They are in Edmonton from Calgary so that Liam could compete in his dance competitions as it is dance season. He has performed a ballet duet and received high silver today. Very impressive. I'd ask that they stand to receive the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Members' Statements

Government Policies

Mr. Stier: Mr. Speaker, under this NDP government things have gone from bad to worse for Albertans. In just two short years they've imposed a radical agenda of economic experiments and job-killing tax hikes. Eighty-four thousand full-time jobs are now gone, a hundred thousand Albertans are on EI, and a record number of people are crowding into homeless shelters and food banks. While Albertans are suffering, the NDP is calling them names like, and I quote, embarrassing cousins and sewer rats.

The government's lawsuit against power companies and the flip-flop on a new Crown corporation have investors worried that they don't respect contracts or the rule of law.

Amidst all of this the \$5 billion carbon tax is bleeding families dry. The NDP didn't campaign on it, and Albertans don't want it despite this government spending over \$10 million on carbon tax propaganda. The Premier swore up and down that all this money would stay in Alberta. Here's the truth, though. The carbon tax will transfer \$140 million straight to Ottawa. But that's their MO. They're using carbon tax money to transfer wealth like when they gave Ecofitt, an NDP-friendly company from Ontario, tens of millions of dollars to screw in free light bulbs.

The writing is on the wall for business, also. Shell, ConocoPhillips, major international companies: they're all getting out of Dodge. Meanwhile our Premier is making political enemies of our closest allies in Saskatchewan and B.C. It's just one disaster after another from this government.

So let's take a look at where we're going. They've sent us down a road that leads to nowhere but more credit downgrades and a record \$74 billion of debt. This will soon cost us billions every year in interest payments. The NDP just doesn't understand Alberta no matter how hard they try. Albertans, though, don't play second fiddle or aim for the middle. Albertans lead. This government doesn't understand that, but Albertans do, and they can't wait to put Albertans back in charge of this province in 2019.

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

1:40

Passover

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Passover, or Pesach in Hebrew, is an eight-day festival celebrated from the 15th through the 22nd of the Hebrew month of Nissan. The tradition in ancient Israel held that the first day of Nissan would not start until the barley was ripe. It is one of the most widely observed Jewish holidays. It commemorates the freedom of the people of Israel from slavery in ancient Egypt. God helped the children of Israel escape from the Pharaoh's slavery in Egypt by inflicting 10 plagues upon the ancient Egyptians. While doing so, God spared the children of Israel, passing over their homes, hence the name of the holiday. Pharaoh's resistance broke, and 600,000 adult males plus many

more women and children fled slavery that day and began their trek to freedom and Mount Sinai.

It is said that they left in such a hurry that they could not wait for bread dough to rise, or leaven. With only this food they relied on the Almighty to provide sustenance for the entire Jewish nation: men, women and children. Each year, to remember this, unleavened bread called matzo is eaten on the first two nights of Passover.

People of the Jewish community also observe Passover through celebrations such as Seder, where people gather to retell the story of their liberation from Egypt and take part in the Seder ceremony. Passover for the Jewish community is also a festival of freedom, commemorating not only their history but also the importance of this basic human right.

Mr. Speaker, we are blessed to live in a province with a rich multicultural history and with the freedom to express our faith in the manner of our choosing.

Passover was celebrated this year from April 10th to April 18th. In Calgary-Glenmore the celebration was held in the homes of constituents and in the Calgary Jewish Community Centre and Beth Tzedec synagogue. I hope this year's celebration of freedom, hope, and new life was enjoyed by all members of the Jewish community.

Thank you.

Armenian Genocide

Mr. Rodney: I rise to remember the Armenian genocide, which was perpetrated against the Ottoman Empire's Armenian population between 1915 and 1923. Two hundred and fifty Armenian intellectuals and community leaders were imprisoned, deported, and assassinated. A law was passed authorizing the deportation of the entire Armenian population. There were mass murders of entire villages. Women and children were burned alive or drowned in the Black Sea very close to where my maternal grandmother was born.

Those who did not meet this gruesome fate were deported by the hundreds of thousands and marched into the desert to die of thirst, hunger, disease, and exposure. Deportees who somehow survived these miracle marches were sent to die in one of the 25 concentration camps along what is now Turkey's border with Syria and Iraq. One and a half million Armenian lives were exterminated as the international community watched, powerless to stop the atrocities. Two decades later the world witnessed a genocide again in the form of the Holocaust.

Mr. Speaker, here in Canada our new leader cosponsored the parliamentary motion recognizing the Armenian genocide, and Prime Minister Harper was the first to recognize it on behalf of the government of Canada. They did so because we have a duty to remember and to learn from this first genocide of the 20th century.

Tragically, the hatred that leads to genocide exists in our time. Armenians and other indigenous minorities have faced attempted genocide at the hands of ISIS in Iraq and Syria, which is one of the reasons why Canada has welcomed hundreds of Armenians and thousands of other resettled refugees from that region.

I pray for the hundreds of thousands of lives lost and for those still in harm's way, and I join Armenians across Alberta and around the globe in remembering the crimes perpetrated against their people. Let us strengthen our collective resolve to never again allow hatred to turn into the mass violence of genocide. We owe it to the 1 and a half million Armenians and the millions more who have lost their lives in acts of genocide.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Castle Downs Recreation Society

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to highlight the incredible work of the Castle Downs Recreation Society, also known as the CDRS, in the magnificent community of Edmonton-Castle Downs. The society was first established in 1983 and includes CDRS International and the Castle Downs Variety Show. The board itself is made up of representatives from six community leagues who work collaboratively with the city of Edmonton and the Castle Downs Family YMCA. This allows for over 60,000 residents of northwest Edmonton to be served by the society. The society prides itself on community engagement. Just a few of the many successful events are Canada Day, Winter Fest, and the annual Castle Downs Variety Show. These have all become family traditions for those who live in north Edmonton.

I highly recommend attending the variety show, which just wrapped up their 32nd season. Volunteers return year after year, showcasing their incredible talents and making memories. Last year was very exciting as the cast and crew received a community facility enhancement program grant to upgrade their staging and their sound equipment. Our government was happy and proud to support the Castle Downs Variety Show and continues to promote initiatives across Alberta that encourage community engagement.

To Lynnette Thompson, a 30-year member and current president of the CDRS board as well as the chair of park development; Nadine Meads, board member and current chair for the Castle Downs Variety Show and president for the Dunluce Community League; Lorna Lewis, current member and bingo chair; and Vini Buecken, a member of CDRS International: thanks for all the dedication and commitment of those here today as well as the many others who work tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure that Castle Downs Recreation Society is a vibrant pillar in our community.

As a resident of Castle Downs for more than 20 years and now working so closely and collaboratively with you, I thank you for welcoming my office into the fold and for all of your hard work for the residents of north Edmonton.

Thank you.

Government Innovations

Mr. Westhead: Mr. Speaker, April 15 to 21 each year is World Creativity and Innovation Week. It begins on Leonardo da Vinci's birthday and ends on World Creativity and Innovation Day. Its purpose is to provide time to encourage and enable new thinking, to create new futures, to make the world a better place, and to make space and time to generate new ideas. This initiative is spearheaded locally in Canmore by Marci Segal, who has achieved recognition for her efforts from the United Nations.

In honour of this week, I'd like to recognize our government's creative and innovative approach that is making life better for Albertans. We are taking an innovative approach to address climate change that is getting results and leading the country. Two pipeline approvals are proof of that. Imagine: a government embarking on a school nutrition program or a \$25-a-day daycare program. Ah. No need to imagine that, Mr. Speaker. It's a dream come true.

That's what happens when you elect a government that is nearly gender balanced, reflects our province's diversity, and has Albertans' backs. Social issues aren't stale. On the contrary, they provide opportunities for creative solutions that make a meaningful difference in the lives of Albertans. For instance, it took the election of this forward-thinking government to remove limitations for survivors of sexual and domestic violence to file a claim and to ensure gender identity and gender expression as basic human rights. Even the oil sands emissions cap, the modernized royalty framework,

and the 30 per cent renewable energy target are resulting in creative and innovative market-based solutions in Alberta's energy sector.

I'm glad that this government is thinking out of the box. In Banff-Cochrane we have public transit, affordable housing, and the approval of a decade-overdue intersection to show for it. I'm proud to be part of a government that is focused on creative and innovative ways to make life better.

Thank you.

Brooks Bandits Junior Hockey Championship

Mr. Fildebrandt: Mr. Speaker, 2017 is a great year for Alberta hockey. The Flames are in the playoffs, the Oilers are in the playoffs, but last night wasn't very good for the orange team. They're still in the running. But before we lose all hope about another missed championship, I implore all members to have faith in the Brooks Bandits. The Brooks Bandits have charged their way through the Alberta Junior Hockey League championship. When they won the Alberta Gas Drive Cup last night, they swept the Whitecourt Wolverines 4-nothing in the championship series. They're going all the way to the western Canadian finals.

Now, speaking of Whitecourt, I made a friendly wager for a six-pack of delicious Wild Rose beer with the Member for Whitecourt-St. Anne that the Calgary Flames would outlast the Edmonton Oilers in the playoffs. Most members of this House know that I have made a few wagers from time to time, and so far I've won, but in this case I feel the need to probably hedge my bets a bit. But since he didn't bet on his own team in Whitecourt, I think we might be even. I can understand him not wanting to bet against the Bandits, though. They are led by our captain, Nick Prkusic, and the coach, Ryan Papaioannou, to make the Brooks Bandits positively unstoppable this year.

1:50

We also have our not-so-secret weapon, Cale Makar, who is ninth in line for the NHL draft pick. My hope is that when Cale has finished his time with the Bandits, he will be drafted by Alberta's only real NHL team, the Flames. Many Flames fans on this side of the House will not shed a tear when the orange team loses in the playoffs or in 2019, but, friends, let's not let this divide us. Regardless of our politics or how long our two big teams may last in the playoffs, we can all agree that the Brooks Bandits are Alberta's team.

Statement by the Speaker

Referring to a Member by Name

The Speaker: Hon. members, just as sort of a reminder, I did not hear this personally, but it's been pointed out to me that during what is affectionately now known in the House as heckling, first names may have been used. I would remind you that first names are not used in the House, and that's not only in terms of speeches but also with respect to comments.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

GST on Carbon Levy

Mr. Jean: This NDP carbon tax is one of the biggest rip-offs in Alberta history. It's nickel and diming families and businesses everywhere they turn: on their groceries, at the pumps, and on their home heating bills. Now new information confirms that the NDP

carbon tax is just another tax on tax, giving Ottawa hundreds of millions of dollars in new revenue from the GST. The NDP have known for months that their carbon tax is just another gift to Ottawa from Albertans. Why didn't the NDP do anything to stop this fiasco?

Ms Hoffman: Well, Mr. Speaker, the member should know that the GST applies to provincial levies and taxes. Why should he know that? Because when he ran federally, he campaigned with a promise to remove the GST from these situations. And what did he do when he was in Ottawa? He broke that promise. Say one thing; do another: it's a pattern with the Leader of the Official Opposition. This is a situation that he promised he'd fix, and instead he only made it worse.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Jean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Factless, totally factless.

Now, I know the NDP don't want to hurt the feelings of their political allies in Ottawa, their new BFFs, but here are the facts. Albertans already send \$24 billion more to Ottawa every single year than we get back in transfers or services from Ottawa, and while tens of thousands of oil and gas workers are out of a job, Ottawa just raised taxes on our oil and gas industry. It's unfair, and it's just not right. We know the Premier refuses to do the sensible thing and repeal the carbon tax – we wish she would – but why won't the Premier fight Ottawa for an exemption on the GST on the carbon tax?

Ms Hoffman: The real question, Mr. Speaker, is: why did the member opposite promise to do something and then do nothing when he actually had the opportunity for 10 years in Ottawa? I know the member opposite is used to getting direction from Ottawa, and that seems to be the case again today, but let me tell you some real facts. Today the Business Development Bank's chief economist, Pierre Cl  roux, said that Alberta is going to have better growth than Saskatchewan, than Newfoundland, that we're seeing more investment right now in Alberta. This is going to be a great year for Alberta. There's going to be a turnaround, and we're going to build on that from this year forward. Those are the real facts.

Mr. Jean: A load of carbon tax.

The fact is that Albertans need fuel to live and work, and they really don't like government taking more from their pockets to do simple things like driving their kids to school, for instance, or maybe to an extracurricular activity. The Premier along with the Prime Minister have insisted that the money collected from the carbon tax will stay in Alberta. Well, we know that that is simply not the truth. All this tax does is make people poorer while growing the size of this government. Why did the Premier refuse to tell Albertans the full truth on the costs of the carbon tax they don't want?

Ms Hoffman: Here's the truth, Mr. Speaker. We know the cost of doing nothing because that's exactly what happened when the member opposite was in Ottawa with his new best friend. That's because on that side of the House they don't want Alberta to succeed. They are not proud of the fact that we got two – two – new pipeline approvals. We did that because we showed courage. We did that because we're working in partnership. We're working with industry. They stand with us. The job creators stand with us. Alberta is on the way up, and the members opposite know it.

The Speaker: Second main question.

Mr. Jean: On the way up, Mr. Speaker? Record unemployment numbers are here in Alberta today because of the NDP.

