



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Third Session

Alberta Hansard

Thursday morning, May 11, 2017

Day 32

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 29th Legislature

Third Session

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Party standings:

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

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Thursday, May 11, 2017

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Deputy Speaker: Good morning.

Let us reflect. As elected representatives we take the weight of our responsibility to our constituents very seriously, and we live by the motto Service above Self. However, let us never lose sight of the importance of self-care. In order to discharge our duties successfully, we must remain healthy.

Please be seated.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders

Third Reading

Bill 8

An Act to Strengthen Municipal Government

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's hard to come in to work today after what happened last night with the Oilers, but we're here doing it, so we'll do our best today. They made a good run but fell short, unfortunately.

Madam Speaker, I request leave to give third and final reading to Bill 8, An Act to Strengthen Municipal Government. This bill is aimed at improving how municipalities are empowered to govern, how they work together, and how they are funded. It's about giving Alberta communities the tools they need to deliver services and improve the lives of Albertans.

Madam Speaker, this bill has been a long time in the making. I'm proud of its contents and the effort that has gone into its development. I would like to thank the many Albertans who took time to provide input and ideas for this very important piece of legislation. I would also like to thank the members of this Assembly for reviewing these amendments to the MGA. Your consideration was thoughtful, and it was great to hear about all the municipalities in all of your constituencies. I would also like to thank the department for its efforts. I know there were countless hours and plenty of thought that went into developing this final piece of legislation.

Well, let me recap. In the summer of 2016 Municipal Affairs toured the province to talk to Albertans about the Modernized Municipal Government Act, or Bill 21. Last session 21 consultations were held in 20 communities across Alberta. Albertans gave us great feedback on Bill 21, and they also shared new ideas for how the MGA can support sustainable and collaborative communities. Municipal Affairs ran with these ideas and released a discussion guide to put them past the rest of the province. The document was posted online during November, December, and January, and Albertans were asked to review it and provide input via an online questionnaire.

Municipal Affairs received more than 1,100 responses to the online survey and more than 35 official submissions. Albertans know better than anybody else how to improve their communities. We heard strong support for nearly every policy proposal, so these ideas from Albertans form the foundation of An Act to Strengthen Municipal Government. This bill provides municipalities with more

tools to continue to build strong communities and to make the lives of Albertans better every day.

Madam Speaker, some of the substantive changes we're making include taking steps to live up to Alberta's commitment to the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. We heard indigenous communities express interest in building these better partnerships with neighbouring communities. Albertans are neighbourly, and speaking to your neighbours about changes you plan to make in your backyard is the right thing to do. That's why we're making three key changes to strengthen the relationship between municipalities and neighbouring First Nations and Métis settlements.

First, we're clarifying that municipalities may invite neighbouring indigenous communities to participate in regional servicing opportunities. Second, we're clarifying that municipalities are authorized to enter into formal legal agreements with First Nations and Métis settlements. Third, we're requiring municipalities to notify First Nations and Métis settlements of new municipal development plans and area structure plans where there is a shared border. This change will make Alberta a leader in Canada. We believe that it will support stronger relationships between municipalities and First Nations and Métis settlements, and I'm very proud of the work we've done to date.

Our government also vowed to make governance more family friendly and more open to people starting families. This bill would enable municipalities to create parental leave bylaws so that councillors may be allowed to take leave prior to or after the birth or adoption of a child. The decision on whether to adopt a parental leave bylaw and the specific content of the bylaw will be left to each municipality based on its needs.

Our elected officials need to better reflect the communities they serve, including young people, new families, and women. Half of Alberta's population are women, but right now in Alberta women only make up 26 per cent of municipal councillors, and 23 per cent of municipalities in this province do not have a single woman on council. As our Premier has said, "We know gender parity is possible. We have done it in our government. It's time to make similar gains at the local and school board levels."

The Minister of Service Alberta, a champion for the Ready for Her campaign and the women of Alberta, also said it well.

Our city halls and school boards should reflect the communities they serve, and that means electing more women. When women run for office in Alberta, they win as often as men. I'm encouraging more women to run because when Albertans are truly represented, that's progress for all of us.

I want to thank the minister for her fine work in that regard.

I also want to repeat the words of Councillor Bev Esslinger, who was instrumental in bringing this idea forward and has already started discussion at the city of Edmonton for what their policy will look like. Councillor Esslinger said of this bill:

It's great to see this change. This is not just about women, this is about families. There are so many bright, talented individuals out there and having a child should not be reason to hold any of them back from becoming a municipal leader.

I was happy to hear all the support for this policy in this House, and I appreciate all the comments and stories that were shared with this Assembly about how parental leave policies would make life better for Alberta families.

Another way we would do this through this bill, Madam Speaker, is the amendments to give local governments more tools to build complete and sustainable communities. An Act to Strengthen Municipal Government will enable municipalities to share intermunicipal off-site levies for libraries, police stations, fire halls, and community recreation centres. This change will also make

Alberta a leader in Canada and is another way that our changes to the MGA are supporting municipal collaboration.

One of the themes of the MGA review has been collaboration between municipalities, their neighbours, and other local authorities, including school boards. This bill would add a section to the MGA that indicates municipalities must enter into joint-use and planning agreements with school boards within their boundaries. These agreements would support effective and efficient use of municipal and school reserves by discussing matters related to planning, development, and use of reserves; transfers of reserve land; disposal of school sites; servicing of school sites; the use of school facilities, municipal facilities, and playing fields, including maintenance, liabilities, and fees; how they will work together; how they will resolve issues; and the establishment of a time frame for regular review of the agreement.

This bill has received overwhelmingly positive feedback from Alberta's school boards. As Mary Martin, president of the Alberta School Boards Association has said:

[This] government has heard our concerns and acted on them – in particular, introducing mandatory joint use and planning agreements. It benefits Alberta families and communities when municipalities and school boards work together on integrated long-term planning for school sites and facilities. Further clarifying exemptions for off-site levies is also good news for school boards, because it means more dollars remain in our classrooms.

We also heard great feedback from the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association, AUMA, whose words of support highlight the shift to collaboration for the MGA.

Collaboration ensures strong communities and increased quality of life for Albertans. Local governments can advance cost-effective regional approaches for infrastructure and service delivery through new tools such as inter-municipal off-site levies and greater use of joint use agreements with school boards.

I also want to highlight feedback from the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts and Counties, whose president, Al Kemmere, reiterates how robust the consultation and collaboration has been during the MGA review. "Through the MGA review process, AAMDC has been grateful to have been at the table. This journey has been open, inclusionary and fair . . . and we are proud to have been part of it."

Madam Speaker, I'm also proud to have been a part of the immense amount of work to update the MGA in a transparent and collaborative way. As Ken Kobly, president and CEO of the Alberta Chambers of Commerce, said so well, "The MGA review is the gold standard for government consultation." We will continue this approach as we work with the key stakeholder groups to develop draft regulations, all of which will be posted online for 60 days so that everyone can see and give feedback on the specific proposed policies.

I appreciate all the feedback from members on the ongoing work of the MGA review, and I want to thank all the members of this Assembly for their many contributions to this important conversation and for their thoughtful consideration. It has been a collaborative process, a long process.

I want to say, Madam Speaker, that I'm extremely proud of the staff of Municipal Affairs for the amount of work they've done on this. It's been, as I said, years coming. They have put in countless hours to make sure that they've listened to feedback from Albertans all across the province. I've heard overwhelmingly positive comments from many municipal councillors, and I'm looking forward to a lot of these things coming to fruition. I know we have some work to do on our regulations once they come out, and I'm looking forward to hearing more feedback once those are posted online. I think it's been an interesting process.

9:10

I feel that the MGA is one of the most interesting pieces of legislation that we've had out there because it touches the lives of every Albertan. You know, it's something that I think we can all be proud of because we've all worked on it together. I'm looking forward to more information coming in from throughout the province, as I said, and getting around the province this summer to municipal councils out there to hear more from them on the ground, what's going on and what they think could be improved or changed or what they like with the MGA and the regulations.

I really appreciate all the work that's been done and everybody in here for all their comments.

With that, Madam Speaker, I move that this bill be read a third and final time. Third time is the charm.

Thanks.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Any other speakers to the bill in third reading? Calgary-East.

Ms Luff: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I haven't had an opportunity to get up and speak to this bill yet, so I thought I would mention some things that I thought were important while I had the opportunity. I'm from Calgary, one of the larger municipalities in the province. I think there are three parts of this bill that I really want to touch on, three amendments that I think are really important and are going to make some crucial changes to how municipalities operate in Alberta. The first is the issue of parental leave and allowing parental leave for city councillors. I know it's something that many members of this caucus have spoken to because many members of this caucus have had the experience of having children while in office or having small children or being part of a family.

Now, while I don't get the distinction of having had a baby while elected, I did campaign in 2012 while I was three months pregnant, and I really don't recommend that to anybody. When you're three months pregnant, you're not allowed to tell anyone that you're pregnant. Also, you feel exhausted and are nauseous all the time. So, you know, it's not something that I would necessarily recommend. Then again in 2015 I campaigned while I had a three-year-old and an eight-month-old, and in the ensuing two years my eight-month-old has turned into a nearly three-year-old, so I've really had the opportunity to experience all of what it means to have children while being in office.