Energy Efficiency Programs

Mr. Jean: The NDP's new energy efficiency program, announced yesterday, creates an instant rebate program for things like LED lights, programmable thermostats, water-saving devices, and smart power strips. It sounds familiar, mostly because they're the same products offered in the NDP's Ecofitt boondoggle, and the way I see it, the NDP either realize how awful their Ecofitt program is, or they realized Albertans are actually capable of screwing in their own light bulbs. When will the Premier come clean to Albertans and cancel this wasteful duplication of a program?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much for the opportunity to talk about the great energy efficiency program that we have here in Alberta, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are excited about the opportunity to save energy and to save money on their power bills and put that back in their own pockets. Alberta contractors are excited about what this will mean for them in terms of new jobs. This is just the beginning. Last month we added 20,000 new full-time jobs in Alberta. These programs are going to add more. This government is getting real action and real results by our jobs plan.

Mr. Jean: Well, Mr. Speaker, it's obvious that the NDP government must realize how bad their Ecofitt boondoggle is. Why else would they announce two programs just a couple of months apart which do the same thing? It doesn't make sense. They're spending Albertans' hard-earned money collected through the carbon tax like it's Monopoly money. There is no doubt that the energy efficiency program announced yesterday will be more cost-effective than the NDP actually hiring an Ontario company to go into houses in Alberta to change Albertans' light bulbs, that's for sure. Will the Premier face the facts and cancel her Ecofitt boondoggle, or do we expect a third one in a couple of months?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are excited to have an opportunity to work with a government that's helping them save money, and some of these things sound familiar because they've been happening for decades across North America. Where weren't they happening? In Alberta. The members opposite want to pretend that they can ignore reality, but we're not doing that. We're helping Albertans save money, we're getting access with two new pipeline approvals, and 350 contractors, Alberta contractors, have already registered to be part of this program. [interjections]

The Speaker: Would you keep the volume down, please.

Mr. Jean: We all know that a favourite pastime of this government is pushing the NDP world view on Albertans. Both the Ecofitt boondoggle and the new energy efficiency program require time set aside for training of program participants. When Ecofitt comes into your home to change your light bulbs, you will also get the privilege of getting lectured on the NDP world view. It seems that Alberta contractors will be trained in that lecturing, too. Will the Premier tell us what chapter of the Leap Manifesto she'll be pushing on Albertans through these programs? [interjections]

The Speaker: Quiet, please. [interjections] Quiet, please.
The Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Of course, the residential no-cost program is going to save Albertans an average of about \$112 per year. The only ones who are unhappy about that are the Wildrose, who continue to make fun of the 90,000 Albertans who have signed up for that program. With the new programs announced yesterday – the rebates for windows, for tankless hot water heaters, and for insulation – again the Wildrose continues to make fun of those Albertans. So many of them were interested in it yesterday that the website crashed. Albertans want to save money. The Wildrose want to . . .

The Speaker: Hon. minister, when I stand, would you please sit down? Thank you.

I think we're at the third main question.

Educational Curriculum Review Survey

Mr. Jean: It will come as no surprise to many Albertans that the NDP government has been less than forthcoming about the results of their curriculum review survey. While more than 32,000 Albertans took the time to participate in the survey, obviously important, the Education minister chose to only reveal hand-picked results from the review. Why? Well, I can only guess that they wanted to push results that aligned with the NDP world view or maybe the Leap Manifesto. Will the Premier commit to more openness and transparency and make the full results of the curriculum survey available to all Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. It highlights the survey that we had with Albertans, the largest survey that we've ever had with Alberta Education, more than 32,000 participants, and we published the results. Quite frankly, we published the good, the bad, and the slightly awkward even. There were 50 people who said that we should get rid of Shakespeare. As an English teacher we're not going to do that. [interjections]

2:00

The Speaker: Quiet.

Mr. Jean: When I travel our province, I hear time and time again about how worried our parents are about their students being prepared in things like math and reading. They want Alberta to return to basics and to once again be a world leader in education, as we were 25 years ago. The curriculum survey itself asked leading questions that certainly don't allow parents to focus on these concerns that are important. Will the Premier commit to putting an end to our children being treated like guinea pigs in the classroom and listen to the concerned parents, who very much care about their children's welfare?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I certainly invite both the hon. Leader of the Opposition and all Albertans to fill out the next questionnaire, talking about the scope and sequence for our education system. You know, so many Albertans did participate in this enterprise because they are concerned, and every step of the way we are putting this out in a very transparent manner. We know that we can make life better for Albertans, better than any other investment, by putting it into our education system. Our caucus has done so. We've built a budget that will support that, and I would advise the hon. member to support that budget, too, for Education.

Mr. Jean: The rollout of results from the curriculum survey clearly points to the NDP government working towards a predetermined end result that will satisfy government bureaucrats and no one else, certainly not Albertans. Without seeing how concerned Albertans actually answered the survey, we'll just have to take the NDP's word for it. That doesn't really sit well with me, and it doesn't sit well with parents who want to see their children succeed. Unless the Premier has something to hide, she should have no problems whatsoever in releasing the survey results. Premier, my question is simple. Will you release the actual results to Albertans? Yes or no? What are you hiding from Albertans?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, sometimes you learn a lot from putting out surveys. For example, we perhaps need to have better education for opposition members to read survey results, which are published in their fulsome wholesomeness for everybody to read. Certainly, it gives us lots of interesting directions to go to, a sense of transparency every step of the way, to make sure that we provide the best education for Alberta students.

The Speaker: The hon. leader of the third party.

Energy Efficiency Programs (continued)

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This NDP government's energy inefficiency program sees people travelling across three provinces to screw in Alberta light bulbs. Not the brightest idea. The government claims that over 90,000 people have applied for the program even though a small fraction will be able to take advantage. A lot of valuable data is being collected for any number of uses. Albertans have a right to know what will happen to this data and their privacy. To the Premier: can you assure this House that all Albertans' information will not be mined by the NDP for your re-election purposes?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. [interjections]

The Speaker: Quiet, please.
The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, we can assure the House that that is the case.

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, this NDP government is misleading Albertans. The government's Energy Efficiency Alberta website has a section, which I will table today, which says: "Energy Efficiency Alberta's official agents will visit your home or business only when invited and will provide you with official identification. They are not selling anything, and they will never ask you for money." We know that they are expected to offer goods and services that are not a hundred per cent free. To the minister: if your official agent with identification won't be asking for money and selling, who will be? When will you correct the misleading website?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In fact, Albertans will be able to sign up and receive no-cost residential installation of select products which will save them, on average, about \$112 a year. In

addition, yesterday we announced a contractor program in which Alberta homeowners can receive rebates for the installation of new insulation, high-efficiency windows, and tankless hot water heaters. Those will also make life more affordable for Albertans and actually repair the fact that we're the only place in North America without an energy efficiency strategy thanks to the PC government.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. McIver: The minister just admitted that someone will be asking for money because that's the only way it can be rebated. She didn't answer the question.

The NDP are vote buying with free stuff and subsidized stuff through Energy Efficiency Alberta. To make matters worse, the CRA says that the carbon tax will cost \$150 million a year when this program gets into full flight. To the Premier: when will you realize that you don't work for those people in Ontario whom you've hired to deliver this program? Start putting Albertans first. They need a Premier that loves them, too.

Ms Hoffman: Speaking of Ontario, Mr. Speaker, I hope that that member asks his new leader why he didn't in fact fix the very situation that his party campaigned to fix many, many years ago. This isn't new. It's not news to the member opposite. We're working to make sure that we increase market access; get good results for Albertans, like two pipelines; and save money, putting \$212 back into a typical Albertan family's household pocket. This is good news, and I'm proud to stand up for it.

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

Highway 2 Gaetz Avenue Interchange in Red Deer

Mr. Clark: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The Gaetz Avenue interchange project was announced with great fanfare in 2016. In addition to the safety improvements for all who travel the QE II, the people of Red Deer and central Alberta are relying on the project to be completed in time to handle the increased traffic that will come from the 2019 Canada Winter Games. But the last few times I drove by, I couldn't help but notice the lack of activity. So I looked into it, and it appears that all may not be well with the project. To the Minister of Transportation: has work stopped on the Gaetz Avenue interchange project, and if so, will it be done on time?

The Speaker: The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, I'm not aware of what the hon. member is referring to. I do not believe that work has stopped on the project. But since he believes that to be the case, I will certainly look into it and get back to him.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad to hear that the minister will look into it.

I have been told by the people in Red Deer that there are challenges with the project. I understand and was told that there's a stop-work order on the project because the steel used is not up to standards. Again to the Minister of Transportation: is that true?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you. Well, I know that the hon. member's question is getting members on the other side excited, Mr. Speaker.

I am unaware of this issue. I will look into it, and I will get back to the member.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Now, I understand also that the procurement process on this particular project has been different than the ones they've used in the past. The question is to the Minister of Transportation again. Is it true, in fact, and if so, did the new process lead to delays with the project?

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much for that question. Mr. Speaker, as I said, I'll get back to the hon. member.

I want to tell the House that this government is contributing over \$4 billion towards projects that are putting people back to work, Mr. Speaker, that are getting Albertans building things throughout the province. That project will improve safety in the Red Deer area. It will put hundreds of people to work, and it will really boost this economy, something this government is doing to make life better for Alberta families.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Northern Hills.

Public Transit Capital Funding

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the MLA for Calgary-Northern Hills I represent a growing and newer residential community. Living on the northern edge of Calgary, one of the greatest challenges residents of my community face is efficient and more frequent and accessible public transit. To the Minister of Transportation: do you have a plan to help fund Calgary's priority transit project, the green line?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and I want to assure the hon. member of this government's commitment to public transit, including supporting both major cities on their LRT network. The city of Calgary has yet to refine the details of the project in terms of its scope, its timing, and total cost. I've indicated to the city of Calgary – and I've had many conversations with the mayor on this matter – that when they have a final ask in terms of this, we are certainly going to sit down with them and consider it because public transportation is a key priority of this government.

2:10

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that many Albertans, including residents of Calgary-Northern Hills, are eager to see transit projects move forward, to the Minister of Transportation: will you make a firm commitment to funding public transit infrastructure in the coming year? [interjections]

The Speaker: Quiet.

The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very happy to tell the hon. member that that has already taken place. We're investing, as part of our four-year capital plan, \$1.3 billion in transit funding initiatives to connect communities, to enhance access to markets and services, and to make life better for Albertans. It includes \$305 million over four years for new transit initiatives to support both regional and green transit infrastructure projects in Alberta. This government is committed to making life better for Albertans.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that Alberta's economy has been experiencing a downturn and many Albertans are in need of work, including Calgarians, again to the Minister of Transportation: how does the plan to build public transit put Albertans to work and help support economic diversification?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. [interjections]

The Speaker: Quiet, please.

Mr. Mason: I know, Mr. Speaker, that the economy is on many people's minds. That's why our government is investing in infrastructure throughout the province. We create jobs in construction, in engineering, design, and many of these jobs are in the city of Calgary, I just might say. It provides affordable alternatives to single-family vehicles for Alberta families, part of our commitment to make life more affordable for Alberta families.

Continuing Care Wait Times

Mr. Smith: Mr. Speaker, when a senior needs continuing care, extended wait times can be catastrophic for everyone. I've seen what a wait time for a loved one suffering from Alzheimer's can do, and I've seen it almost kill the spouse as they tried to care for the most important person in their life. According to the AHS third-quarter performance report Alberta seniors have only a 56 per cent chance of finding a continuing care placement within 30 days. To the minister: when can our seniors, the men and women who built this province, expect better results?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the important question. This certainly is one of the issues that matter a lot to Alberta families. When you are aging and you require additional supports, you deserve to be able to have access to that in a timely fashion, to live in a homelike environment. That's one of the reasons why while the opposition and the third party were lobbying for big, deep cuts in the last campaign, we were campaigning on building 2,000 new long-term care and continuing care beds. We're really proud to keep moving forward with that initiative. There is still much more work to be done, but we are working to make sure that we make life better for Alberta seniors.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that these long wait times are getting worse under this government's watch and that families are suffering and given that in southern Alberta, or the south zone, seniors only have a 48 per cent chance of being placed within 30 days – the system is obviously failing seniors – and given that in the summary of the report it states, and I quote, that the south and the north zones have remained stable, does the minister really think that a failing grade is stable, or do southern Alberta seniors just not matter in the eyes of this government?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Every Albertan matters to this side of the House. We are working diligently to make sure that we are building those 2,000 very much-needed long-term care and dementia beds. We're making sure that we're working in

partnership with communities to make sure that everyone can age with dignity and respect. That's important to us, and that's one of the reasons why not only are we moving forward with the capital projects that are much needed in this province, but we're actually providing operating funding to make sure that those beds can actually be staffed, that seniors can have dignity, instead of pushing for billions of dollars in cuts, which the members opposite are advocating for.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that self-managed care increases the quality of life for seniors and lowers costs on the system and given that we have heard that AHS enacted changes in the fall of 2016 so that clients residing in privately operated supported living settings are no longer eligible to receive self-managed care funding, why is the NDP stopping seniors from receiving self-managed care funding in private settings at a time when seniors are facing long wait times for continuing care placements?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Each potential home-care client is assessed individually to determine whether or not he or she has any unmet health care needs that could be addressed under self-managed care. Clients receive funding to hire and pay for their own unmet personal care. So there would be individual assessments that are done to determine if there is unmet care. We did touch on this in estimates. I'm happy to discuss this matter further if the member would choose to, but I think that there's perhaps some lack of information, and I'd be happy to provide it to the member.

Workplace Legislation Review

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, yesterday opposition parties shared Albertans' concerns about the inadequacy of consultation with respect to broad changes being considered by this government to both the labour code and employment standards. These changes will impact every business in Alberta, with small and medium-sized enterprises being particularly affected. All that these individuals and businesses ask for is meaningful consultation and for their views to be heard and considered. To the Minister of Labour: will you do the right thing, reopen consultation, enhance it, and extend it at least until the end of the calendar year? And, please, this is not a question about 1980s pop trivia.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. During tough economic times Albertans need legislation that protects families. The former government held consultations and did reports on Alberta's workplace legislation, too, but then what did they do with it? They did nothing. The member opposite is speaking about the concerns of Alberta businesses. I'm very much interested in working with businesses as we move forward, but I'm also listening to the concerns of Alberta workers, concerns like talking to Andrew, whose wife had to work through chemotherapy because she couldn't get access to job-protected sick leave.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, given that we continue to hear concerns from stakeholders that this government's hasty consultation

is a sign that the minister already knows what the final legislation will look like and given that many individuals and organizations have expressed concern that the government will use pro-union legislation as an olive branch or quid pro quo in upcoming labour negotiations with their ideological friends, again to the minister: did you design consultation to meet a predetermined outcome . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Quiet, please.

Mr. Gotfried: . . . and will you use ill-considered legislation to appease union leadership as part of upcoming public-sector negotiations?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Given that this legislation has not been updated in so much time, it was responsible and important for this government to start reviewing workplace legislation. In regard to the consultation process, particularly with the Labour Relations Code, we have engaged expert Mr. Andrew Sims, and I have spoken in this House before about my respect for this gentleman. Also, the Member for Calgary-Hays has spoken about his respect and has suggested that getting advice from Andrew Sims is a good idea, that he is one of the smartest people you will ever meet on labour laws. I am confident in our consultation.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Gotfried: Mr. Speaker, given that part of the concern with inadequate consultation is this government's and the NDP's deep and obvious constitutional and personal ties to a variety of unions and labour groups and given that because of these strong ideological ties there's an assumption that this government will facilitate greater ease in the formation of unions by getting rid of the privacy and anonymity of the secret-ballot process, again to the minister, a question that is important to all Alberta employers and employees: are you planning on get rid of the secret-ballot requirement for unionization? Yes or no?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Labour.

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Our consultation closed just yesterday at midnight, so we are going to be reviewing what over 4,800 Albertans had to say on the matter, what over 1,000 employers had to say, and 340 written submissions. I want to see what Albertans have had to say and then move forward with fair and balanced legislation that will make sure we're supporting a strong economy here in Alberta, making sure we're returning some basic rights to our workers like job-protected sick leave.

2:20 Municipal Government Act and Wood Buffalo

Mr. Yao: It was nearly a year ago that the Premier rose in this place and called the Leader of the Official Opposition a fearmonger after he raised concerns about the wildfire that would eventually devastate Fort McMurray. Eleven months ago this government said that it would stand side by side with Fort McMurray as it rebuilt. Five months ago the former Minister of Municipal Affairs said, and I quote: Bill 21 grandfathers the current ratio indefinitely. End quote. Now we have Bill 8, which exposes Fort McMurray to massive property tax hikes. Why should my constituents and all Albertans trust this government after this massive flip-flop?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. We spoke about it yesterday, and as I told him yesterday, that ratio of 5 to 1 is in regulations that will be coming out soon and that we're going to collect feedback on. We've been working hand in hand with RMWB on this. They've been working very closely with industry on this, and we're waiting to hear feedback on what they come up with and what all these other municipalities have to say on it, like we have been doing constantly.

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, many people in my riding are struggling since this government came to power. Given that local businesses are closing shop and many homeowners that are trying to rebuild are still stuck in limbo and given that this bill could be another blow to a community that has faced so many challenges in the last few years, will the Premier please explain, given the economic situation in Alberta and Wood Buffalo, how she can justify sticking these homeowners with a policy that could lead to massive increases in Fort McMurray's residential tax rates?

Mr. S. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I don't deal in hypotheticals. We're working together with Fort McMurray. We're working together with municipalities across this province. The MGA is the gold standard of consultation. I've said it before, and I continue to say it. We are going to make sure that we have the backs of the people of the RMWB. We said it last year, we've continued to say it, and we will continue saying it and having their backs going forward.

Mr. Yao: There's nothing hypothetical about this bill, sir.

Mr. Speaker, for many years Fort McMurray was forgotten and left to fend for itself by provincial decision-makers. As such, our municipality took matters into its own hands to ensure that people in our region had the services that we needed. Given that previous government decisions drove housing prices through the roof, affordable rent disappeared, wages had to be compensated for the high cost of living, and the RMWB built infrastructure with no provincial funds, is this Premier taking her advice from the same bureaucrats responsible for creating these very same issues?

Mr. S. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, it's unfortunate, the disrespect coming from the opposition's side for our people that work so hard to make sure that the people in Fort McMurray were taken care of and continue to be taken care of. I can't believe that he's saying this. I am proud of the people in my ministry, how hard they work, the effort they put in day in and day out. I will continue to support them, and I will continue to support the RMWB going forward, as I've said.

Okotoks Water Supply

Mr. W. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, last week in estimates when asked about whether or not the Okotoks water pipeline was a funding issue, the Minister of Transportation said that he believed the main and only remaining hurdle for the town to procure potable water from Calgary was a licensing issue. He said, "There are no more licences to draw water, so it's a matter of negotiating, I think, between Okotoks and Calgary." Pretty profound. Does the minister still agree that this issue would be resolved if the town could obtain water from the city of Calgary?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I know that the town has made an application under the water for life program with respect to this matter, and that is under consideration. I'm not at liberty to

disclose the results of that application because it has yet to be determined.

Mr. W. Anderson: Mr. Speaker, given that in 2014 the city of Calgary issued a letter stating, “I am pleased to inform you that Calgary City Council has confirmed that The City of Calgary is prepared to provide treated water to the Town of Okotoks to supplement [their water supply]” and given that this letter should allow Okotoks to begin discussions with the province of Alberta to provide funding assistance for the pipeline, as they did, why is the province standing in the way of this important project for the town of Okotoks?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Environment and Parks.

Ms Phillips: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have also had conversations with both the town of Okotoks and the city of Calgary on the water licensing issue, and we continue to work on it within Environment and Parks because, of course, our commitment to clean drinking water for all Albertans is a shared responsibility between the Ministry of Transportation and the Ministry of Environment and Parks. That remains our commitment to make sure that all Albertans have access to that drinking water infrastructure that they need in order to make life better for everyone.

Mr. W. Anderson: Well, to either minister. Which one? They seem unaware that the details of the situation are well known.

Since I’ve raised this issue several times in the past two years, when will the minister put an end to the bureaucratic red tape and roadblocks, move forward on this file, and give Okotoks the much-needed water pipeline they deserve? Do the right thing.

Mr. Mason: Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Environment and Parks has said, we’re committed to making sure that Albertans have . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Quiet, please.
Go ahead, hon. minister.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We’re committed to making sure that Albertans have access to clean drinking water. We’ve expanded the program, for example, in order to provide drinking water . . . [interjections]

The Speaker: Quiet, please.

Mr. Mason: Will you knock it off?

The Speaker: Hon. minister, finish quickly.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We’re committed to making sure that Albertans have access to clean and safe drinking water, and we’ve extended the program \$100 million over four years to extend water lines to First Nations as well, which is a very serious problem. In terms of . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Fentanyl- and Carfentanil-related Deaths

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Drug dealers have upped the death toll by lacing opioids with carfentanil, an elephant tranquilizer. We learned this news through an interim AHS opioid abuse report highlighting that carfentanil not only killed 30 Albertans in 2016, but it has already killed 15 people in the first six

weeks of this year. When this government learned of the alarming death toll spike, it did not raise an alert. Minister, why, at the very minimum, did you not warn the public the moment you learned that carfentanil was killing Albertans?

The Speaker: The Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. As was highlighted by the member, earlier this month we released the interim fentanyl death report, which showed that 51 Albertans died from fentanyl overdoses, which compares to 28 deaths in the same six-week period in 2016. We know that this crisis is escalating, and with the emergence of carfentanil we are very concerned as well, which is why when the first cases of carfentanil were detected in Alberta, a public statement was made by our government officials. We continue to warn Albertans about the dangers of fentanyl and carfentanil.

Mr. Ellis: A report is not a warning.

Given that carfentanil is 10,000 times more potent than morphine and 100 times more toxic than fentanyl and given that someone overdosing on carfentanil may need multiple doses of naloxone and people assisting them need to know this and given that carfentanil’s extreme toxicity also puts first responders in danger, to the minister: why have you not created a system that will alert all Albertans of surges and locations of fentanyl-related incidents to assist in saving lives and co-ordinating resources?

The Speaker: The hon. associate minister.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. Our government officials have been working very closely with law enforcement as well as with first responders, sharing data as well as information about emerging trends. What we are finding, of course, is that law enforcement and first responders, in particular, tend to see trends emerging sooner than we maybe see them across the province. Having those open lines of communication and working together in a collaborative effort is how we’re going to work together to respond to this crisis.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that six weeks into 2017 fentanyl-related deaths are estimated at 51 – that’s almost twice the number as last year at this time – and given that fatalities could be astronomical this year alone and given that in the United States, where 91 people are dying every day and this death toll crisis is being compared to the AIDS epidemic of the 1980s and Alberta was ground zero for it, to the minister: how many Albertans have to die before you finally declare a public health emergency and bring all resources to bear on this crisis?

The Speaker: The hon. associate minister.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We are aware of what a serious crisis this is, and that is why we’re multiplying our efforts in Budget 2017, spending up to \$56 million over the next year to help Albertans get the treatment they need to reduce the harm of substance use and to raise public awareness. I sincerely hope that when we get to the budget estimates in Committee of Supply later today, the members will vote in favour of our Health budget.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

2:30

Unharvested 2016 Crops

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many of my constituents' livelihoods depend on agriculture, but given the recent disastrous harvest season these hard-working farmers have raised specific concerns they want this government to address. To the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry: how is this government prepared to mitigate the disastrous harvest this past year, and what proactive measures are being taken to ensure that our farmers are protected in the future?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the member for the question. Last season was certainly a difficult one for producers, from dry conditions early on to wet. While we can't control weather conditions, we can control our response, and we can prepare for these types of tough growing seasons. That is why our government continues to invest heavily in business risk management programs like AgriInsurance, AgriStability, and AgriInvest. These programs are available to help producers mitigate the potential effects of these kinds of conditions and is one of the ways that our government works to make life better for producers.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the concern my constituents have with wait times, to the same minister: has this government supported AFSC to ensure that they have enough adjusters to assess last year's crop damage in a reasonable time frame?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My department is working closely with AFSC to track their response to the poor season, to make sure that producers are looked after. As of March 24 over \$32.3 million has been paid out to producers, and 95 per cent of eligible unharvested acres benefit claims have been processed. I've been in touch with AFSC to ensure that they have an aggressive strategy in place to effectively allocate resources. I'm pleased to hear that AFSC has been working diligently to ensure that resources are allocated effectively and that claims are processed as quickly as possible. I would urge all producers to work closely with their local AFSC office.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that farmers are expected to leave rows of unharvested crop for assessment, which may render cross-contamination of the new crop, to the same minister: how is the government preparing to mitigate that issue?

Mr. Carlier: Mr. Speaker, if a producer is eager to get the crop off the field, I strongly urge them to reach out to the AFSC prior to doing anything. Some producers may be asked to leave rows for assessment, but I've been told that AFSC will assess as soon as possible. Producers concerned about contamination should call 310.FARM to explore options. There are many unique crop scenarios for AFSC to consider, and AFSC will recommend a variety of actions according to the unique circumstances of that crop and that region.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

New School Construction in Rocky View County

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Chestermere is one of the fastest growing cities in Canada, and Chestermere high school serves the communities of Langdon, Indus, Conrich, Chestermere, Dalemead, Delacour, Balzac, and Kathym and has for 54 years and is overcrowded and old. The Auditor General report states that the departments of Education and Infrastructure do not have adequate systems to plan, deliver, or report on school build plans. Chestermere high school is on the second year of the Rocky View capital plan and, hopefully, will be built far away from the highway that took Jaydon Sommerfeld. To the minister: what will it take to get a school built in Chestermere-Rocky View?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. Certainly, we were just in six hours of estimates the last two days, and we did discuss capital projects in quite a large degree of fulsomeness. One of the features that we have built in as a result of the Auditor General's report is extra money to help individual school boards get site ready in terms of site ready for the sewage and for the electricity and for drainage and so forth. We are directing these extra monies and supports to make sure that we get schools built on time to make life better for Albertans.

Mrs. Aheer: Given that the Auditor General's report stated that each of the departments of Education and Infrastructure is responsible for specific pieces of school builds but neither is responsible for the overall results, so the information on project schedules, including completion dates, is lost and given that the AG said that internal reporting on the project progress is lacking and public reporting is therefore consequently weak and that in Langdon we have a school that is on the first-year capital plan, to the minister: what has your ministry done to work with the Ministry of Infrastructure to address the specific concerns in the AG's report and get our schools built?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Yes. Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, in fact, we did ask the Auditor General to produce that very report because we were concerned about the scheduling of how the previous government was building schools. We found that more than half of them were behind schedule. Based on that report that we actually asked the Auditor General to do, we built a very sophisticated system by which we communicate with Alberta Infrastructure. We have meetings, and we have just-in-time funding. We meet with the larger school boards who are building their own projects. It's working. We're saving Albertans money. We're getting schools built. Certainly, I'm well aware of the circumstances in Rocky View school . . .

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, given that the Auditor General stated that neither of the departments of Education or Infrastructure has the systems to support school building programs, nor could they keep pace with the very large growth and complexity of the school build program and given that there seems to be no clear method of reporting school projects' progress, which the surrounding communities desperately need, to the minister: will you be able to build a school in Chestermere-Rocky View?

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: Yes.

Mr. Eggen: Again, thank you very much, and yes, yes, yes. We certainly are working on this in the most fulsome sort of way, and I'm well aware. I met with the Rocky View school board last week, and it's one of the fastest growing enrolment situations in the province of Alberta. So we are working very closely with them, including getting site readiness for schools like Chestermere, making life better for Alberta families.