Subsequently, I have been super impressed with the Ask Her campaign that's been going on in Calgary to get more women involved in municipal politics because, really, we don't have enough women involved in municipal politics. The numbers have been thrown around several times. There are only 23 per cent of municipal councillors who are women. The Ask Her campaign has been very successful. We have women running, I think, in almost all of the wards in Calgary now – I know in my ward there are at least three women running, which is wonderful – women from indigenous backgrounds, women from African-Caribbean backgrounds, women from Muslim backgrounds, women from, really, all walks of life.

Many of them have come to talk to me, and they've said: "I need to talk to you because I have kids, and I am about to do this. I am worried that it will be really difficult. I don't know how you're doing it." When I speak with these women, I try not to scare them too much, because it is hard. It's challenging. You have to have really supportive partners. You have to have access to good-quality child care. You have to have access to flexible child care. This amendment is going to make it that much easier when I talk to women about running to say: "Hey. It is possible now for you to

push for parental leave for municipal councillors.” So I think it’ll make a really big difference.

Why is it exactly that we want more women in politics? We want more women in politics because all sorts of research has shown that more women in politics leads to more equitable societies. Women have a tendency to focus on issues that matter to them. They focus on issues like child care, reproductive rights, education, women’s health.

When I was on the family-friendly subcommittee, when we were trying to come up with changes to how we could make this House more family friendly, I heard from other members of the committee: you know, we should have gotten around to this, but we didn’t ever really have to. The thing is that when women are involved in the political process, we get around to things. We get around to things that should have been done for hundreds of years, and men didn’t do them for hundreds of years. That’s why it’s important to have women involved in politics.

Women have been shown to govern differently. They have a tendency to be even more collaborative, less aggressive, more likely to emphasize consensus building, which I think we can all agree is a good thing. There are also at least two peer-reviewed studies that have shown a significant correlation between a higher proportion of women in government and lower levels of corruption, so I think that’s probably a good thing, too.

I am really impressed with this amendment, that allows municipalities to create parental leave and to create parental leave that works for them so that we are allowing them to do it but also allowing them to come up with what works for them themselves.

I do also want to talk about the amendments with regard to school boards. I think it’s valuable to note at this point that the Calgary board of education is actually 100 per cent women, which is a wonderful and interesting thing. They’re wonderful women, whom I get to work with on a very regular basis. They come to talk to me about all manners of things. The Calgary Catholic school board also has a majority of women. I know that both of these boards recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the city of Calgary to allow more flexibility for how the city uses school reserve sites. The mayor of Calgary was quoted as saying that he was really excited about the possibility of having a firehouse and a school together on the same site. I’m not sure that that’s something that will necessarily happen, but the fact that we are requiring these joint-use agreements could lead to any manner of very exciting development.

Schools really are community hubs. They’re places in the community that people come to, where people gather. If we can include more services that are required by the community in those schools, we’re all going to benefit. You could have child care centres in schools. You could have libraries in schools. You could have daycares in schools. You could have other varieties of recreation facilities.

For example, not in my riding but in the Member for Calgary-Cross’s riding we have Village Square Leisure Centre, which was built right next to a high school, so the high school is able to use all of the facilities at the Village Square Leisure Centre for their physical education classes. Also, there’s a library in there. There are, you know, cafés and other public-use areas. It’s really become a hub for that community. People from all over the northeast of Calgary go to Village Square Leisure Centre to partake in all of the services that are available there. That’s really an example of what we can do when we plan for communities when we’re planning schools as opposed to just building a school and nothing else associated with it.

The other part that I’m excited about, the other amendment, is to include environmental well-being as a municipal purpose. Again, when I used to talk to my students about water and how we use

water, because that’s part of the grade 8 curriculum, we always talked about: when planning for the future and looking at the water that we have available, who are the groups that need to use that water, and how are we going to plan for using it into the future? The students always, very rightly, brought up that although people and industry are very important and need to use the water, the environment needs that water, too. The environment needs that water to be self-sustaining and to allow a functioning ecosystem.

So including environmental well-being as a municipal purpose, I think, is really important, especially given that many of our cities in Alberta are river cities. Calgary is a river city. Edmonton is a river city. Lethbridge is a river city. There are lots of cities that have rivers running through them. [interjection] Sorry? Lots of them have rivers running through them. Really, the river is the centre of our communities. So including environmental well-being helps to really foster that sense of care that we need to have.

It’s been shown that spending time outside has proven to have, you know, clear mental health benefits. If you spend just 20 minutes or half an hour outside, even in an urban park, every day, it can really clear your head, help you to think more clearly, reduce depression. There’s research that shows this. I think maybe all of us in the House might benefit from getting outside a little bit more often, spending time in nature.

In Calgary we’re very fortunate to have many wonderful parks. Just this last Saturday was really the first truly beautiful day of the year. As Albertans we all really appreciate that first day where you can get outside and sit in the sun. My kids and I went down to Prince’s Island park and threw rocks in the water and looked at the goslings and, you know, got into an argument with some people about religion. It was a good day. We had a really good day. Because Calgary has really prioritized the ability to have those public parks so that even within a large public park you have the opportunity within the city to get outside, and I think that’s really important.

9:20

Those are really the three things I wanted to touch on. I’m obviously also very excited about the work for collaboration with indigenous communities. There are many First Nations communities just outside the city of Calgary who I know will appreciate the amendments in this piece of legislation that are really focusing on our commitment to the rights of indigenous peoples and to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

There are a lot of good things in this bill, Madam Speaker. I thank the minister for bringing it forward, and I look forward to its passage. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker: Other speakers to the bill? Red Deer-North.

Mrs. Schreiner: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is a pleasure to rise and speak in support of Bill 8, An Act to Strengthen Municipal Government. I am in full support of each of the proposed amendments, particularly the parental leave amendment. Fellow members, the most recent Canadian statistical data available regarding women supports that women comprise 48.9 per cent of our Albertan population. Parity in many respects is an endeavour that supports fair representation. The impact of policy and legislation should denote a similar representation.

When the Municipal Government Act review was conducted last year, 21 sessions provided a broad scope of feedback that resonates throughout each community. My community of Red Deer was one of the participants, and what emanated was the immense pride that Albertans have for their community as well as its governance. Speaking to our MGA, the impacts also reflect how our municipal

governance is comprised and how it interacts with the diversity of our communities. Static governance cannot reflect the dynamics of our ever-evolving province, and I am glad that I belong to a government that recognizes that change is inevitable and that policies require flexibility. Madam Speaker, we must be adaptable and resilient in order to sustain the impact of change.

Fellow members, my opening statement supported the specifics of the parental leave amendment. I speak to this because it enables and encourages the empowerment of women to participate, without repercussion, in municipal councils and various other municipal boards, with an impact that supports the demographics of our province. It is my belief that elected councils need to better reflect the communities they serve. It hones in on making political life more accessible for Albertan women and their families. Currently the population of women involved within municipal councils, sadly, encompasses a mere 26 per cent.

It is no surprise to the House that I wish to encompass my great city as a superb example of how the participation of women in the political and policy-making forum can be executed. Currently Her Worship Tara Veer is the mayor of Alberta's third-largest city. Her career has supported three terms as a city councillor, with transition into mayor, and is an excellent example of how women can sustain great momentum in the municipal forum. I wish to speak about our former mayor, Gail Surkan, who held office as mayor for three terms as well. In fact, her participation inspired Tara Veer, and this is specifically one of the changes that our MGA amendments serve to achieve.

My city of Red Deer is rich in contributions from women within the municipal arena. Within the team of city councillors 3 of 7 are women. Lynne Mulder has served four terms as councillor, Dianne Wyntjes is in her second term, and Tanya Handley has her first term almost under her belt. What does this mean to our municipality? Madam Speaker, I'd like to say that considering the needs of our city, our dream teams are bringing projects to fruition and accomplishing what needs to be done.

Recently the announcement of the Red Deer regional justice centre shed light on this momentum. I wish to thank the members for Calgary-Buffalo, Edmonton-Strathcona, Red Deer-South, and myself along with Mayor Veer, who were dubbed the Get 'Er Done Girls. No disrespect to Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood, but thanks nonetheless.

Women bring a perspective that is prevalent in all facets of our political spectrum. Currently our education boards also support a strong female presence. Why? Because we recognize the importance of their input and invaluable feedback. We cannot be stifled by conventional views if we are going to participate in global matters. Red Deer's public school board also has 3 female members out of 7. It's chaired by Bev Manning, vice-chaired by Cathy Peacocke, with Dianne Macaulay as trustee. We commend the diversity of participation that allows the vision and mission guiding our future Albertans' education.

Similarly, the Red Deer Catholic school board engages 3 women participants of 7: Anne Marie Watson as vice-chair, Diane MacKay as trustee, and Adriana LaGrange as trustee as well as president of the Alberta Catholic School Trustees' Association. These women inspire progress and change while balancing priorities because they are passionate about our future and direction.

Bev Hanes, the president of our Red Deer Royal Canadian Legion, is also an outstanding individual who contributes at a municipal level. Having participated as a director and chair, her presence as president is unprecedented. And I'm not going to repeat that.

Broadening the scope of our municipal governance paves the way to sustainability as well as adaptability. While division is historically prevalent in many aspects of our global society, our

ability to implement change must be met with the open-mindedness that allows for growth as well as progress.