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

Fentanyl Use in Indigenous Communities

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. During estimates for indigenous affairs the minister spoke about the need to fully consult with First Nations before implementing aspects of the climate leadership plan that affected those communities. He said that decisions could not be made unilaterally and must include government-to-government dialogue, but I've heard from First Nations leaders who feel that their input was not fully considered regarding declaring a public health emergency with respect to fentanyl. To the minister: what consultation occurred, if any, specifically with First Nations groups regarding the fentanyl crisis?

The Speaker: The Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the very important question. We know that indigenous communities have been particularly hard hit by the fentanyl epidemic, which is why we're working with leaders in those communities. Further, we've been working with health centres on- and off-reserve to ensure that supplies of naloxone are readily available as well as that the adequate screening is there so that those kits are able to save lives.

Mr. Rodney: Given the shared responsibility between provincial and federal governments with respect to indigenous relations and health spending and given that the federal government has designated money to be put aside to combat opioid abuse and given that in estimates the Minister of Indigenous Relations agreed with me that we have a fentanyl and opioid crisis on our hands, to the same minister: would the declaration of a public health emergency help First Nations to access more resources to deal with opioid addiction and the scourge of fentanyl, and if so, what is your government doing to help them access additional federal support? The Minister of Indigenous Relations, please.

The Speaker: The Associate Minister of Health.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the very important question. We are continuing to work with indigenous leaders both on- and off-reserve to ensure that we have adequate and culturally appropriate treatments and supports available to all indigenous peoples, whether they live on-reserve or off-reserve. To that end, we are also working to establish supervised consumption services in areas where there is the highest level of need.

Mr. Rodney: I didn't know we had a new Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Now, given the need to foster dialogue with First Nations so that the fentanyl crisis is quickly and efficiently addressed and given that other ministries such as Health rely on the expertise of Indigenous Relations to help them develop culturally appropriate

practices and given the unique challenges that each of these treaty groups has in dealing with this crisis, to the Minister of Indigenous Relations: will you facilitate meetings with treaties 6, 7, and 8 and their representatives to help co-ordinate the provincial response to fentanyl with culturally appropriate best practices for each . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The associate minister.

Ms Payne: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We have actually taken a crossministerial approach to the fentanyl crisis, working quite closely with partners in law enforcement, with Indigenous Relations as well as Advanced Education and Education. This is a very important issue and one that we take incredibly seriously as government, which is why we've also been working quite closely with the federal government, not just on how we're going to best and most effectively implement the resources for people using the federal funding that we received at the end of last year but also with matching funds from our government. Again, I urge the members across the way to support the Health budget so we can continue to . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The member for Calgary-East.

2:40

Affordable Child Care

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the main concerns that I hear from my constituents in Calgary-East is access to affordable, quality child care. Many parents in my riding are shift workers and require flexible hours, and as a mother I am keenly aware of how difficult it is to find a licensed space that meets your children's needs. To the Minister of Children's Services: will the government's recent investments increase access to spaces for parents in Calgary?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Children's Services.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As a mom I know how important the place that you drop your kids off every day is, but when the cost of child care is as much as a second mortgage, many parents are forced to choose between child care and pursuing their career, and the struggles that moms and dads face when trying to provide the best opportunities for their kids have been ignored in this province for far too long. That's why we're making life better and more affordable for families with our early learning and child care pilot centres, costing no more than \$25 a day.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that research shows the preschool years are absolutely critical for child development and given that parents deserve a child care centre that meets the learning needs of their children, how will the 22 new centres ensure that children with diverse needs can access the care that they need?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. While our goal is to make child care more affordable, we are also focused on addressing gaps that already exist in Alberta's child care system. Early learning and child care centres will be welcoming, supportive places for children with developmental and other disabilities, indigenous and newcomer families and will offer the kinds of flexible hours that have been missing in Alberta for so long. Centres will fit the needs

of their communities, meaning parents can trust that their kids are getting the kind of care that they need.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given the interest my constituents have expressed in the pilot program and given that early learning centres are already receiving a high volume of calls for spaces, can Albertans expect to see this program expanded?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We know these centres won't come close to addressing the demand for quality child care in Alberta. They are just a start, a pilot, and we'll be watching closely as they evolve, and we'll apply what we learn as we expand this pilot as the province's finances permit. For families who won't be able to take their kids to the centres right away, we are continuing to invest in the child care subsidy program to provide supports for early learning and child care professionals. Unlike the Official Opposition, who has called this program a waste of money, we made the choice to make this investment in affordable, quality child care for Alberta families now and in the future.

The Speaker: Hon. members, we'll proceed in 30 seconds.

Hon. members, if you're exiting, please exit. Hon. members, either sit down or exit.

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have several tablings. The first, from Great White North Franchisee Association-Tim Hortons storeowners requesting consideration in the ongoing discussions around consultations with business and the labour code.

The second is from the Progressive Contractors Association of Canada.

The third is from the Motor Dealers' Association of Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I've got a couple of tablings here. The first one is a screenshot of the Energy Efficiency Alberta website that I referred to today about not selling anything and not asking for money.

The second one is an article from the *Edmonton Journal* talking about how the carbon tax could raise another \$280 million in revenue for the federal government on the surtax on the carbon tax.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks for your note today. I have three letters for tabling with respect to a call for an extension and enhancement of the consultation on labour and employment standards. The first is a letter from Marc Rheaume, vice-president, Hospitality Inns, Delta Hotels. The second one is from Jessie Lail, chief investment officer, Indevolutions Corp. The third is from Mr. Dean Koeller, president, Calvert Home Mortgage Investment Corporation.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The Member for Strathmore-Brooks.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have five copies to table of a letter I wrote to the hon. Government House Leader on March 9, 2017, with this one particular quote: "I was interested earlier when the Premier was going on and on about how the terrible opposition parties with their tiny resources had been able to brainwash the entire population of the province on postsecondary education." That was the minister in 2005.

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

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In estimates the committee chair asked if I would table five copies of the following. It is indeed the Association of Independent Schools and Colleges in Alberta's December 2016 newsletter. The reason he asked me to table it is this quotation: "We have – and will continue – to support choice in education as well, whether students are learning in a bricks-and-mortar school or at home under the watchful eyes of their parents." That was said, of course, by the hon. Minister of Education.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a letter from the Calgary Motor Dealers Association about the workplace legislation review. They're not satisfied with the consultation process. They felt it was flawed, and they wanted more time for the consultation.

The Speaker: The Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a copy of a letter that was CCed to me. It was sent to the Minister of Labour, writing to request additional time and better local and regional access with respect to the workplace legislation review. This letter is from Kelly Temple, the dealer principal at Eastside Kia in Calgary.

The Speaker: The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to request unanimous consent of the House that we return to Presenting Reports by Standing and Special Committees. In the order of proceedings we seem to have missed something.

[Unanimous consent denied]

2:50

Orders of the Day

Committee of Supply

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

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

Hon. members, prior to beginning, the chair will outline the process for this afternoon. The Committee of Supply will first call on the chairs of the legislative policy committees to report on their meetings with the various ministries under their mandate. No vote is required when these reports are presented according to Standing Order 59.01(10).

The committee will then proceed to the vote on the estimates of the offices of the Legislative Assembly. The estimates of two ministries will then be voted on separately pursuant to Standing Order 59.03(1)(b) and in accordance with notice provided by the Official Opposition House Leader to the Clerk and the Chair of Committees on April 18, 2017. The final vote for the main estimates will consist of the remainder of the ministries not yet voted upon.

Finally, the chair would like to remind all hon. members of Standing Order 32(3.1), which provides that after the first division is called in Committee of Supply during the vote on the main

estimates, the interval between division bells shall be reduced to one minute for any subsequent divisions.

Committee Reports

The Chair: I would now invite the chair of the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future to present the committee's report.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Madam Chair. As chair of the Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future and pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(10) I'm pleased to report that the committee has reviewed the 2017-2018 proposed estimates and business plans for the following ministries: the Ministry of Advanced Education, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, the Ministry of Executive Council, the Ministry of Infrastructure, and the Ministry of Labour.

Pursuant to Government Motion 17 the committee has also reviewed the 2017-2018 proposed estimates and business plan for the Ministry of Education.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

I will now call on the chair of the Standing Committee on Families and Communities to present the committee's report.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Madam Chair. As chair of the Standing Committee on Families and Communities and pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(10) I am pleased to report that the committee has reviewed the 2017-2018 proposed estimates and business plans for the following ministries: the Ministry of Children's Services, the Ministry of Community and Social Services, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General, the Ministry of Seniors and Housing, the Ministry of Service Alberta, and the Ministry of Status of Women.

Thank you.

The Chair: Thank you.

Now the chair of the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship.

Loyola: Thank you, Madam Chair. As chair of the Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship and pursuant to Standing Order 59.01(10) I am pleased to report that the committee has reviewed the 2017-2018 proposed estimates and business plans for the following ministries: the Ministry of Energy, the Ministry of Environment and Parks, the Ministry of Indigenous Relations, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, the Ministry of Transportation, and the Ministry of Treasury Board and Finance.

Thank you.

Vote on Main Estimates 2017-18

The Chair: We shall now proceed to the vote on the 2017-18 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates. Pursuant to Standing Order 59.03(5), which requires that these estimates be decided without debate or amendment prior to the vote on the main estimates, I must now put the following question on all matters related to the 2017-18 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2018.

Agreed to:
Offices of the Legislative Assembly \$128,440,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Now we will proceed to the vote on the estimates of the two ministries which will be voted on separately pursuant to Standing Order 59.03(1)(b) and in accordance with notice provided by the Official Opposition House Leader to the Clerk and the Chair of Committees on April 18, 2017.

Agreed to:
Ministry of Children's Services
Expense \$1,205,824,000
Capital Investment \$1,539,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Agreed to:
Ministry of Justice and Solicitor General
Expense \$1,336,428,000
Capital Investment \$4,452,000

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

We shall now proceed to the final vote on the main estimates. Those members in favour of the remaining resolutions for the 2017-18 government estimates for the general revenue fund and lottery fund for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2018, please say aye.

[The voice vote did not indicate agreement]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 2:55 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms. Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Gray	Miranda
Babcock	Hinkley	Nielsen
Carlier	Horne	Payne
Carson	Jansen	Phillips
Ceci	Kazim	Piquette
Coolahan	Kleinsteuber	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Larivee	Sabir
Dach	Luff	Schmidt
Dang	Malkinson	Schreiner
Drever	Mason	Shepherd
Eggen	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Feehan	McKitrick	Sweet
Fitzpatrick	McLean	Turner
Ganley	McPherson	Westhead
Goehring	Miller	Woollard

Against the motion:

Aheer	Fraser	Rodney
Anderson, W.	Gill	Schneider
Clark	Gotfried	Smith
Cooper	Hanson	Starke
Cyr	Hunter	Strankman

Drysdale	McIver	Swann
Ellis	Orr	van Dijken
Fildebrandt	Pitt	Yao
Totals:	For – 45	Against – 24

[The remaining estimates of the general revenue fund and lottery fund were carried]

The Chair: Moving on, shall the vote be reported? Are you agreed?

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

I would now invite the hon. acting Deputy Government House Leader to move that the committee rise and report the 2017-18 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates and the 2017-18 government estimates for the general revenue fund and lottery fund.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions relating to the 2017-18 offices of the Legislative Assembly estimates and the 2017-18 government estimates for the general revenue fund and lottery fund, reports as follows, and requests leave to sit again.

The following resolutions for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2018, have been approved.

Offices of the Legislative Assembly: support to the Legislative Assembly, \$68,657,000; office of the Auditor General, \$26,754,000; office of the Ombudsman, \$3,265,000; office of the Chief Electoral Officer, \$7,436,000; office of the Ethics Commissioner, \$949,000; office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, \$6,873,000; office of the Child and Youth Advocate, \$13,242,000; office of the Public Interest Commissioner, \$1,264,000.

Government main estimates.

Advanced Education: expense, \$2,763,355,000; capital investment, \$450,556,000; financial transactions, \$630,000,000.

Agriculture and Forestry: expense, \$743,901,000; capital investment, \$17,189,000; financial transactions, \$1,310,000.

Children's Services: expense, \$1,205,824,000; capital investment, \$1,539,000.

Community and Social Services: expense, \$3,326,108,000; capital investment, \$3,623,000.

Culture and Tourism: expense, \$335,056,000; capital investment, \$2,041,000; financial transactions, \$5,017,000.

Economic Development and Trade: expense, \$354,180,000; capital investment, \$2,340,000; financial transactions, \$50,000,000.

Education: expense, \$4,703,858,000; capital investment, \$1,290,904,000; financial transactions, \$14,348,000.

Energy: expense, \$208,881,000; capital investment, \$5,399,000; financial transactions, \$65,025,000.

Environment and Parks: expense, \$950,482,000; capital investment, \$226,766,000; financial transactions, \$100,000.

Executive Council: expense, \$26,807,000.

Health: expense, \$20,356,900,000; capital investment, \$174,791,000; financial transactions, \$66,200,000.

Indigenous Relations: expense, \$192,811,000; capital investment, \$25,000; financial transactions, \$24,901,000.

Infrastructure: expense, \$589,026,000; capital investment, \$766,898,000; financial transactions, \$23,727,000.

Justice and Solicitor General: expense, \$1,336,428,000; capital investment, \$4,452,000.

Labour: expense, \$204,139,000; capital investment, \$900,000.

Municipal Affairs: expense, \$1,687,610,000; capital investment, \$8,437,000; financial transactions, \$138,279,000.