Madam Speaker, engaging opportunity for parity provides for well-rounded approaches and solutions and engages the diversity and mental mapping that embraces a stronger model that paves the way to future endeavours. Achievement is measured on cohesion. As a female elected official I fully support the amendments and move to a global progression.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Standing Order 29(2)(a) comes into effect if there are any questions or comments.

Seeing none, I'll recognize Calgary-Bow.

Drever: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to rise to support Bill 8, An Act to Strengthen Municipal Government, and I would like to give my utmost respect and appreciation to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and also his staff, that worked tirelessly to make this bill happen. Thank you. I know how much work goes into a bill.

There are many great amendments to this bill to make lives for Albertans easier, but I would like to bring attention to the parental leave amendment and give a shout-out to Lisa Holmes, who is the president of the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association. She was a huge supporter of this amendment, and I would just like to quote her right now.

Collaboration ensures strong communities and increased quality of life for Albertans. Local governments can advance cost-effective regional approaches for infrastructure and service delivery through new tools such as inter-municipal off-site levies and greater use of joint use agreements with school boards. We appreciate that the province adjusted many of its initial approaches for the bill [in order] to ensure the provisions are more practical for municipalities.

Another supporter of adding parental leave to the MGA is Bev Esslinger, Edmonton city councillor. She states:

It's great to see this change. This is not just about women, this is about families. There are so many bright, talented individuals out there and having a child should not be a reason to hold any of them back from becoming a municipal leader.

9:30

Madam Speaker, I am a woman in my child-bearing years – that kind of scares me saying that – and after the next three or more terms I will still be in my child-bearing years, so it's comforting to know that if I decide to run in municipal politics and I could bring my expertise that I learned from this House, I could do it because of this policy. I feel this way because when I look at Calgary's city council, there are only two women sitting on the 14 seats available. That is only 14 per cent, and I find that concerning considering the fact that 50 per cent of Calgary's population is female.

Another concerning fact is that half of Alberta's population is women but that right now in Alberta women only make up 26 per cent of municipal councillors and 23 per cent of municipalities in this province do not have a single woman on them. By adding parental leave to the MGA, it will remove this barrier for women trying to enter municipal politics, and I'm happy to see that our government wants to encourage young women to get involved so that their voices can be heard. Something I speak often about when I talk to constituents in my office and at the doors is that I'm proud that our government is taking women's issues as a priority. This is a change as this kind of discourse was not present with the previous government. I applaud this amendment.

Another amendment that I would like to talk about is our government's commitment to building new schools to serve our

young and growing province and to protecting and improving education for Alberta's students. The education of our children is incredibly important to the well-being and prosperity of our communities, and schools are at the heart of our neighbourhoods. We listened to municipalities and school boards that we can do better in how school sites are planned and serviced for communities, so this bill proposes joint-use and planning agreements to work together on integrated long-term planning for school sites and facilities. This will benefit students, families, and all communities, including the riding of Calgary-Bow.

Back in April I was pleased to attend the grand opening of the West Ridge middle school in the community of West Springs. As government one of our top priorities is seeing school constructions like West Ridge middle school completed quickly and efficiently. An incredible amount of hard work and dedication went into the development of this school. Between the parents and community at large, the Calgary board of education, and contractors, everyone involved can take great pride in its completion. By building that school, we ensure that all of our students receive an education that prepares them for success.

More than 60 new schools and modernization projects opened last year while 26 more projects province-wide will be announced for this year. Another investment that our government provided was for the much-needed modernization of Bowness high school. We all know that projects like these are creating good jobs and protecting and improving the things like education that Albertans and my constituents count on.

Speaking of modernization, Madam Speaker, our government is delivering on its promise to modernize the Municipal Government Act. The amendments that were made were from Albertans to serve Albertans to make lives better for Albertans. It's just one more way that our government is improving the lives of Albertan families.

With that, I would like to end my comments and ask everyone here to support this bill. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), any questions or comments?

Seeing none, other speakers to the bill? Lethbridge-East.

Ms Fitzpatrick: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Like the others who've spoken before me today, I want to thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs for really championing this bill. I want to thank in particular Melinda and Keith on his staff for the work that they have done supporting me and the other cosponsor for this bill.

Now I want to talk about a couple of things within the bill, and the first piece that I'll talk about is collaboration. I want to give kudos to my city of Lethbridge for the effort that they make and they have made since 1959 to collaborate on so many different things, collaboration with our county in the municipal development plans and area structure plans and for reaching out to the Blackfoot Confederacy as they border our city. In terms of any of the new things that are going on in the city, the schools, the whole issue of sharing facilities with schools: just amazing in my city. Absolutely. Kudos to the city, to the council, and to the mayor for doing those things.

The next piece that I'm going to talk about, obviously, is the parental issue, and I want to talk about that totally from my perspective. I was a single parent, as I've said many times in this Legislature. I've certainly met throughout my years with many, many other single parents who couldn't even think about participating in politics even though they had the ability to do so. They certainly had the passion to do so, and they had input that would have been fabulous for their municipal councils; however, they were single parents and they had children, and this didn't allow

for them to do that. I see many men in this Legislature who probably have children and are here because their wives or their partners are at home looking after their children.

Women have a huge impact in our society, an impact that's rarely acknowledged and appreciated for just how important it is. That same perspective of being a mother and looking after your children, balancing the bank book, cooking meals, doing a menu week in and week out, getting the laundry done: all of those things really show the ability for women to multitask and the ability to be organized and provide input. We have a depth of knowledge of families and communities that is rarely tapped.

To have this amendment in this act to me really speaks of a progressive, forward-thinking bill that engages all of our community. So thank you again to the minister and the staff for including that in this amendment. Because I've spoken to this bill before, I'm not going to say much more. I just want to say how pleased I have been to be a part of this.

I guess one thing to go back to is the indigenous communities. Somebody had said to me: well, they're not compelled to engage in that conversation. No, they're not, and neither is your neighbour when you're building a fence or anything else. But the neighbourly thing to do is to tell them what you're doing and to ask if they have any concerns about that, and that's what this bill does. You are required to notify them of what your plans are within your community. To me, that opens the door to a much better collaboration in the future. Certainly, I think that if I'm talking to my neighbour, it increases the level of trust that I have with my neighbours when we collaborate and talk about what we're doing within our own neighbourhood.

With that, I'm going to say please support this bill. Thank you very much.

9:40

The Deputy Speaker: Any questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? Seeing none, any other speakers to the bill? Stony Plain.

Ms Babcock: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm really proud that our government is delivering on its promise to modernize the Municipal Government Act in time for the municipal elections this coming fall. It gives municipalities practical tools and resources to support strong and sustainable communities and a more resilient and diversified economy for all Albertan families. As we know, in our rural constituencies it is incredibly important that we are diversified, that we are resilient, and that we are bringing these investments to our communities. We're making life better for Albertans by listening to their ideas, enhancing community collaboration, and removing barriers to municipal leadership. We will continue to work collaboratively with municipalities.

Our government is committed to open and accessible consultation with Albertans on the Modernized Municipal Government Act, and we took the time to do it right. Last summer we held 21 sessions as government across the province to hear directly from Albertans about what matters for each and every one of their communities. There are so many people across Alberta who care about their communities, and we heard from those people how our government can make practical changes to make their lives and communities better. I attended one of those sessions in Hinton, and I was very encouraged by the conversations I heard and was engaged in with many municipal leaders from many communities. Many of them had travelled a very long way to be there.

There were 40 additional amendments in the Modernized Municipal Government Act last fall before it was passed. What we've heard are things that we're bringing forth in this amendment. They're new ideas on how we can support those sustainable and

collaborative communities. We heard strong support for nearly every policy proposal. One of the key focuses of the MGA's modernization is municipal collaboration because we believe that all Albertans benefit when municipalities are good neighbours and they work together to provide services and strengthen the economy.

Madam Speaker, I'm lucky enough to live in what we call the trimunicipal area. The trimunicipal area is Parkland county, Stony Plain, and the city of Spruce Grove. When we have our communities in silos, everybody can make something good. We can have a small rec centre in each community. We can have decent infrastructure in each community. But when our communities get together, as they do in the trimunicipal area very often, we can provide something great for all of our citizens. Parkland county, in particular, extends collaborative agreements within their borders as well as beyond their borders. For example, they have a number of agreements with the town of Devon for things like fire services.

Over the last year we heard from leaders in many First Nations and Métis settlements that they want to see better relationships with their neighbouring municipalities. These amendments would require that municipalities give First Nations and Métis settlements the same notification and opportunity to comment on statutory plans that is provided to all other adjacent municipalities. It would set a Canadian precedent to build a stronger relationship between municipalities, First Nations, and Métis settlements. We are empowering municipalities to enter into agreements with indigenous communities. It's a small but significant step to strengthen relationships between indigenous communities and municipalities farther.

Our province is committed to implementing the principles of the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, and as such it's important to encourage the province's municipalities to continue to take meaningful and reasonable steps to understand and engage with neighbouring indigenous communities and citizens in a respectful and culturally appropriate manner, particularly in respect to land-use planning and service delivery. I know that the indigenous leaders in my region – namely, the Enoch Cree Nation and Paul First Nation – appreciate the collaborative approach we're taking now and ensuring into the future.