Seniors and Housing: expense, \$532,729,000; capital investment, \$166,580,000; financial transactions, \$17,500,000.

Service Alberta: expense, \$333,193,000; capital investment, \$131,155,000; financial transactions, \$10,150,000.

Status of Women: expense, \$7,329,000; capital investment, \$50,000.

Transportation: expense, \$1,771,356,000; capital investment, \$1,276,319,000; financial transactions, \$95,831,000.

Treasury Board and Finance: expense, \$165,052,000; capital investment, \$3,328,000; financial transactions, \$6,187,000; transfer from the lottery fund, \$1,445,544,000.

Madam Speaker, that concludes my report.

3:20

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

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

Introduction of Bills

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

Bill 10 Appropriation Act, 2017

Mr. Ceci: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 10, the Appropriation Act, 2017. This being a money bill, Her Honour the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor, having been informed of the contents of this bill, recommends the same to this Assembly.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance has moved first reading of Bill 10, the Appropriation Act, 2017.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion for first reading carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:22 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Horne	Nielsen
Babcock	Jansen	Phillips
Carlier	Kazim	Rosendahl
Ceci	Kleinsteuber	Sabir
Coolahan	Larivee	Schmidt
Dang	Luff	Schreiner
Drever	Malkinson	Shepherd
Feehan	McCuaig-Boyd	Sucha
Fitzpatrick	McKittrick	Sweet
Ganley	McLean	Turner

Goehring	McPherson	Westhead
Gray	Miller	Woollard
Hinkley	Miranda	
Against the motion:		
Aheer	Gill	Rodney
Anderson, W.	Gotfried	Schneider
Clark	Hanson	Starke
Drysdale	Hunter	Strankman
Ellis	McIver	Swann
Fildebrandt	Orr	van Dijken
Fraser	Pitt	
Totals:	For – 38	Against – 20

[Motion carried; Bill 10 read a first time]

3:40 Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

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

Bill 6 Northland School Division Act

The Chair: Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek.

Ms Woollard: Are we speaking on the bill? Okay.

Madam Chair, I'm very pleased to be able to speak about the Northland School Division Act. Some of the things that I was thinking about – I've given it a lot of thought. Northland school division was created not like every other school division in Alberta, not like most of them. It was created out of whole cloth in the '60s to fill a gap. That gap was providing some form of school system for the various northern communities that had their educational needs tended to by the churches or by a few local, very individual school divisions but nothing in which there was cohesive effort to make sure that their standard of education was the level or the equivalent of other people, other students in Alberta. They took care of the very small, some medium, some very isolated communities. There were farming communities; there were very definitely bush communities all over north-central Alberta, Métis settlements, and a lot of different areas.

One of the things that I find intriguing is that while there were commonalities to them – the population was 95 per cent indigenous at the time of creation – there was diversity, differences among them. Just for instance, I remember my class in Wabasca where the students found it very funny to listen to a tape of children from one of the farther east Northland schools speaking Cree because the accent was so different from their own. It was the same language, but it definitely had regional variations.

I want to talk about a few of the communities within the Northland division just to give kind of an illustration of how challenging running a school division like that, like Northland and that is Northland, can be. One community where I spent some time working as a psychologist is Susa Creek. Susa Creek is south of Grande Cache. It's just along highway 40, so when you go north from Hinton, you go up along that highway. Susa Creek is a very small community, and it's a co-op. It is not a reserve. It is not a settlement. It is a co-op. There are little co-ops set along that highway, groups of people who were displaced from Jasper national park when it was created.

What happened is that the Susa Creek people and the other people in the various co-ops along there were offspring of the Cree people and the Iroquois voyageurs who wound up settling in around Jasper. They farmed. They had a very nice farming community in the Athabasca River valley. If you go to Jasper park now and you go to Snaring River campground and you turn left to go towards Celestine Lake, you'll come to this big, beautiful valley surrounded by mountains, and you'll see some of the original farmhouses and outbuildings of the people that lived there. It's just lovely. But the park, when it was created, really didn't have a place for them there, so they were given these little pieces of land up along the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains and, basically, to the best of my knowledge, what I've been able to understand, were told: away you go. It was a year's march – that's in the Grande Cache visitor centre, which also works as a museum – to get all their belongings and their farm animals all that way on their own. So they settled there, and they've managed to have pretty active communities.

The only one of the co-ops that has its own school is Susa Creek, maybe just because it was the largest of the co-ops. The people there, as in many of the Northland communities, are always walking that tightrope, wanting the best for their children, like parents everywhere do, which means giving them options to do different things when they grow up. They want an education that's needed, but they want them to be aware of and to learn about their traditional way of life.

I had a long conversation with one parent in that community who said that every once in a while she and her husband would become aware that the children were becoming too affected by the modern conveniences. It didn't necessarily mean that she didn't want them spending all their time watching TV or playing video games but that they were missing out on learning how to do the things that were important in the culture. So their solution, which they did on a semiannual basis, my guess would be, was to move everybody into the wilderness for a period of time. They had a wilderness area where they would live, and they would set up a home, and they would provide for themselves.

Of course, the children would learn everything they'd need to know: the old ways of doing things and the ways you took care of things, how you get your food, how to get your water, how to build your housing. This was really important. It's such a challenge but, obviously, a very rewarding one because they want to maintain the traditional way of life and to have an education be available for the children, so they will come back into the community for the schooling to make sure that they're not missing it.

One of the things that becomes very clear the longer that you work up north is that to go in and have any expectation that the people in the various northern communities are going to somehow transform into people that are more like, you know, their urban neighbours, is not really realistic. That wouldn't be them.

I had a long conversation one time with a family up in Fort Chipewyan, and it involved raising grandchildren. When children sometimes would disappear into the delights and the money of Fort McMurray and not necessarily come back, the grandparents would be left with the children. Again, they'd be working very hard to maintain the traditional ways and to make sure that the children grew up with the skills of their culture but also to support them being successful at school.

Again, I heard parents talking about that one concern some of them had in one of the more southern schools was how important it was that children learn math and science: well, you know, don't dumb things down; don't oversimplify things. They wanted their children, when they graduated, if they wanted to go to NAIT or university, to be able to do it, so what they were being taught in

school needed to be at a level that would benefit them, that would be worth while for their futures.

Of course, it is bearing fruit. I'm noticing now that in a lot of the Northland schools more and more of the people working in the schools, the teachers and other professional people, are people from the communities, so that's success right there. Things are working.

One of the problems sometimes is that people want it to work really fast. They want things to change overnight. I can tell you, as anybody who's lived up north knows, that if you spend 40 years up there, if you're lucky, you're going to see a change, but you're not going to see great big, huge landslide changes.

It's recognizing, acknowledging, celebrating the culture, and it's also making sure that the education, as I've said, is something that will benefit students in the long run. It's making sure – and I do agree with that – children have the opportunity to learn about their cultures in school, so it's not just saying, "You know, on weekends you can go and be with your families and learn about your cultures," but to get a big picture of where their cultures fit into the big mosaic of being a Canadian, being an Albertan. It's really important to make sure that they know they are important in the fabric of their country and their community.

In the variation, as I've said, about Susa Creek, Wabasca-Desmarais, which are quite big communities, there's another comparison because they're not exactly urban but by comparison they are. They've got stores, they've got hotels, and they've got gas stations. There are a few more temptations for families. Sometimes, as a result, families will leave those centres as being a little bit too modern and will go live in the wilderness for a while, for six months or a year, just to be able to get back to their roots. I've known people who did that. It's not only sometimes for the children but for themselves, so they can find out where they are, remember who they are, remember what's important, and then they come back. This is fairly common.

3:50

There are people who, you know, are next to highways. The Mackenzie highway goes right by a couple of schools out there. There are the people of the fly-in communities, Chip Lake in the summer, and other places. Well, Susa Creek, being near Grande Cache, is pretty central. It's just that the more I look at it, the more interesting, the more diverse, the more varied it is, and the more we need to support having a board.

I was just having a look at some of the old reviews and some of the studies of Northland, and one of the things they said was that if you try to break up Northland and try to just put everybody with the nearest local community, you're going to be discounting the nature of the people that make up Northland. To help Northland and to help the children there and to celebrate who they are and what they're doing, they need to have their own schools and they need to be fostered, celebrated, and helped to prosper.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to thank the Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek for just wonderful information and for your obvious passion for the people in your outreach out there. Thank you so much for that. It was really, really wonderful to hear your background and your understanding of those folks. It's spectacular. Thank you so much. It actually plays a lot into the things that I want to speak about with regard to this bill, so thank you so much.

One of those things is that need for consultation, especially in spaces like this, where you have so many people and such diverse communities. As you were saying, Cree is spoken differently in one area than it is in the other. It's a beautiful and an unusual and very – I don't know – unique, I guess, aspect of those folks that may not get a chance to see each other and may have been, you know, separated by distance for a very, very long time so that they ultimately get their own accents and colour and feelings and words to describe the same things. Thank you so much for sharing that because I didn't know that and it gives a lot of personal anecdotal information to bills like this.

You talked about the cultural diversity, but there's also huge geographical diversity as well, isn't there? When you have that vast territory that's covering so much of Alberta's north, it provides learning opportunities that must be inclusive of First Nations and Métis students. We don't want – and I was saying this to the minister earlier today. This isn't about incidental inclusion; this is about actual inclusion and the obvious decisions that need to be made around making sure that those kids actually go to school, right? Obviously, based on a lot of the information that you've shared, hopefully, that's helping to determine the way this bill will move forward, too, because a lot of the information that you brought forward, I think, should be part of how the determination comes about on how to put this school board together. I think, ultimately, that information that you gave is going to help get kids into schools, get bums in seats, as it were.

There are approximately 2,900 students and 500 staff in those 23 schools. Of course, we've already listed some of the challenges that they've faced in these last 50 years. One of the things that we see with this particular area is low rates of school attendance and poor levels of student achievement and low high school graduation rates. I would love it if the member at some point would also maybe be able to speak to her knowledge about maybe why that is as well because I think that again could help in determining how this bill should go forward and the regulations that go with it.

The division was operated with appointed trustees. That started in 1961 and went to 1983. At that time, the first local school board committees were elected. Then from 1983 to 2010 the division's board was comprised of chairpersons from all of those local school board committees. On January 21, 2010, the Minister of Education at the time dismissed the board and then appointed an official trustee.

The Auditor General actually made three recommendations to improve governance and student performance in Northland, and the first one of those was to develop a plan for student attendance. Now, that sounds fairly obvious, but I think in this particular situation that this is probably one of the more important pieces of this. The second piece is: what is the oversight of the department to be in this? The third piece is: how do we monitor and engage students so that they're attending school?

I am very, very glad to see that this legislation will reinstall the democratic process of electing the trustees out there. I think that will make the Northland school division – well, it will bring them in line with other school divisions. With elected trustees generally I think we're going to feel that they're representing those local constituents better on their various issues. Then that model will also reflect the school board formation across the province and provide local representatives an opportunity to share in local issues and local decision-making. Again, with the uniqueness of this area this is super important because every one of these is a thumbprint. They're unique, they need their space, and they need people who understand those areas to be helping to make those decisions.

There are some good changes that will be made so that the board can adapt to circumstances that change. I mean, I'm assuming – and this is one of the places where I think this outreach is going to be so important. Maybe the minister might be able to clarify some of these things as well. If it is a good idea or if a reduction in the number of wards is the right way to go here to reduce the overall administrative costs, to help streamline the decision-making, that's a good thing. But we want to make sure that the information is thoughtfully gathered through stakeholder outreach consultation and, in some cases, consensus with some of these groups.

I didn't know about the co-ops. That was a really, really neat piece of information. Thank you for sharing that.

The caution, of course, that I would say, as always, is that we need some clarification of the roles and the responsibilities of that administrative structure. Starting with the administrative structure is important, obviously, but again we have to look at learning outcomes and getting kids into classrooms. I think that's the priority here. I felt that was a very strong part of the discussion that we had around education with Northland schools, that it was about really engaging with these students and getting them into the classrooms. I mean, obviously, administration and governance are important to any school division, but kids come first. We've got to get them into school.

We know that the previous board – I don't know if it's the right thing to say that they weren't successful in meeting the learning needs of students, but it certainly wasn't working. In whatever capacity that was happening before, we were seeing that the learning needs of students as a result – their extremely low levels of high school graduation, as I said before. The student achievement rates have to be the priority in this situation, in my opinion. I guess that in my understanding – and please correct me if I'm wrong – that was the reason the board was fired and an official trustee was installed, I believe, at that point.

Here are my questions to the minister. What does the legislation really change? We know that we're going to streamline the administration, but what does it actually change for the folks out there to really honour the uniqueness of this area that the Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek brought up?

Secondly, what makes you believe that a different administrative structure will positively impact the lives of those students serviced by the Northland school division? I truly believe – and I think we could all agree – that there is such a need to help reinvigorate that school division. I really hope that that new administrative structure is able to provide an opportunity for the schools in the Northland division to find the supports that they need to meet their students' needs, again, consultation being key with the folks that work and live in that unique area and understand the needs. I think that if the appropriate administration, the right people in those right places, is paired with changes in classrooms to improve educational opportunities for the students, we'll see a turnaround. Again, this is going to be about making sure that that education is really reflective of what goes on in that area.

4:00

The member was saying some interesting things about how sometimes the parents take the kids out into the bush for a little while and live and work out there to understand those areas. Maybe that's something that can be brought into the educational piece as far as outdoor education or – I'm not quite sure, not knowing what it is that they're doing while they're out there, but I'm certain that curriculum could certainly be constructed around those pieces. I think that would be very fun. Obviously, I mean, this is a nonpartisan issue, so all of us have a very, very important role in supporting education in those northern, rural, and indigenous areas.