Madam Speaker, by making political life more accessible for women and Albertans with young families and by making amendments that would enable councils to make parental leave bylaws for councillors, our elected councils will better reflect the communities they serve, including young people, new families, and women. With the new census numbers released, we know that in the town of Stony Plain there are approximately 500 more females in the community than males, and the average age of a resident in Stony Plain is 39.4 years old. I'm not sure where the .4 comes from. And 19.3 per cent of the population is aged zero to 14, which is higher than in any other region in Alberta, which means that having parents of this large portion of our population be engaged is even more important.

Half of the population in Alberta are women, but right now they only make up 26 per cent of municipal councillors, and 23 per cent of municipalities in this province do not have a single woman on council. Today in our House we have 33 per cent women, and 97 per cent of those sit on the government side. Of course, I'm incredibly proud to see the number of women that surround me. But it's not the case even here in Canada, if we speak on a provincial or national level, because only four out of our 13 jurisdictions have achieved the minimum 30 per cent participation of women as outlined in the 2011 UN resolution on women's political participation.

Madam Speaker, I am a huge believer in using all the tools available to achieve a successful result. There is substantial

evidence that the collective intelligence of a group is significantly increased when there are more women as part of said group. Studies from MIT and Carnegie Mellon, among others, point to some diversity being good, more women being important, and to encourage this is imperative. In this way, supporting women may be a tool in the tool box to encourage participation of all marginalized groups, but it cannot be the only tool. It doesn't accomplish enough. Today less than 19 per cent of legislators world-wide are women, so there's still much to do to involve all voices in our province, in our municipalities, and globally, of course.

Madam Speaker, one of the things I'm most excited about seeing in this Municipal Government Act is the commitment to building schools to serve our young and growing province and protecting and improving education for all Albertan students. Mandatory joint-use and planning agreements will be required between municipalities and school boards through amendments to the MGA and the School Act. That will require all municipalities to have these agreements with the school boards operating within their borders and to consider establishing a process for discussing matters relating to the planning, development, and use of school sites on municipal reserves, school reserves, and municipal and school reserves in the municipality; transfers of municipal reserves, school reserves, and municipal and school reserves in the municipality; disposal of school sites; and the servicing of school sites on municipal reserves.

It's so important that we see the education of our children as being one of those most important things that we can do as a province and as municipalities. It helps with the well-being and the prosperity of everybody in our community to have a good educational system, and our schools are the hearts of those neighbourhoods.

There is a higher percentage of children in the town of Stony Plain, as I mentioned, at 19.3 per cent, than in the region – that is the No. 11 census division, including Edmonton and surrounding areas – which sits at 18.5 per cent of the population. Stony Plain also has a higher percentage of children aged zero to 14 than the population of Alberta, which sits at 19.2 per cent, or even Canada itself. Nationally we sit at 16.6 per cent. So we are a growing community, and we are a young community.

One of the things that I'm really proud that our government has stood up and made a difference on in our municipalities and our school boards is how we can do better on school sites being planned and serviced. In the city of Spruce Grove, in Parkland school division, the Minister of Education has funded a bus transfer station, which is in a planned new school, which will help all of our children from the west end of our region come into these more urban places so that we don't have so many buses on the road. It's working because working regionally is so important to all of us.

You know, An Act to Strengthen Municipal Government is designed to make life better for Albertans no matter where they live, whether they live in our cities, whether they live in our towns, or whether they live in rural Alberta. Madam Speaker, I would encourage every member in this House to vote for this bill.

With that, I will take my seat. Thank you.

9:50

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

Seeing none, other speakers to the bill? I will recognize Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Mr. Piquette: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's my unexpected privilege to rise in the House today to speak at third reading of Bill 8. It's always a pleasure to speak to municipal governance. I guess,

before getting into the meat of my comments, I'd just like to thank, of course – I think I've mentioned this on other occasions before. Municipal Affairs is an amazing ministry, with dedicated and very astute individuals within it. This process wouldn't have had the kind of traction it did without the co-operation and buy-in from our municipal partners from across the entire province.

As the members might be aware, I had the opportunity to attend four of the consultation sessions over the last summer: in Two Hills, in Lac La Biche, in Athabasca, and in Rocky Mountain House. They were all very well attended, and the people that came to them came briefed, came with kind of reasoned opinions on it and with a willingness to discuss them. But it also goes beyond elected officials.

Of course, this is the second bill with amendments to the Municipal Government Act that we passed. The first one actually went over two separate sessions. This has been an ongoing topic of discussion within municipal circles for, you know, quite a bit of time now, I guess, even if you add to that that the beginning of the consultative process, of course, happened before we ever became government. So this is an iterative process that's been going over years, and there's been continued engagement, like I said, not just from elected officials. Some of the most astute commentaries that I'd heard actually came from CAOs, from people doing assessments, and from people generally involved with municipal government in all sorts of different ways. If they hadn't been forward in their comments, I don't think that we would have been able to come up with such an excellent, balanced approach to reform.

It's kind of a real special honour to be involved in this type of legislation because it kind of speaks to the most important technology we actually have. I think that's something that we need to take time to kind of reflect on and to recognize from time to time, just how fortunate we are to be in a place like this and that this is the way that we settle disagreements, that we work out how to share power equitably between people. It's absolutely critical to civilized life, to the point of the very definition. You know, when we say "civilized," we're talking civil, we're talking civic, and we're talking city, right? So we're talking about, you know, municipal affairs.

Now, this has always been a real challenge to be able to get right, the balance between centralized authority and local autonomy. I mean, there have been philosophers in the past that have made the argument that without sufficient centralized authority, you actually can't even have morals. I think one of the hon. members on the other side referred to Thomas Hobbes, and I know that we had one of our members bring up Hobbes as well.

The famous quote by Hobbes about life and nature refers to what happens when you don't have adequate centralized authority. I'll read the quote in its entirety.

During the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition which is called war, and such a war as is of every man against every man . . .

To this war of every man against every man this also is consequent, that nothing can be unjust. The notions of right and wrong, justice and injustice, have there no place. Where there is no common power, there is no law; where no law, no injustice. Force and fraud are in war the two cardinal virtues . . .

No arts, no letters, no society, and, which is worst of all, continual fear and danger of violent death, and the life of man solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.

That's that famous quote within its context.

When we're talking about the balance between centralized authority and local autonomy, we're talking about fundamental tensions that go to the beginning of civilization itself, and in fact

these are the types of arrangements that developed in time when we started living in cities. In fact, the very definition of politics itself, the root of "politics," is the Greek word for city, "polis." That's where these technologies developed over time, how to be able to balance out between the common person and the king, between the Senate and the proletariat, and on we go.

What has been found through trial and error, essentially, over the centuries is that, really, too much on the one side is a bad thing. If you go with too much autonomy, you end up with anarchy and all the miseries that are attendant there. However, if you go too far the other way, to too much of a centralized authority, then you kill any ability to progress. You create huge inefficiencies, and you create, of course, autocracy, tyranny, and oppression. How do you strike that balance?

Now, the very meaning of the word "municipal" comes from earlier attempts at striking that balance. Whereas "polis" is Greek for city, "munia" is Latin. That comes from a Latin origin. "Municipal" is pertaining to citizens of a free city within the Roman Republic and the Roman Empire, where they were Roman citizens, but they could govern their own local affairs with their own laws. That's where you had this balance between, you know, the centralized authority and local autonomy. That's kind of the very base of where the concepts of municipal politics, municipal affairs come from.

Like I said, this is something that has been a tension ongoing for, well, as long as we've been around. I guess I could also refer to maybe another earlier philosopher than Hobbes, and that, of course, would be Plato, who wrote, you know, one of the foundational books of western philosophy, *The Republic*. It's about: what does it take to govern a city wisely? What does it mean to be a good person in that type of city? Aristotle, after Plato, talks about how it is impossible to have a good life as a human being without being embedded in a well-functioning society. It's just something that you can't do. We are talking about, as I said, pretty important stuff.

10:00

As I think I've mentioned before, there are a lot of decision points going through this bill, and I think the overarching thing is kind of where they fall on that spectrum between authority and autonomy. I think that we've used a really deft hand with the use of that authority, and I think that the whole ICF process – I guess we'll see how that unfolds as time goes on – is kind of an example of that, where we're saying as the province: "You have to sit down and talk to your neighbours and work things out. However, we are going to leave it up to your discretion how to do that. Now, if in the end your discussion isn't in good faith or you just end up with irreconcilable differences so that after two years you're just not going anywhere, then we'll step in and help bring that agreement. But we respect your autonomy to the point that we'll give you that opportunity to work it out yourself."

With Bill 8 I'm very happy to see that that potential or that option is now extended to working with indigenous communities as well. Now, of course, it would be mandatory for municipalities, you know, if they have developments that can directly impact these communities, to contact them. I'm surprised, quite frankly, that that hasn't been there all along. This option for municipalities to sit down and talk with indigenous communities about that shared interest: I'm very happy to see that in there and hope to see that kind of take fire.

I know that there are some good examples of that happening within our own area. The Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills and I attend what are called joint municipalities meetings in Smoky Lake county. I've been told that this isn't unique, but I'm not sure who else does this. Is it every three or four months? I think

it's three months. Every three months the county of Smoky Lake has a meeting with all the municipalities within the county as well as representatives from the police, representatives from the school board, and you get presentations from community groups, and they invite both of the MLAs that represent the ridings.

It's a very interesting experience, as I know my colleague would probably agree. It's never dull, and sometimes it can get pretty heated. Very tough questions sometimes get asked, and sometimes people aren't very happy with each other during that meeting. The key point here is that they're still talking to each other. As long as people are talking to each other, there are other things that they're not doing to each other. I think that it is just so absolutely important to keep people at the same table.

It's kind of funny. I mean, it's been a couple of years that I've been going to these meetings, and you can start to see some of the patterns of, you know, relationships between people at the table. You can see that there are a few, I guess, sort of frenemy relationships, but you can also see that some people don't reach their rhetorical best without having these frenemies there to help goad them into flights of eloquence, let's just say.

Now, why am I going off on that a little bit? It's because I think it would be really wonderful to have more opportunities where representatives of indigenous communities and the surrounding municipalities would get the opportunity to forge those types of relationships, you know, sort of honest, open, forthright, and happening enough over time so that people come to respect the qualities on each side and then build a way forward for effective, lasting partnerships. That is what the government is really looking for between municipalities and indigenous communities and, of course, between municipalities and the federal government as well. I think that this extension of options for ICF for indigenous communities speaks well to that.

Now, just going on to the next sort of major set of amendments, around parental leave, many of my colleagues I think have made pretty excellent points on why that's so important. I know that I myself have risen before to talk about just the absolute necessity of diversity for good decision-making. I just want to make this small point. Of course, when we're talking about municipalities being empowered to develop parental leave, I know that the focus has been on women, but I do want to, you know, maybe remind our male colleagues that, of course, this can apply to us as well.

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

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I was really interested in the comments of the member from Redwater and surrounding area. He touched a number of times on the theme of collaboration. That's one thing that I think this government can be proud of as the major theme of our government throughout the ministries. Whether it be Economic Development, Health, Treasury Board and Finance, we're all looking for ways to make sure that government departments and agencies aren't siloed.

I know that one of the ways that I saw evidence of this in a beneficial way was even before I was elected, and I wanted to know if it is something that is continuing in the member's riding. One of the last homes I sold was in Ryley, and I, of course, wanted to familiarize myself with what school opportunities there were for families who might be buying that house. I discovered that there was collaboration between neighbouring school boards wherein there were smaller class sizes or smaller populations of certain age groups in one community versus another, so they gathered together the groups of students into classroom sizes and decided where certain grades would best be offered in a community. One

community would offer grades 3 to 6, and another one would be, you know, 6 to 9. It kept people in their communities and with shorter busing distances. I thought it was a great example of a collaborative effort that was not really formalized. I think these amendments go a long way to formalizing that type of collaborative effort.

I'm wondering if in his community the member has been able to identify new areas of collaboration that he thinks this effort will benefit and what relationships, as he alluded to, may be formed as a result of meetings between communities, if the formalization of this collaborative effort in the MGA amendments will lead to new interconnections and opportunities to share services and regionalize the benefits of those spread-out services, and what examples he might see where he would like to apply these new collaborative initiatives under the MGA.

The Deputy Speaker: Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

Mr. Piquette: All right. I'd like to thank the hon. member for the question. Just to make sure that I understand it correctly, he's not asking about existing agreements but asking about where I see potential for new agreements. Well, I mean, first is that I think one of the things about this process is that until you get people sitting down and having these discussions, it's kind of difficult to be able to predict just what synergies are going to emerge from those types of discussions.

I guess this sort of goes back to why it's really important that we didn't try to dictate this from the top down. You know, when you're on the ground and when you see these discussions unfold and there are things happening, sometimes you can have these unexpected areas where you can find efficiencies or where you have a new area for potential co-operation that you might not have been aware of. For example, you know, the co-operation and collaboration in discussing water seems to be opening up some new possibilities in Athabasca county. They're looking at bringing water out to communities such as Rochester and also to the summer villages. I know that, you know, in having them sit down at the table and talk, they might be able to find better ways of doing that and also help them to come up with a consensus within their own communities. Of course, these discussions are never isolated in small communities; everybody kind of gets involved. So there's power in having these discussions in and of themselves.

I guess other efficiencies that I hope we could find: well, snow removal might be one. Perhaps you could see municipalities, villages, towns, and counties working more closely together to optimize how they allocate resources for snow removal. Sanitation: of course, there is a lot of co-operation in municipalities as it stands now through various water commissions, those types of organizations, but there might be also partners that they don't yet know they could have. That might come out of these discussions. Garbage collection and bylaw enforcement could be other areas of fruitful collaboration.

10:10

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any other speakers to the bill? Edmonton-Whitemud.

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It really is my honour to rise today to speak to third reading of An Act to Strengthen Municipal Government, presented by the Minister of Municipal Affairs. Like my colleagues, I really want to congratulate both the current minister and the previous minister for their excellent leadership on this effort. The various amendments to the Municipal Government Act, in my opinion, are among the most important measures that this Legislature has taken in the two years that we've been sitting.

Indeed, it is my honour to be able to speak to it because when you look at what we do as legislators, I doubt that there's anything much more important than what we are talking about today, collaboration between cities and municipalities.

Loyola: The Securities Amendment Act.

Dr. Turner: Well, maybe the Securities Amendment Act would have some impact, but I don't think it's quite as important as ensuring parental leave for folks that might want to run for municipal office. The Securities Act probably isn't as important as ensuring collaboration among municipalities, and it's not as important as the topic that I really want to cover in this, and that is protecting our environment and ensuring that this province, its municipalities, and its other levels of government collaborate on ensuring that we have environmental protection.

Before I get to that, since I am the first Edmonton MLA to stand up, I really want to take a couple of moments to express my appreciation to the Edmonton Oilers for the fantastic effort that they've shown this year. I'm sure all of my colleagues in the House join in congratulating Captain McDavid as well as Coach McLellan and the rest of the team and the management in really overachieving and making us all proud as Albertans. Thank you.

Back to what I was talking about, another thing that I've really appreciated in the discussion of this act throughout all of its phases has been the collaborative spirit that all sides of the House are showing. I have learned a lot about Municipal Affairs from listening to the comments made not only by our minister but by representatives of the opposition, of all stripes of the opposition. In particular, I'd like to pay tribute to the Member for Livingstone-Macleod. He is a wise man, and his interjections have been very positive, and I have personally appreciated his wisdom in his comments. There have been other members. I'm not going to go through the whole list. Actually, each of the interjections, I think, has been very positive. As a government MLA I truly appreciate it, and I think that's how we should be working on a whole bunch of things. I think we worked that way on the securities bill, actually, yesterday. There was a sense of collaboration.

Our government is delivering on its promise to modernize the MGA, and we need to do this expeditiously because there are municipal elections this fall. We're making the MGA a responsive and forward-looking piece of legislation that gives municipalities practical tools and resources to support strong and sustainable communities – and I would underline the word “sustainable” when I come back to talking about the environment – and a more resilient and diversified economy for Alberta families.

I'm going to pause again to quote some of the folks that have worked with the government on these. The first is from Lisa Holmes, who has been mentioned before. She's the president of the Alberta Urban Municipalities Association.

Collaboration ensures strong communities and increased quality of life for Albertans. Local governments can advance cost-effective regional approaches for infrastructure and service delivery through new tools such as inter-municipal off-site levies and greater use of joint use agreements with school boards. We appreciate that the province adjusted many of its initial approaches . . . to ensure the provisions are more practical for municipalities.

That was Lisa Holmes, president of AUMA.

The president of the AAMD and C is Al Kemmere, and his quote is:

Through the MGA review process, AAMDC has been grateful to have been at the table. This journey has been open, inclusionary and fair. Though you never get everything you ask for, in the end

we have current legislation that for the most part reflects municipal challenges and we are proud to have been part of it.

Last summer our government held 21 sessions across the province, and we heard from Albertans directly about what matters to their communities. There are so many people in Alberta who care about their communities, and we heard from these people about how our government can make practical changes to make their lives and communities better. Those changes have been made in the form of 40 additional amendments to the MGA, and this was passed unanimously last December. Today is about the rest of what we heard from municipal leaders, families, young people, school boards, indigenous communities, and businesses. They've included new ideas about how the MGA can support sustainable and collaborative communities.

I'm going to turn now to the discussion about components of these amendments that relate to environmental well-being. I think that before I do that, I just want to discuss a couple of points. Don't municipalities already take environmental issues into consideration when making decisions? Well, many do, but specifically enabling municipalities to consider environmental well-being will encourage them to take a leadership role in addressing this critical issue and will better position the municipalities as key partners with the government of Alberta in addressing environmental matters.

Well, might this policy give municipalities a blank cheque to take land for environmental purposes? No. This wouldn't allow municipalities to adopt any policies or bylaws that are inconsistent with the provincial policy or legislation. It would also not allow municipalities to take environmentally sensitive or valued land without proper compensation, and this would empower municipalities to include environmental well-being in their planning and development of policies. I think this is really vital, and I'm going to give you some examples from my constituency of Edmonton-Whitemud where this might apply.

What's changing, actually? We're going to foster environmental well-being by including it in the MGA as a municipal purpose. The MGA currently identifies municipal purposes as providing good governance, providing “services, facilities or other things . . . necessary or desirable,” and “to develop and maintain safe and viable communities.” Many municipalities consider environmental elements as part of their decision-making, but the MGA does not include fostering environmental well-being as a municipal purpose.