I really feel that in here we need to support the work of these communities who are directly affected by this bill to ensure that every single decision that we make puts student learning first. I would propose that we use the opportunity that we have here to have some really meaningful discussions and conversations around what's going on with our indigenous partners and how to play a larger role in making this division a success. Of course, that can only happen if we're equal partners with the First Nations folks and co-operatives that are working out there so that we make sure that we understand where we're coming from, that we're not just throwing what we think is the right idea at them and assuming that they should fit into our mould. I think we should really make sure we're taking a look at this and that it works for these people.

We really want to see them improve their chances for academic success for all of these students and these families. In order to do that, we're going to need the support for this school division, the schools, the administrators and the teachers, and ultimately the students.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Madam Chair. Certainly, I appreciate the comments from the hon. Member for Edmonton-Mill Creek as well as Chestermere-Rocky View. I am very interested to see this bill move forward. I'm here to answer questions specifically, so for the hon. member's questions around what we are changing with Bill 6 from the existing governance structure: well, it's a way by which we can have elected trustees to represent areas and mostly represent probably more than one school. Again, I wasn't around personally to see how the original system was working with a trustee from each of the 23 schools, but I could probably see that it would be cumbersome. I have talked to trustees that were part of that system, and they found it to be – you know, each person was defending their own individual school, and then people weren't having that sort of broader picture of looking after the whole system together. I think that is definitely a change as well.

Also, this bill compels this newly elected Northlands school board to have school councils and to be meeting with them on a regular basis but also a ward council having a schedule – I think a quarterly schedule – to meet with the ward council and then also having a general council elected that meets once every term, which would be representation from all of Northlands school division. Again, that's a unique structure. I mean, this is the only school board that has its own act. That's the unique structure that forms the framework of this bill.

Also, I know that if we do pass this Bill 6, we are making a commitment to increasing funding to Northlands school division here over a period of a number of years, which we are paying for internally, Mr. Finance Minister. He was looking at me. You know, this is important, too, because, yes, we will, I think, make some great advances by having a democratically elected board back in place, but we need to send a message that we are supporting them as well.

We know that attendance and graduation rates from this particular school division are the most challenged, let's say, in the entire province. We know there are a lot of kids that just aren't going to school up there, Madam Chair. I think people talking about the elections, talking about increased funding, trying to entice teachers to make a long-term commitment to work at these schools will generate a lot of interest, and people will start to go back to school.

We think there are 2,300 kids enrolled right now, but it's probably even less than that now because we see a lot of people

coming and going, different seasonal basis. Yeah. You know, you mentioned 2,900, but really our actual numbers are quite a bit lower than that. So that's a challenge for all of us, to get more kids into school. I know there are way more kids up there that aren't going to school at all, so that's what we're going to aim for. We make our measurements based on graduation rates and attendance, so those are the improvements we hope to achieve.

Teacher retention is a big deal, for sure, to be able to get teachers to come and to stay longer, to get First Nations, Métis, and Inuit teachers into place not just as teachers but as administrators. I'm endeavouring to do that as well. Every step of the way we want to make sure that we're building a partnership where people are making their own decisions about their education future in the schools in the Northland school division. That's very, very important. You know, we have Kee Tas Kee Now Tribal Council as a partner with Northland schools, and I think that's a nice way to show how things can change over time, Madam Chair, that we can have an evolution of governance and how Northland looks like over time. I'm not suggesting that this bill would cast in stone how Northland would move forward forever, but rather it's the reinstatement of democracy for people to make choices about how Northland will look in the future, so that's an important consideration.

The consultation and the choices that people make in those democratic elections – they can make changes over time, just like all the other school boards, in terms of structure, composition, wards, direction, education, the whole nine yards. But the key is to take the power back to where it belongs, with the people, democracy in Northland, and to know that we are here to support change and that we will stand behind our choices here to improve education for students in Northland school division every step of the way.

Thanks.

The Chair: Any other questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: If I may, Madam Chair, I just would like to ask for some clarity on a few things that the minister had mentioned.

Minister, you had mentioned about compelling the school boards. Would you mind expanding on that a little bit in regard to the ministry's oversight with respect to compelling the school boards. Thank you so much.

Mr. Eggen: Sure. Yeah. Built into the bill that we're debating here today is that the structure will be in place to have a school council, the trustees to have regular meetings with the school council, and then a ward-level sort of council as well. Then, you know, I've instructed the trustee that I have appointed there, the interim trustee who will stay for a period of 18 months after, to get things moving, to make sure that these things do come to pass.

You know, we want to have representation from elders and from youth to be encouraged on each of these levels of council because we believe that those are the two places where there's the most to be gained from both the cultural perspective from elders and from the buy-in from young people up in the school division. So the oversight comes through the channels of my elected trustee and on a transition basis. But then, you know, it will be built into legislation if we pass this bill, and that will drive it, right? I mean, obviously, it's not like we're building a speed trap law or something like that here. It's not like we're going to catch them and make sure they do it. But, I mean, we have mechanisms to work together in partnerships to compel those structures to be in place.

We're trying to build, like you've heard before, that level of input that is so valued in the northern communities – I mean, it's valued

everywhere – that idea of people coming together and forming some consensus. It becomes obvious where you need to go to move forward, and we want to honour and value that, too. As part of our consultation, which will be ongoing here in the next coming weeks and months, too, you know, we are making sure that – like, I spoke to some of the political organizations up there with Treaty 8 and the Métis settlements association to let them know that, again, we're not just making decrees from Edmonton here. This is a bill that will set things free to restore the democratic choices that should reside in Northland school division.

This is not the bill. That's why I'm holding up the back side. It's actually Bill 10.

4:10

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you.

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

Are you ready for the question?

[The clauses of Bill 6 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

Hon. Members: Agreed.

The Chair: Opposed? That's carried.

Ms Ganley: Madam Chair, I move that the committee rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 6.

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

Hon. Members: Aye.

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

Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 1

An Act to Reduce School Fees

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you. It's my pleasure to rise and move third reading of Bill 1, An Act to Reduce School Fees.

Madam Speaker, it's been very heartening to see so many members rise in this House to support this legislation. When I think about our government's efforts to make life more affordable, there are few initiatives that I can think of that will have this level of impact with so many families, and I believe it will be felt almost immediately and certainly in the fall.

With the bill, if proclaimed, we will be removing the burden of instructional supplies and materials for nearly 600,000 students and families, and we will be removing these fees for busing to

designated schools for more than 145,000 students. I just want to be clear in my response to the hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View in relation to one of her questions that we will be funding the busing for special-needs students as well. All told, Alberta families will be saving more than \$54 million this September. You know, Madam Speaker, of course, I'm a teacher myself and have witnessed first-hand so many families struggling to come up with money to pay for fees, and the fee structure was just kind of let go, so it's a very bumpy landscape out there, to be sure.

I know that many members of this House will be watching closely as we develop regulations, and I expect them to do so, of course. We also will do so in partnership with all of our school boards, including those from charter schools, too, because the other part of this bill is that it's an act to reduce school fees but also an act to get school fees in check somehow so that we have a more uniform landscape, using the same simile or metaphor, if you will. I know that the Member for Calgary-Mountain View was talking about this in regard to the school fee situation, and I'm glad that he did bring it up because it helps us to understand that this is a discussion moving forward. It's an act to reduce school fees; it's not an act to eliminate school fees.

I think it was a remarkable support from our caucus and cabinet and Premier to come up with this to reduce school fees a year earlier than what I had built in a long-term budget, and I think we did a good job as an act to reduce school fees.

We believe that every student in Alberta has the right to an education and to have it affordable and of the highest quality, but we also, Madam Speaker, do care profoundly about Alberta's families and their pocketbooks. We were supported, as part of our platform, to make these changes and to improve and protect education and to make life better for Alberta families, so that's exactly what we did. I have been very heartened and encouraged by the support and encouraging words that I've had from other parties in this House as well. I can't wait for September, when people can see their school fees reduced, and we get some money back into Alberta families' pockets.

You know, one other issue I just wanted to bring forward here today: I've been getting some reports here and there where schools and school boards are putting out information suggesting that they would be short as a result of An Act to Reduce School Fees, that they might have to cut programs or fire or lay off teachers and so forth. We are covering this here from the government of Alberta, the finances to reduce school fees. We made reductions in other areas and other ministries, and I thank them for that very much. Schools and school boards will not be shorted as a result of An Act to Reduce School Fees. Any suggestion of that is perhaps confusion or something else, that I'm less happy about. We will get that information out very clearly once again for everybody to know that this is not in any way going to compromise the staffing or the programming or any of the offerings that school boards have right through this fine, fine province of ours.

I'm very happy at this point to once again thank everybody for helping us to build a very coherent and helpful bill for Alberta families, and I thank you for this time.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. First of all, I'd like to thank the minister for the announcement on being able to bus our very able and wonderful special-needs kids. I do have a question for you about that, and I'll include it in my little speech here. That's just wonderful news. It's a great way to start this part of the discussion. Thank you so much for that.

As always, I'm very pleased to speak to this bill. We've had a great chance to debate the bill, and I've heard some very positive pieces as well. We have a few concerns as well, and I'll reiterate those just a little bit as we're going forward because regulations will come, so this, you know, will hopefully help with going forward on those regulations as this bill starts to take form.

Overall, of course, we're pleased to see that the government took some leadership to address the Wild West of school fees, as they've been called, and to find ways to mitigate the impact of what's happening with families right now. Especially with the carbon tax and other things, reducing those transportation costs is going to be somewhat helpful, for sure. As you know, these issues are very, very close to the hearts and minds of the Wildrose and its caucus. We would like to of course see the eventual elimination of school fees.

My concerns, though, fall into a couple of specific categories. One of them is just with respect to the school fees. I've asked this question before, and I suppose that this may come forward in the regulations, but this is with respect to how they're defined. It seems a little bit inconsistent with the goals and objectives of the ministry's business plan. In the plan the government states, "Children and students are provided with an education that enriches their lives, prepares them for flexible careers in a diversified economy, and prepares them for success." Depending upon the school, their needs are going to be slightly different, one from the other. In the documents around the curriculum rewrite we read, "We are looking ahead to the future and working to ensure that provincial curriculum continues to give... students the best possible start in [a] life" that meets the demands of living in the 21st century.

4:20

With that large umbrella over what our education system could and should look like as we prepare our children for this world, all discussion of fees: we have to understand what's going to be reimbursed and link them. Are we linking them to paper and pencil like what we grew up with, or are we linking them to technology? Like, what are we looking at when we're talking about where the fees are going to be, where they're going to be taken from, and what is actually going to be covered? We've heard from the government that they'll define what constitutes school fees, and so far we've heard this much: workbooks, photocopying, printing, paper, and common fees charged to entire school bodies or a grade cohort.

The concerns are more around if the ministry is going to define the school fees across the province. Are we going to find that it's sort of a one-size-fits-all, that may not necessarily be helpful for certain school boards? It's just a thought and, as you go forward with regulations, just something to consider. Is it going to be difficult to define what constitutes mandatory fees? That will be, I would think, a critical part of implementing this bill.

Like I was saying earlier, school communities are so different across the province in the way that they meet their students' learning needs. We were just talking about Northland. I mean, this is perfect timing. We're talking about a school division that is extremely unique and may require different kinds of resources. If the government is going to support those families by reducing school fees, I would think that it would make sense to have some flexibility in determining what that's going to look like instead of sort of a centrally determined school fee. Again, this is just something to look at in the regulations. For example, in some schools workbooks and photocopying may constitute fees, but in others costs might be more related to digital media or learning activities with communities or as part of work experience or CTS, where those may constitute fees.

I heard during the budget estimates that the minister intends to expand the dual credit program as well, so that's a wonderful opportunity to allow students to see some really great academic success in new ways. The school fees for a high school that offers a wealth of dual credit options could look extremely different from the fees in a high school that has a more traditional classroom program.

We've also heard from stakeholders that are a little concerned that how school fees are defined may not support their efforts to provide learning experiences that will prepare them for life in the 21st century. I think that some clarity around those pieces and consultation, I think, especially around that, going into the regulation phase of this, once the bill passes, will be very, very important.

I'm also very interested to see how the bill will be implemented and how the regulations are going to be developed. As the minister said, we'll be watching extremely closely to see how that happens and to see the impact of that. Are the funds going to go just to general revenue, or are they going to be used at the complete discretion of the local authorities? Obviously, we support local decision-making, so if the funding is intended to reduce school fees for families, are we going to see some measures of accountability as well to ensure that families are actually enjoying the benefit of these reductions in the funding?

On the website it reads, "In the long term, the proposed amendments would provide government with increased authority over all school board fee types related to publicly funded education programming." If maybe the minister has a moment to talk a little bit more about the increased level of authority. That raises some concern and also will impact the way that the bill is implemented. That's actually determined after the bill is passed, so I would like to have some clarity on that if that's possible.

The collaboration of Albertans prior to the enactment of any legislation: I think if there's one thing that we've learned since we've been in this House, it's that piece. Albertans have been really disappointed. They feel like they've been sidelined. I mean, we could bring up Bill 6. There are lots of examples. It can be deeply hurtful and destructive and very divisive if governments don't engage meaningfully and with consultations prior to enacting legislation. The bill seems to follow in that pattern: you know, table legislation, pass it through the process, proclaim it, and then consult. I feel it's very, very important that Albertans understand not just the fact that we're reducing school fees – that's excellent – but that there are other pieces to this bill that will not be determined until it's actually passed.

Again I wanted thank the minister for his consideration of special-needs students. My question with regard to that: is that just to designated schools, or is that going to be able to take kids to schools that might specifically be for their needs? Not all kids with special needs or disabilities can go to the school that's designated. That's just my question around that.