Some stakeholders express concern that municipalities lack explicit authority to incorporate environmental well-being in their operational land-use decision-making processes. This may prevent municipalities from fully embracing a leadership role in environmental stewardship and more actively taking action towards the goal in Alberta's climate leadership plan. Members of the public are supportive of clarifying municipal responsibilities and consideration in the decision-making process that will lead to better planning and development decisions. Expanding municipal purpose in the MGA to include fostering environmental well-being will give municipalities a clear signal to consider the environment in a multitude of operational and growth decisions, and municipalities will not be able to pass bylaws that conflict with provincial legislation on these environmental measures.

10:20

I'm proud to say that the city of Edmonton and indeed the city of Calgary are extremely supportive of this. The Urban Development Institute and the Canadian Home Builders' Association have not been as supportive as they believe this will confuse the roles of municipalities in the province regarding management and development of the environment, but I think we can still work with those folks to get their involvement. Meanwhile the Canadian

Association of Petroleum Producers will be supportive if the scope of environmental stewardship as a municipal purpose is limited to matters that are municipally related.

As I said before, I'm actually going to give a few examples in my riding where this collaboration has worked very well. The riding of Edmonton-Whitemud is a very urban riding. I'll describe it. If people don't know the geography of it, the riding of Edmonton-Whitemud is bounded by the North Saskatchewan River on the north and west sides, by the Henday on the west and south sides, and the east border is Whitemud Creek, from which the name of the riding comes. It's a beautiful riding with lots of natural areas and ravines. Really, a high-quality life is available to our residents for activities in the parks and in the ravines, on the bike trails. For the constituents of Edmonton-Whitemud having a positive approach to our environment is very important. I can tell you that when I go door-knocking – and I'm door-knocking twice a week in my riding now – the climate leadership that our government has done and the approach to these Municipal Government Act amendments are really, truly appreciated.

In the riding of Edmonton-Whitemud we have a monthly meeting which involves all of the community leagues, the municipal councillors, their MLAs as well as representatives of the rec centre and the school boards. We actually discuss these issues on a regular basis. One of the things that has come out of this – and this is called the Terwillegar Riverbend area council – is a fantastic organization called Brander Gardens ROCKS. ROCKS means reaching out to community kids. This is a phenomenal organization. I've spoken about it briefly in a previous presentation.

Brander Gardens ROCKS is a collaboration between the public school, Brander Gardens, in the northern end of Edmonton-Whitemud; Capital Region Housing, which has a large number of units in the vicinity of Brander Gardens school; as well as the Riverbend community league; and several of the churches, including the Riverbend United church. The local library is part of this, and the city of Edmonton also collaborates with this.

The city of Edmonton is interested in collaborating with this not only because of the housing that's involved but because there's a large number of recent immigrants that are living in the housing that I referred to and there's a known need for programming to provide for youth to have things to do, basically. The library is an important part of that. The school opens up its facilities after hours and on the weekends for this. There's phenomenal music, cultural interchange. People exchange, actually, cooking hints between the recent immigrants and the people that have lived in Riverbend for a longer time.

It provides a safer community. It's a collaboration. It's really an example in this very urban setting of how this collaboration could work between various levels of government. I'm really proud to have that in my riding. I can tell you that the constituents of Edmonton-Whitemud really appreciate that as well.

A short time ago I spoke about my experience at the opening of the Larch sanctuary in the southeast corner of my riding, where it abuts the riding of Edmonton-Rutherford and Edmonton-South West. This is actually a conservation area of about 50 acres. It's at the confluence of the Whitemud and the Blackmud creeks. It's an oxbow, and in that area there are a lot of different . . .

The Deputy Speaker: Under Standing Order 29(2)(a), Calgary-Shaw.

Mr. Sucha: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'll touch on two things that the member said. First, I would also like to extend my congratulations to the Edmonton Oilers for a great season. I'm hoping that the member would be open to cheering for the Ottawa

Senators. There are some great players that are on there with some great names, including Cody Ceci, Mike Hoffman, and Craig Anderson. With that being said, I could really see it as a team that our entire caucus could get behind.

But I would love for the member to continue to elaborate on the conservation areas if he would like to.

Dr. Turner: Well, I truly appreciate the question. Thank you very much. You can be assured that the Ottawa Senators will have my full support, at least the hockey team. I'm not very fond of the actual people that sit in the House of Commons, and if it were up to me, I'd get rid of them, actually.

Anyways, thank you for the opportunity to finish the description of Larch, and I may go on to another example of collaboration between the municipalities, at least at various levels of government. This sanctuary was the result of a donation of land from the Poole family of Poole constructors. Another private company called Maclab has also contributed, as has Melcor. I would actually welcome all members to come down to that area. It's on May Common where it meets May Gate in Magrath.

Melcor has built several sustainable housing developments, and there are actually several blocks in which every building is covered with solar panels. It is a real revelation to go down there and see how this private company, with the assistance of the city in terms of its zoning, has been able to enhance our sustainability. I spoke to Mr. Tim Melton at the opening of this Larch development – he's with Melcor – and he said that this was a good business decision, that this is what people want, and that this is what new families are looking for. You know, the home builders are responding to these needs when we give them the proper support through policy and development. I really think this is a glowing example of how that can work.

The other company that I want to give a shout-out to on a completely different measure – but it's again through our policies that promote collaboration between private industry and municipalities – is Telus. Telus has invested over a billion dollars in a fibre optic build-out throughout the province. They're showing confidence in this province. They're showing that this province has a future. That fibre optic build-out is happening right now in Edmonton-Whitemud, and I'm going to actually share a booth with Telus at the upcoming farmers' market on May 17 I think it is, whatever the Wednesday is next week. I'd welcome you all to come out basically to see me but also to see how Telus is expanding this important service that's going to help students, businesses, and old folks like me that want to download some movies. Maybe I'm going to be able to do trading with the new Securities Act.

In any case, this is a collaboration that's been facilitated by the municipality – and it's changing its policies – and the government or at least private industry, that is seeing its opportunities. It's there because it's going to presumably make some more money and maybe improve its competitive status. But, again, this is a collaboration. It's a very positive thing.

Thank you.

10:30

The Deputy Speaker: Any further questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? Edmonton-McClung, you have 15 seconds.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I just wanted to ask quickly the hon. member if he could elaborate a little bit more on a topic he touched on that interested me greatly, and that was the area council that he alluded to that had been in operation in his riding, where the school board, community league, Capital Region Housing, faith groups, library, city of Edmonton, all of them got

together on a monthly meeting basis and formed an area council, out of which this group called Brander Gardens ROCKS came. I'm just wondering: what was the genesis of this organization, how long has it been going on, and is it something that you would recommend other . . .

The Deputy Speaker: The time for 29(2)(a) has expired.
Other speakers to the bill? Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to rise today to speak to the amendments to the MGA. I wanted to discuss some of the application that that will have in my constituency.

Over the last two years as MLA for Strathcona-Sherwood Park there have been a number of school builds and modernizations and commitments that we've made within the constituency that really come back to some of the agreements and amendments that are coming into the MGA. We saw that we committed to École Élémentaire and an expansion, even, for the school there, and Davidson Creek is in the new area.

For those of you that aren't familiar with Sherwood Park and Strathcona county, I mean, it's considered one of the most livable communities in Canada. It's something that – lots of families move there to raise their children.

I know that I've discussed this with many parents and community leagues and parent councils and school boards and the municipality in the last two years, kind of being shocked to find out that there was no mechanism where the school boards and the municipalities were really sitting down and very thoughtfully planning out the long-term development strategies. I mean, there's been lots of growth in Strathcona county. There have been a lot of families moving in, and that causes, you know, increased need on the school board and increased need for more space. Of course, you always have changing demographics. Is it young families that are moving in?

All that's happening requires a planned approach. I am happy to say that even before we did this, the county, the municipality, and the school boards got together and had been discussing how they do joint planning. But to solidify that goal a little bit further, the amendments within the MGA allow for there to be clarity as to what needs to be hashed out and worked in to make sure that when you bring in a new school – I'll give the example of, like, Davidson Creek, which was a new school in an established neighbourhood. Had there been some kind of long-term planning and some expectations as to where the new schools were going to be built, it might have facilitated a simpler conversation, and it hashes out also the roles and responsibilities of both municipalities and the new school board.

Just to expand on some of the things that it means to have something like joint-use planning and agreements for schools that would be seen under this bill, the change requires the municipality to have joint-use and planning agreements with the school boards operating within their borders that consider establishing a process for discussing matters related to the planning, development, and use of school sites on municipal reserves, school reserves, and municipal and school reserves in the municipality; transfers of municipal reserves; disposal of school sites; the servicing of school sites on municipal reserves; the use of the school facilities, municipal facilities, and playing fields, including the maintenance of the facilities and the payment of these fees associated with them. Set out within that is how the municipality and the school board are going to work together collaboratively; also, setting up a process for settling disputes; also, a time frame for a regular review agreement; and any other provisions that the parties may consider to be advisable.

When we talk about how that is applied, there have been many cases within my constituency where that would have helped the process. There was the school closure of Colchester, and the school site had to be disposed of. You know, there was a very complicated process because of the things laid out, because of the history between the public school board and the municipality. Those things were resolved. However, there weren't processes and ways to resolve the kinds of circumstances that were arising, so it was new for everybody. It was complicated, and it took a lot longer than it needed to. At the end of day, that means that maybe the school was sitting there, like, having to deal with some of the vandalism that happens when a school isn't open.