Also, the government speaks about ensuring that our students have the best possible education experience. The distance allocations to designated schools may actually put families at a disadvantage. Again, within the regulations, that might be something that you want to look at, those distances. The more kids we can get on those buses, the better. I think there are efficiencies to be had there. The minister was actually speaking today about areas where children can be picked up and a couple of other things. Maybe you could expand upon that as well.

I'm also wanting to just again ask – and I know I've asked this a hundred times; I'll ask a hundred times more – about the impact of the carbon tax on transportation costs. The cost of carbon tax to boards is expected to be between \$8 million to \$12 million over the

next year. This change and the expected payment of \$15 million to boards will not really begin to cover the cost of the carbon tax and the reduction of the school fees.

These are just a few of my concerns, Madam Speaker. The minister is quite aware of my concerns, but I just thought it might be time to bring some of these up again and maybe get some more clarity on those. It's a good first step in trying to ease the financial burden on Albertans, reducing the school fees. I really do look forward to further conversations around implementing the bill and the regulations.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I rise at third reading of Bill 1 to speak in favour of the bill and will be voting in favour of An Act to Reduce School Fees. Clearly, it's important that we make public education as absolutely accessible as it possibly can be. School fees and other fees do act as a barrier for many parents. I know that many parents have a very difficult time paying those. Of course, I'd love to see it be an act, in fact, to eliminate school fees because I know this is something that really is a burden for many Albertans. But this bill in its current form is at least a step in the right direction, so I will support the bill.

Having said that, I do have some concerns. The Member for Calgary-Mountain View had brought an amendment, of which I was certainly supportive, to address the gap, what this bill does for all public schools but, quite curiously, leaving out charter schools, whereas we know, of course, that charter schools are in fact public schools. It is very interesting that the government has chosen to ignore charter schools when reducing school fees, and I do wonder, frankly, if that is a deliberate choice on behalf of this government. Clearly, it is, because they rejected the amendment and have kept it in the bill.

When this bill was first introduced, it was interesting. A lot of parents, I think, were left with the impression that there would be no school fees, and those parents, of course, included parents of children who were in charter schools. The news release itself indicated that Alberta parents will no longer have to pay school fees for certain categories of fees – those included instructional supplies or materials and eligible students taking the bus to their designated schools – but, obviously, not all Alberta parents and not all public schools because charter schools were excluded. So I wonder about that.

Of course, charter schools are public schools as per the legislation that governs them. They provide the same basic education as per the curriculum that is laid out by Alberta Education, and they do so in a way that's different or to enhance overall student learning. Now, there are a lot of questions about charter schools, whether or not they cherry-pick students, whether all charter schools are, in fact, accessible. And I believe very much that they are. They cannot deny access to any individual or group. They cannot charge tuition. They can charge the same school fees as other public schools currently can. That will change under this bill, where other public schools have a reduction in their school fees and, again, charter schools do not.

4:30

I wonder why that is, and all I can surmise is that the government is lumping together charter schools with private schools, and they are not private schools. It is very much a different thing. I just wonder if this is part of what I would consider a passive-aggressive attempt to divide schoolchildren between those who are seeking

their public education through a charter school and those that are seeking their public education through a traditional public school rather than the government choosing to make a definitive statement.

Now, I've heard the minister, and he and I have actually had a conversation directly in the past about whether this government does in fact support charter schools, what their plans are going forward. He's indicated that charter schools will remain part of Alberta's education system, and I sincerely hope that is the case. He also indicated earlier today that he will look into what he deems an oversight, to not include charter schools. I don't believe it is an oversight. It seems to have been a deliberate choice.

I hope, though, that it is not a way of starting a chipping away at charter schools. I think they provide a tremendous service to the students who participate in them. They enrich our province and enrich the overall educational experience and have driven public school boards in those similar jurisdictions and around the province to add programs similar although not always identical to the programs that are provided by charter schools. That also is a good thing. It is innovation in our education system within the public frame, and as a supporter of public education I can only think that that's a very good thing.

It's a worry when a minister is establishing one set of rules for public schools and another set of rules for a different group within the public schools. I don't think it's right, and I would obviously encourage the minister to fix that going forward.

In the end, though, I will support the bill because I think it's important to reduce school fees, much as I would have liked to have seen the charter schools included in that. I'll take the minister at his word that he's going to look into this, and I would hope it would be something he would address going forward.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) allows for five minutes of questions and answers if anyone wishes to take advantage.

Seeing none, I'll recognize the hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak on Bill 1, An Act to Reduce School Fees. I think it's a good step in the right direction to lighten the load for Alberta's parents, but as did my colleague from Calgary-Elbow, I want to focus specifically on the bill as it pertains to charter schools.

I have a great small rural charter school in my area, Valhalla Community School. It is the smallest charter school in Alberta and the only truly rural charter school in Alberta. It is a K to 9 school that serves the population in the surrounding 3,600 square kilometres around the hamlet of Valhalla. It is a rural school that serves families in Valhalla Centre as well as the surrounding farming community.

The school has a direct instructional model of teaching and learning through a phonics-based reading and writing program starting in kindergarten. The highly structured and sequenced approach to education meets with a very high level of parent satisfaction, increasing levels of academic success on the part of the students, and it sees increasing enrolment registration numbers for early elementary school. All of the kids and parents of Valhalla Community School attend school council meetings to get a sense of being involved in rural communities. This school believes that the long-term goal of rural education is to develop the skills, knowledge, and values that will enable students to become strong and contributing leaders of tomorrow. I think I can speak for all of us and say that we share this belief in our next generation of Albertans.

Bill 1 is designed to reduce school fees for parents of children attending public schools. Let me be very clear. Charter schools in Alberta are public schools, so if this government aims to help the parents of children who attend public schools, then children who attend charter schools must be included. Unfortunately, this is not the government's plan. The government is reimbursing public schools through grants, but charter schools are not eligible to receive those grants. If another public school in a designated area can receive a government grant so that they don't have to charge parents school fees, why can't a rural charter school like Valhalla Community School receive the same grant? The expenses are going to be the same at both schools. The difference is that the designated public school can get money from the government, and the charter school can't.

Transportation funding is a long-standing issue. Transportation funding in rural Alberta is divided into base funding and distance funding. Kids who are in Peace Wapiti get funding for both base and distance funding. The transportation for Valhalla kids would only be eligible for base funding. In a \$1.4 million budget base transportation funding would be \$90,000. To cover transportation costs in full would likely take another \$90,000, which is 7 per cent of the budget, which would have to come out of the operation funds, which is basically a teacher's salary.

With this distinction in funding, the parents of children who attend charter schools will have to pay more than parents who send their kids to a public school in their designated area even though they are both public schools. If parents want to send their kids to a charter school like Valhalla because they think it's the best choice for their children's education, they are now at a financial disadvantage. Moving to a designated school from a chartered school that they believe in, due to finances, is not a choice we should be forcing our parents to make.

I support the work that the rural charter school of Valhalla is doing to educate rural kids in my area, and I hope that this government can see that disadvantaging these schools by inequity in funding is not the way forward. I urge the Minister of Education to carefully consider how the money going to school boards could be more efficiently distributed to also lessen the school fees load for our Alberta charter schools.

I'm not quite sure and am not clear on the minister's plan going forward, you know, on how he's going to finance these. I just hope, going forward, that he doesn't reward the bad operators and punish the good ones. I know of large rural schools that have large areas that actually lose a lot of funding in transportation, and they cover that cost from the classroom funding. They don't charge transportation school fees. Yet I know large schools in cities where the school boards actually make money on transportation and use that money to subsidize the classroom. And guess what? They charge school fees for transportation. I don't think it's quite right that he punishes the good operators and rewards the bad ones.

Those are my comments. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other speakers to the bill?

Seeing none, I'll call on the hon. Minister of Education to close debate.

Mr. Eggen: Yes. Thank you and for everyone's comments. I appreciate the commentary. Certainly, once again if I can express that this is An Act to Reduce School Fees. We gave it that title for a reason. We will have a fulsome discussion about reducing more school fees as we move forward.

Talk about something that literally epitomizes and defines making life better for Alberta families with children: this is it. I'm

really glad that people do kind of see the forest for the trees on that. The comments that each member made I will certainly take into fulsome consideration.

Otherwise, Madam Speaker, I would ask to close debate on this bill.

[Motion carried; Bill 1 read a third time]

4:40

Bill 2

An Act to Remove Barriers for Survivors of Sexual and Domestic Violence

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm honoured to be able to rise today and move third reading of Bill 2, An Act to Remove Barriers for Survivors of Sexual and Domestic Violence.

I want to thank my colleagues on all sides of the House for their willingness to support this bill and for the constructive debate we've had so far. Bill 2 proposes amendments to the Limitations Act that would help survivors of sexual and domestic violence by allowing them the time they need to come forward and file a civil claim. If passed, the bill will eliminate the limitation period for commencing a civil claim related to sexual assault or other sexual misconduct and nonsexual assault involving a minor, an intimate relationship, or a dependant.

We have heard from survivors that the current time frame, two years, is often not enough time to heal from their traumatic experiences. Madam Speaker, we know it's time to do more to support and protect people who have experienced sexual and domestic violence. We recognize that for survivors, the decision to come forward is extremely personal and difficult. Removing the existing limitations period empowers survivors to come forward on their own terms when they are ready.

If passed, the legislation will make Alberta a leader in addressing other sexual misconduct in intimate relationships as no other jurisdiction in Canada expressly states this in their legislation. Removing the limitation period for these types of claims would help people who have experienced a broad range of behaviours. This includes sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, stalking, indecent exposure, voyeurism, or distributing sexually explicit photographs or videos without an individual's consent. The provisions of this bill would apply retroactively, meaning it would allow claims that stem from incidents that predate its coming into force.

Madam Speaker, every Albertan deserves to feel respected in their communities, homes, and workplaces. Organizations that work with survivors call this legislation an inspiration. They told us that the bill opens one more door for survivors to come forward and provides one more option for a survivor's journey. Survivors will have time to heal. Ultimately, this is about choice. It's about allowing survivors to come forward and hold their perpetrators to account when they choose to do so.

I'm gratified by the support this bill has received so far, and I have been moved by many of my colleagues in the House who were brave enough to speak about their own experiences during second reading. Their ordeals and those of countless other survivors underscore how common these crimes are and the need for legislation like this.

Madam Speaker, the evidence certainly suggests that when a survivor is healing from sexual or domestic violence, these journeys take all sorts of different paths and that we need to empower these individuals to have the tools they need to come forward when they are ready to make the decisions that are right for them in each individual case. Not everyone will take advantage of this

legislation, but at the end of the day, this is about giving survivors a choice, a choice of when they feel ready and when they choose the path forward.

I stand here today seeking continued support from the House for this bill. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-West.

Mr. Ellis: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 2, An Act to Remove Barriers for Survivors of Sexual and Domestic Violence. As we all know, sexual assault, assault on minors, domestic violence are some of the most disgusting crimes present in our society.

You know, as a former law enforcement officer I, sadly, have had much experience in dealing with many victims of crimes, especially those pertaining to sexual and domestic violence. These crimes violate the fundamental feelings of security that are a necessary condition for feeling safe within our community. All too often that feeling of security is further harmed when the victims of these crimes attempt to seek justice. While the men and women who work in our police services and in the criminal judiciary system do amazing work, the reality is that our justice system is not always accommodating to victims.

The high burden of proof that we demand in our criminal justice cases to prevent wrongful conviction and maintain innocence until the proof of guilt can be traumatic for someone that has recently suffered. While the civil prosecution system offers an alternative method of obtaining justice, where the burden of proof is lower, there are still many factors that would discourage a victim from coming forward.

One of these factors is a reluctance to face the person who wronged them so soon after that event. Given the nature of the offences that this bill is focused on, there are very strong emotions involved in bringing an accusation forward, and the experience of testifying, attending court day after day, and hoping to obtain some measure of peace can be extremely trying. The idea of having to go through all of that can discourage people from bringing forward accusations, and that can become a barrier to achieving justice.

While the bill before us today doesn't make the experience any easier, it does give more time to heal before having to go through with it. I think that is a positive step, a way of acknowledging that we know how hard the process can be, that if you need to take longer than the two years previously allowed, you can do that, and you can do that without worrying that justice won't be served because you waited.

For that reason, I will support this bill as a show of support for anyone who finds themselves in a situation. Along with that support, though, I do have a note of caution for the government. I see that the bill makes the removal of limitations retroactive, and I don't have a problem with that, but I do want to make sure that the government has the resources in place so that when these older cases start to go through the system, they do get the attention that they deserve. For many of these people seeking to bring older cases, some of them have lost faith in the ability of the system to help them, and if they try again after any number of years to address past wrongdoings and the system fails them again, well, that will be another traumatic experience that they simply just do not need.

I will be, of course, voting for this bill, and I hope that the government will dedicate the necessary resources to make it a success. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Airdrie.

Mrs. Pitt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today and speak to the third reading of Bill 2, An Act to Remove Barriers for Survivors of Sexual and Domestic Violence. It's a bill that I will certainly be supporting and, I should add, all members of my caucus as well.

Now, this bill is an opportunity for all of us to work together and collectively show that we support survivors. It's important for us to recognize the absolute horrors of sexual assault and that we as legislators reflect this understanding by addressing barriers to justice for these crimes.

Sexual abuse and any form of sexual violence, including rape, molestation, incest, and similar forms of nonconsensual sexual contact – most sexual abuse experts agree that sexual abuse is never only about sex. Instead, it's often about an attempt to gain power over victims. We have an obligation to Albertans to ensure that we put the power back into the hands of victims. Removing the time limitations on civil matters of sexual abuse will allow victims to seek their own form of justice that they might not otherwise have been able to, whether that be due to trials being stayed or dismissed or for some other reason.