Being able to have a plan in place and a process for those kinds of things really aids the community's understanding of the process as well. I know that a lot of my parent councils and my school boards are very involved together, and they work collaboratively. I know that in talking to parents, they want to know more about the process and how decisions are made in developing the long-term planning and in understanding why a school would be built in one place versus another place. Madam Speaker, I believe that this is actually going to be something that I will be talking about throughout the summer to the parent councils, and I know that this is actually feedback that I've received as the MLA from people that come to me and say: I'm not sure why there hasn't been this joint planning in order to prevent surprises from occurring.

There are also residual effects from not having joint planning. For example, if the municipality decides to build a facility in a space that maybe in the foreseeable future isn't becoming a school site, they might put investment into that green space and make a baseball field or whatever the case may be. They can put those investments in. I know that on a municipal level the council is looking at motions to prevent things like that. But this solidifies that you have to do it in an inclusive approach, understanding the different things that are involved in building that community.

It would prevent something for the community also, just being surprised, when a school site is announced in a certain area, as to why it was picked, as to all of these things. It really helps build that transparency and accountability with the community, and I think that that's something that in my area people are looking for.

I'm really proud to say that the Minister of Municipal Affairs really heard the concerns that people brought forward and appreciated that, you know, they looked at how to find solutions, and he also appreciated that, from the side of the school board trustees in my area and the municipalities, they were also open to doing this. They have been doing this in a more informal setting already. Solidifying that and kind of establishing a paradigm to work from really help altogether as we address all of the needs and concerns.

Again, going back to the number of infrastructure investments that we've made in my community, there's, as I mentioned before, École Élémentaire, which is a replacement school; Davidson Creek, which is a new school in an area that has grown out and has actually seen a lot of the students from the area that was developed be on buses to another side of Sherwood Park.

Of course, when you're talking about reducing bus times, making sure that you're building communities that are accessible, especially with something like Emerald Hills, which is one of the ones that was built – it was built with the mind frame of it being a walkable community, the same as Summerwood, that whole area, of it having all the things that you need in order to really have the capacity to have parks there and do that. Having to attend a school on a different side of Sherwood Park isn't really working within that vision.

Having that kind of mandatory agreement that you have to come to this place and talk to the municipalities as to what they're building out, make sure that the school sites are actually viable options for them to choose when thinking about building a school, which is, I mean, something that was discussed within the school reserve left in Summerwood, whether they could actually build a school there and what the impacts would be – there was a train site, rails nearby. There were perceptions of safety concerns at that point.

10:40

So understanding that it all comes together and that the school boards work within the confines of what areas are provided to them by the municipality and some of the concerns that maybe parents raise: they're limited to being able to address them based on that. Having to work together, making a plan, well, that actually might eliminate some of the frustration that I've heard from community members. Of course, I think everyone has come together to address these concerns, but I think that putting something like this in place really allows people to know that when they come forward to discuss that – they have expectations of accountability and want to be a part of the process – something like this really says to them: we're listening; we want to move forward on things that are meaningful to you, and we want to be accountable for the decisions that we make.

Just as we go forward, I know that this will be a topic of conversation in my community, so I just wanted to discuss that even further.

Having kind of highlighted the number of families and schools being modernized or the infrastructure investment in my community, that also means that there are a lot of families there. When we get to the other part of the amendments here, there's the parental leave. What does that mean when, you know, we want to elect representatives that represent the diverse makeup of our community?

When a community like Strathcona county is made up of families – also, not excluding that there are an increasing number of seniors, as the rest of Alberta is experiencing, that high increase in the number of seniors in the population, there's still a big portion of the people living in Sherwood Park that are family orientated. Making sure that representatives can be elected that are mothers or are fathers or whatever the case may be and aren't being prevented from running for politics because of being worried that if something happened, they wouldn't have an option available to them, that they would have to make a lot of sacrifices to make it work – I think that when we talk about being allies and being supportive to women and diverse voices in leadership, it has to translate into policy.

That's what this looks like – right? – translating that into being able to have parental leave and being able to give the tools available to municipalities and people within the council to figure out what that parental leave can look like within their constraints, because each one is different. I mean, they set out their own salaries. They set out a lot of these other conditions. Being able to set out what this looks like for that municipality is very important, but it also allows the tools to exist.

I know that I was able to go to one of the meetings with AAMDC and talk to Lisa Holmes on behalf of the Minister of Status of Women. We discussed that the leadership on a provincial level allows people on a municipal level to really bring these issues forward. I remember having that conversation because it is really important to lead by example, to provide those spaces in a place like the Legislature because it builds a broader understanding in the general public as to what is actually happening. Not many people would just know off the top of their head what kind of, you know,

parental, compassionate care leaves an MLA or an elected official on a school board has. Those aren't pieces of information that people just know. That's something that you have to look into.

Bringing to light the fact that we had the first two MLAs that had a child while being an MLA brings those issues to light. Those things have never occurred. We've never really resolved these issues because they didn't come to the forefront. We weren't really forced into it, and it didn't seem all that relevant. I mean, it seemed something, you know, like, that we should work on, but it just didn't seem like we had to do it right now.

But I think that as we move forward, we know that supporting women in politics has a very positive effect, supporting diverse voices in that way, especially in a community such as mine, where it's made up of families. It has this commitment to being a livable community for your family, to being able to actually talk to representatives in the community and say: "Listen; you can raise your family, and you can be part of a municipal council or school council. Those things are options available to you. There are supports put in place, and there are tools there for you to make it a better space for you." That is something that people think about: how am I going to manage all of the expectations I have as a mother or a father of a young family and be able to also manage the expectations of living a political life?

I mean, we understand inherently that it's difficult, that there are expectations put in place on the amount of time that you're spending going out into communities. I always say that it's more of a lifestyle than a career because it's part of your life, going out to the community. So it's knowing, for them, that there are at least some options for things. You know, when you're pregnant, you might need some other time off, and being impacted negatively in your position because of that is a natural deterrent. It's a barrier for people to experience.

I think it's incumbent upon us to make sure that we are supportive, that we put the things in place, and we listen to people when they tell us the reasons that they're hesitant to move forward, and if there are not reasons that that needs to be in place that we find a solution for those things.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under Standing Order 29(2)(a)? Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Hinkley: Yes, under 29(2)(a) to the member. It was very interesting, and it was great to hear about the parent councils that are working together collaboratively. It is a microscopic reflection of what we want to happen with the municipalities. I have two sort of questions that I'd like you to touch on if you could. Have there been examples of shared facilities or events between the various urban and rural municipalities in your constituency already? If not, do you see any potential for any specific joint socioeconomic collaboration within those different municipal governments within your constituency as well that would benefit as a result of the modernization of the MGA?

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you. I think that's a really great question. More of an example of a collaborative approach to it would actually be just, like, a block outside of my riding, in the Member for Sherwood Park's riding. It's a school that is part Holy Trinity and Lakeland, and it also has a part in there that is part of Children's Services. It's all within the same facility, so it's one building. It's one space, a shared field space. But what the school boards have actually done is to be able to stagger the break times, the recess times so that they were both able to use the whole playground for their classes during their break times.

That would be an example of a joint venture between the school board and the municipality because you create a government space in the middle that's kind of in between the two. Again, it's just outside of my riding. I actually went to that school, so I was able to see it in action and see the fact that you don't really see much of the other school there because they stagger this in order to create the maximum use of the space there.

You know, it's a really wonderful thing to be able to talk about because, at the same time, somewhere like Strathcona county and Sherwood Park are going to be experiencing a limitation in the amount of land available for schools. Then you're going to see the number of parents and families that need space, and enrolment capacities are at a maximum right now, so you get into the complication of: where do you build these schools?

Both, you know, the separate school system and the public school system need schools as well. We also have a francophone school division that actually just had a grand opening in that area as well. That's another example of joint planning again in the MLA for Sherwood Park's riding.

At the end of the day, it's a fact that we're going to be facing a limitation of the space available, space that is currently being used as green space in the community. So if we learn to utilize that space in a way that is efficient, that is thoughtful to the community's perspective of that space as well – because, of course, these are established neighbourhoods where they've used these spaces for a very long time; there are habits being built – being able to come up with a plan of how to respect that community's needs and how to make sure that we're enhancing those needs and meeting the needs of our education system, that's incredibly important.

There are some examples, and I know that everyone at the table is willing to work at finding more of them. So I think it's a great question. I think that we can continue to do things like that. It allows us to actually maximize money and look at different mechanisms of doing things like that. I was really happy to be able to share those examples.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

10:50

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

Seeing none, other speakers to the bill? The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. Certainly, I just wanted to make a few comments in regard to An Act to Strengthen Municipal Government. Of course, one of the main elements of this was to have interaction between school boards as a level of government and municipalities and then the province, too. I must say that this has been quite an illuminating experience for school boards across the province.

Initially they entered into the MGA consultation with some trepidation. I think perhaps they have had less than amicable relationships with previous governments. But, lo and behold, with the new government they found that the process was quite open and was within both the spirit and the letter of the law of responsibilities between these levels of government. So by building the planning and compelling school boards and municipalities to discuss the issues around school sites, I think we've really taken a big step forward. Of course, again, everyone has stories – we've heard them all morning – about school planning and municipal planning that were not in alignment with each other.