Sexual assaults can leave victims with a feeling that their body is not their own. Victims often feel shame, terror, depression, and may even blame themselves for the attack. When a survivor finally comes forward, it can be sometimes decades later. According to some studies in the U.S. approximately 73 per cent of child victims do not disclose the abuse for a year or more, and 45 per cent do not disclose it until more than five years have passed. Many victims of childhood sexual abuse never tell anyone about the abuse. It is important that when they are ready to seek justice, they still have options.

I want to thank all parties in this Assembly for joining the call to put victims first, and I thank the minister for her very hard work on this file. Good job. I urge all of my colleagues to support and stand in favour of this bill.

4:50

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) allows for questions or comments.

Seeing none, I'll recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak in strong support of this bill, and I think the best way to start the conversation and my comments is just to quote the minister. First, I want to thank the minister for bringing this forward and thank the government for taking real steps that I think will help survivors of sexual and domestic violence in a meaningful way. Quoting the minister, it allows them "to come forward when they are ready. We respect the time it may take to do this. If passed, Bill 2 will improve the lives of these Albertans."

I think we in this House can agree with all that, all of those words and this sentiment. It's good when we can focus on an issue together in this House that is a huge problem in our community but also come forward with a solution that we can all agree is the right one. I do take the Member for Calgary-West's point, that resources in our court system are an important aspect and an important issue and something that we do need to ensure we focus on, and I will continue to hold the government to account for their role in ensuring that the court system continues to function well.

But as it relates specifically to this bill, it's timely, and it helps make Alberta a leader in addressing sexual assault and sexual misconduct. It helps address what is a chronic and substantial problem in this province and, sadly, has been in Alberta for many, many years. The statistics are sobering. Half of all women in Canada have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual

violence; 74 per cent of Albertans, three-quarters of Albertans, say that they have personally known at least one woman who has experienced physical or sexual abuse.

A number of years ago I volunteered with HomeFront, the domestic violence specialized court in Calgary, a remarkable organization that focuses on survivors of domestic violence and ensures that we tackle the root cause of why it happens, ensures that perpetrators are brought to trial quickly. But the focus is not purely on punishment. The focus is on counselling, not just for the perpetrator but for the victims, for the survivors and their families, to really get into the root causes of why domestic violence happens and to try to, in the tag line of the organization at the time, stop it where it starts.

I'll tell you a brief story from that time. A volunteer rode with the Calgary police domestic conflict unit that night, and they said: all right; we're going to sit and listen to every single domestic violence call that comes in, and we're going to try, lights flashing, to get to every single one tonight if we can. It was absolutely impossible. They'd get a call in one corner of the city, and while they're on their way, a minute later they'd have to be going to the next call and to the next call and the next. It was absolutely not possible to respond to every single domestic call that evening, and that just tells you about the scale of the problem.

My statistics here show me that the Calgary Police Service responds to 19,000 domestic violence calls every year. So we get a sense of the scale of this issue, and by no means will Bill 2 address every single aspect of the issue – far from it – but it's an important step to allow survivors, victims of domestic violence and sexual assault to, in their own time, bring action that can help them with their healing journey.

With that, I will absolutely support this bill, and I again thank the government for bringing it forward. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)?

Any other members wishing to speak to the bill?

Seeing none, I'll call on the hon. Minister of Justice to close debate.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I don't think that much remains to be said on this bill. I'd like to thank again my colleagues on all sides of the House for their support of this bill and particularly my colleagues who shared their stories at second reading. I think that really signals to the public just how prevalent these sorts of offences can be and how they reach through sort of all different areas of society and touch the lives of all Albertans in a really devastating way. I'm very glad that we were able to move forward on this bill to ensure that survivors can come forward in their own time and to make it just a little bit easier for them.

Thank you, again, very much.

[Motion carried; Bill 2 read a third time]

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 7

An Act to Enhance Post-secondary Academic Bargaining

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my pleasure to rise today to move second reading of Bill 7, An Act to Enhance Post-secondary Academic Bargaining.

Our government is committed to fair legislation that makes life better for hard-working Albertans. This includes the proposed bill, that will modernize Alberta's labour relations model for the postsecondary sector.

In 2016 our government introduced changes to the legislation governing essential services. These changes extended the right to strike to Alberta's public services and health care sector; however, it did not include academic bargaining in the postsecondary sector. This gave postsecondary employers and employees additional time to transition and established a thorough consultation process to better understand the unique details of labour relations in the postsecondary sector and the needs of stakeholders.

Madam Speaker, we are bringing this bill forward after extensive consultation with stakeholders. As a result, I believe the changes we are introducing do take into consideration the unique nature of the postsecondary sector while also extending constitutionally protected rights to postsecondary faculty, graduate students, and postdoctoral fellows.

Bill 7 proposes sections of the Post-secondary Learning Act to be repealed and creates a new division in the Labour Relations Code for the postsecondary sector. If passed, academic staff, graduate students, and postdoctoral fellows would fall under the Labour Relations Code, giving them the right to strike and becoming subject to essential services legislation. This means that for the first time in Canada postdoctoral fellows would fall under legislation that formally recognizes their status as employees and would improve and protect their rights to fair and respectful workplaces.

Our government believes in the collective bargaining process that respects both workers and employers. That's why postsecondary institutions would be required to negotiate essential services agreements with bargaining units and would be covered by the lockout provisions under the Labour Relations Code.

With the proposed changes, graduate students and postdoctoral fellow associations would be responsible for bargaining with the institutions for mutually beneficial collective agreements. Ending compulsory arbitration will allow faculty, graduate students, and postdoctoral fellows and their institutions to come to prudent agreements that respect workers' constitutional rights, protect students, and ensure affordability for taxpayers.

Madam Speaker, Alberta has long been out of step with the rest of Canada, and it's time to ensure that postsecondary employees have the same rights as other Canadians. The changes that we are proposing would extend the right to strike, with protection of essential services, to faculty so that labour relations in Alberta's universities and colleges are consistent with the rest of Alberta's public sector and with the postsecondary sector across Canada. In addition, by modernizing our labour model, we are ensuring that our workplace rules comply with the Supreme Court of Canada's 2015 decision.

Over the past year we've worked with well-known labour lawyer Andy Sims to better understand the needs and considerations of our stakeholders. Since the introduction of the bill last week, many of our stakeholders have shared their satisfaction with the proposed changes. Many graduate students and postdoctoral fellows have applauded this government for considering their unique situations and for pushing for these changes. We know there'll be questions, and we will continue to take careful and measured approaches to provide stability.

Over the next five years the government will work closely with institutions to transition postsecondary staff to a collective bargaining process that addresses their unique needs.

5:00

While we recognize that these changes directly affect staff on our postsecondary campuses, students will also have questions about the impacts to their education. That's why we'll work with institutions to ensure that adequate contingency plans are developed to address strikes and lockouts and ensure minimal impacts to students. This includes reviewing and making contingency plans that address student aid, grants, and bursaries because we know, Madam Speaker, that these are the things that make a difference in the lives of students and Albertans.

This bill demonstrates our government's work to make life better now and into the future by making practical changes, changes that ensure that workplace rules are strengthened and that hard-working Albertans have good, fair jobs that support a strong and modern economy because that's what Albertans deserve.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other hon. members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Highwood.

Mr. W. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise today to speak to Bill 7, An Act to Enhance Post-secondary Academic Bargaining. First, I want to say that the bill itself seems a bit misleading. What the NDP have introduced here is not going to enhance anything except the likelihood of professors on picket lines. But maybe that's what the desired outcome is. As a matter of fact, we know that not only will it make bargaining more combative; it also caused quite a stir in the academic world. The government admitted in its discussion document that this could have been sorted out within the existing postsecondary act. We agree with some of the faculty associations that basically turning these associations into labour unions under the postsecondary act is once again a case of this government going a little too far in pursuing its ideology.

Many stakeholders and faculty and staff have been in contact with me and are not in support and have not felt that they have been heard. The objective in consultation was to seek stakeholder feedback to make informed options for potential legislation, or at least one would hope. This, however, is not what happened to many. They made submissions and even explained what the obstacles were and would present, but once again it seems like ideology has taken precedence over common sense. Most agree that some changes to bargaining are needed to comply with the 2015 Supreme Court of Canada decision and the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour case. It is seen as strengthening Canada's public-sector workers' right to strike unless they are actually deemed essential.

Granting this to academics, I'll note, is not out of line with a number of other provinces, for better or for worse. But as usual, the NDP government couldn't help themselves and went too far with something that is not very popular with a number of faculty associations. Many stakeholders that we have spoken to do not like the contents of this bill and certainly have felt that they have not been heard.

Today I will stand in the gap and tell the House what I've heard from some of the ones who have not felt that they've been heard. What I've heard, Madam Speaker, is that many aspects of the model, except the strike lockout, are already covered in their collective agreements. What they don't desire is to be unionized, but would prefer to work the strike lockout and essential services element into the Post-secondary Learning Act.

The very nature of the uniqueness of postsecondary education is such that it should have its own labour regulations and have its own regulations arrangement. The academics play an integral role in the management and direction of the university and its friendly

atmosphere, and that's the way they want to keep it. Instead of being perceived as academics and intellectuals in a leadership role, the government is trying to turn the faculty associations into trade unions, diminishing and diluting their status to fit into the NDP world view, where either you're a boss trying to exploit workers or a worker who will be exploited unless you have a powerful union.

I want to make it clear that I'm not trying to belittle one sector for the sake of another. What I'm trying to say here is that these academics are just different, and they should not be moulded or attached to any other just to fit this government's agenda. Apples should not be compared to oranges. An overwhelming majority would prefer the status quo, especially as it relates to bargaining, because it allows faculty associations to exist as integral partners of the governance and operation of the institutions. Statutory rights of faculty associations have tempered a potential adversarial relationship between management and faculty. The other issue is that after five years these faculty associations could be replaced by trade unions.

As well meaning as this government might be, it always has to take it one step too far. There are some good things that have been decided upon, but do the associations need to be moved from the PSLA to the labour act to achieve these outcomes? As a matter of fact, moving associations from the PSLA to the labour act creates more problems and conflict and more points of confusion than what really needs to be dealt with.

Bill 7 provides no transition period for bargaining that's already in progress, and unfortunately there will be plenty of colleges and at least one university that we know of that will lose their ability to go to arbitration should there be an impasse at the bargaining table, which is what the rules were when they started the process. In other words, with this bill the government is pulling their existing right to binding arbitration in the middle of negotiations. With the new legislation in place the only binding dispute resolution mechanism is to strike or, better yet, to get locked out.

Now, let me be clear about one thing. Many of my colleagues think the binding arbitration that public sectors have relied on is a mixed blessing. Yes, it means that there have been virtually no work stoppages in Alberta, but it also meant that the government has not been able to get the best deal for taxpayers because pay for government workers has been decided on by arbitrators.

I'm not against changing the rules, but I do think that if we're going to change the rules, it's pretty surprising that this supposedly pro-labour government is doing it mid-negotiation – why? – because you're giving them the right to strike, and they probably can't use that because they never thought they would have to prepare for it. No protocols are set up, and more importantly they have no contingency fund.

Legislation should have been very clear that an appropriate amount of time be allowed for the transition. There is no order and no arrangements have been made that will provide stability going into a nonstrike environment and none where strikes are now allowed. Some forethought should have been given to how this would affect the institutions, faculty, grad students, and postdoctoral fellows. We understand that you took extra time just so you could justify making the heavy changes, but without actually listening carefully to all sides involved, only ideology will be achieved.

Designing an appropriate labour code provision to the PSLA would have been less disruptive. The fact that faculty members wear different hats only justifies a unique approach to labour

relations within the PSLA or even a separate section of the labour code. I'm almost positive that if you would have asked some of these faculty associations to help you design such a regime, they would have been more than happy to help.

Other recommendations have been made, and you have and you are possibly incorporating similar language as in the B.C. College and Institute Act. This would only strengthen the authority of the academic councils in that the board of governors would have to consult academic councils on the development of educational policy for matters outlined at least 10 working days before the board of governors deals with the matter.

Currently PSLA states that an academic council "shall make recommendations . . . to the board with respect to any matter that the board refers to the academic council." In other words, academic councils currently have no more than an advisory role on matters that the boards refer to them.

Another change that has been recommended is that certain matters be the joint responsibility of both the board of governors and the academic councils. If agreements cannot be made, the matter is then referred to the minister. It has its pros and cons, but I'd like to hear this government's thoughts on that.

Another item discussed was that the composition and election of academic councils must be clearly defined. Many examples of this have been presented to you.

Moving ahead, I know you've heard that instead of appealing to the Labour Relations Board, ideally the board of governors and faculty associations should jointly be responsible for the designated decision, with the right to appeal the designated decision to an independent third party.

In closing, due to the overwhelming evidence that has been presented to me in regard to this legislation, I have no other option, then, but to oppose this government's bill in its current form and ask them to at least make some changes to reflect the wishes of those who this bill will affect.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Any other members wishing to speak to this bill?

The hon. Minister of Advanced Education to close debate.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Of course, I have listened intently to the Member for Highwood's statements, and I look forward to perhaps getting into the details of some of the changes that he and the people he represents would like to see in Committee of the Whole. But for this afternoon I think we've enjoyed a vigorous and stimulating debate, and I would like to close debate on this bill.

[Motion carried; Bill 7 read a second time]

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

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Seeing the really fantastic progress that we have managed to make today – I'm very impressed with us and our ability to work together on moving these things forward – I move that we call it 6 and adjourn for the day.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:10 p.m.]

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