I can tell you, Madam Speaker, that we are in the midst of the largest school build here in the history of the province of Alberta. We have 200 projects on the go now, and it's going very well. I can

tell you – you know, knock on wood – that the projects have been moved into alignment with the timing. I mean, you always have the vagaries of individual circumstances that might cause delays. We know that we had a tragic fire, for example, here in Edmonton just a few days ago. But, again, we're getting better at building schools, and the contractors are getting better at them, too, right? We now have, with all these projects, lots of experience building specifically to school project orders. I'm seeing projects speeding up and timelines shrinking all the time.

One of the main ways by which we can choose a project for its readiness is how the site is serviced and the interaction and the co-operation between the municipal government and the school board. There are many schools, for example, that I know I want to get going – we see the population growing, and we can track the populations of young children moving through, you know, and you need a school for the next phase of their lives – but we've seen roadblocks where the site servicing has not been done in a timely manner or the urban planning has not been sort of put into alignment in a timely manner as well. So by building in these changes from this bill, I fully expect that we will have a much more integrated planning process that will allow municipalities and developers and school boards to get it all working together in a timely and efficient manner.

All of us, again, have had lots of these stories of schools. A picture of a school in a field stays there for 10 years, but no school is ever built, right? Or, you know, some posts in the ground with tape on them but no school. Together with our planning, working in co-operation with Infrastructure, working in co-operation between school boards and sitting down at the table with municipalities, I believe that we've turned a corner in this regard, and we can start to get those schools built and serviced and integrated into the community in a timely way, that we've never been able to do previously.

So, yeah, I know as well that there's a large appetite for school boards to work closely with municipalities in terms of providing public services in close proximity to where school sites might be. We've seen some interesting and imaginative pilots in this regard: school boards and municipalities building, for example, their multiplexes in close proximity to each other; school boards and municipalities looking for libraries and other public buildings in close proximity to each other with the school. I'm encouraging this every step of the way. This is a way by which, again, we can facilitate that at a discussion table between the school boards and the municipalities.

I think the best and wisest good governance from a provincial level is that you open the door for a smooth interaction of communication and let the local authorities on the ground make the decisions that are best for their own neighbourhoods and communities, right? We know that any given town and school board have an intimate knowledge of what they need and how they can achieve that in terms of planning, and I believe that that's the best and wisest way for us to go. This bill does do that in the broadest possible way, and I'm quite proud to see my school boards give it universal acceptance and that enthusiastic agreement to moving forward under this new framework.

We know as well that when we are building schools and we're making decisions about planning over time, we're really shaping how those communities will look not just for a few years but for generations to come. We know that, for example, schools will have a heavy demand on them for certain populations moving through, and then the demographics change over time. Over the course of 50 years or 100 years you have different waves of young families moving through and retired people and so forth, so we can be more flexible using those public buildings and those public spaces over

time. We might consider, for example, having some social services or seniors' services built into a school complex. We might have access to daycare built into those school complexes. We might have, you know, anything that people can creatively and imaginatively consider. I think, again, this bill will help to make that happen.

You know, it's important to note that, of course, with Municipal Affairs, with Education – for example, Education I know. Your budget I know less about. But between about 95 and 97 per cent of all the money through Education goes to the school boards. I think that that's a proud and wise decision. We try to have certain initiatives that we encourage school boards to do, but ultimately they're making those decisions around capital projects and operations and everything else.

What better way to ensure the responsible spending of those considerable funds – in my case it's \$8.1 billion coming through the Education budget – than to make sure that they are discussing and planning with municipalities every step of the way? Because once you pour the foundation and put up the roof, then that's what you've got for probably 50, 60 years of a school's life, or even more sometimes. So we need to make sure that we have an adaptable and clear vision of what the neighbourhood is going to look like with that school as its community hub every step of the way.

So, yeah, it's looking good. I know that there are other provisions I've heard colleagues talking about in regard to elections and the improvements that this bill does have in regard to elections. Of course, we have the school board elections in October, too. Already I'm very proud of how we have much more gender balance in the school boards than in perhaps other levels of governance. You know, I would like to encourage people to be running in those school board elections here in the fall. I know that the provisions to encourage more gender parity in this bill can really help to strengthen the school boards.

11:00

It's interesting. Of course, I know CBE very well. I'm in discussions with them every week. It just was a great reminder to say: hey, that's an all-female board, right? And it's strong. I mean, it's one of the largest school boards anywhere, really. It provides an excellent standard of education, and the leadership is second to none. There you go. Of course, it's an all-female trustee crew, and I am very proud of the work that they do. They lead by example every step of the way.

We all signed off on the Northland School Division Act here just in the last few days. Again, that is signalling a democratically elected trustee board for Northland, the first time in seven years. I think that this municipal government act here will really help to encourage people to make choices about running in the Northland school division. For women to make that decision, we need that, quite frankly. Again, we're just facilitating the movement of democracy in the Northland school division here, but it's the people on the ground in Northland that must step up and run. I think that An Act to Strengthen Municipal Government can really help to encourage people to run in Northland and all school boards here in the province of Alberta.

Madam Speaker, this is an exciting time, to see us moving forward on this bill. I know that it was a long time coming. I know that a lot of people put work into it over many years. It's an example of what can be done when everybody puts their shoulders together to push in the same direction.

With that, Madam Speaker, I move to adjourn debate on this bill.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

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 12 New Home Buyer Protection Amendment Act, 2017

The Chair: Are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Chair. I know that saying the New Home Buyer Protection Amendment Act, 2017, over and over probably gets a little long. I'll just shorten it up. I'll just call it builder licensing if that makes it easier for people.

I just have some comments today, you know, some kind of clarification on some of the things I've heard from people over the last little while of debating this bill. I'll start with the online registry, some of the messaging and a little bit of information here. An online registry will be kept up to date for consumers with a listing of all the builders who are licensed to build. The licence status – active, probationary, suspended, provisional, as examples – will be listed as well as reasons why the decision was made in the case of a probationary or suspended licence. In addition to providing more information to home builders to help them make informed decisions when selecting a builder, this will provide homeowners with the assurance that builders meet government criteria.

The registry will build on existing infrastructure that is housed and maintained within Municipal Affairs, which is an important thing to know, which lists the number of homes registered in Alberta. The current new-home buyer registry has 6,400 users that utilize the system daily. This infrastructure will be leveraged to ensure a seamless application process.

I've heard the question: will this be a new registry? This is not a new registry, nor is it related to registries under the purview of Service Alberta, which has drivers' licences, birth certificates, et cetera. The new-home buyer registry currently lists all homes in Alberta which have a home warranty insurance contract. This will be expanded to list information about all licensed builders in Alberta, including licence status, to provide consumers with information about builders. This is not associated with the Association of Alberta Registry Agents but is a stand-alone registry that will be maintained and housed within Municipal Affairs.

I've also heard some things about program operations. The builder licensing program will be administered from within government in the new-home buyer protection office. The program will not require additional staffing resources. It will be administered through a reallocation of existing staffing resources. Integrating this program into the new-home buyer protection office will enable integration into the safety codes system, working closely with warranty providers, municipalities, and builders, and it can also leverage an existing public registry.

I also have some more questions and answers here that I'd like to go through just, as I said before, to get some clarification and to get this information on the record so that we have it straight. I heard a question that says: why does Alberta need a builder licensing program when the province already has mandatory home warranty coverage under the New Home Buyer Protection Act? Albertans have shared many stories about poor home construction leading to massive repair costs. The recent consultation on builder licensing indicated that homeowners want builders to be held more accountable for their work.

Builder licensing will directly address builder accountability. The NHBPA does not address the qualifications for being a home builder, and right now anyone in Alberta could be a builder regardless of their experience or skills. This is unlike other aspects of building construction, where plumbers, gas fitters, and master electricians are required trades.

There's also no provision under the NHBPA to prevent a builder from building in Alberta even under extreme circumstances such as fraud or imminent bankruptcy. Licensing builders will help prevent issues in home construction by requiring builders to be accountable for their actions. For example, a builder may set up a numbered company, which can later be dissolved. The builder can walk away from its business without any repercussion while transferring the cost and risk of low-quality builds to the consumer. Builder licensing will enable tracking of these types of practices, and those with poor track records may find their company without a licence.

I've also heard the question: do any other jurisdictions have builder licensing programs? I have stated before that, again, Ontario, British Columbia, and Quebec have builder licensing programs in place. That covers 75 per cent of Canadians under those. Manitoba is expected to come online with a program in 2018.

The next question that I've heard is: who did government consult with to develop this proposed bill or licensing framework, and what are some of the results that we heard? We did consult stakeholders in engagements between February and March 2017 to hear stories from Albertans and determine the appropriate scope of what this builder licensing program was going to be in Alberta.

We had approximately 1,270 or so Albertans respond to the online survey, and about 130 participants – homeowners, owner-builders, builders, renovators – that attended the 11 engagement sessions and 78 per cent of survey respondents were in favour of the government exploring options for licensing builders. Several builder survey respondents noted the challenges of competing with home builders and that they would welcome a builder licensing program. Also, 81 per cent of members of the public support government exploring options for licensing builders compared to 69 per cent support from those in the industry.

I said to a gentleman the other day who asked me about builder licensing: "You know what? If you go out right now, I bet that if you polled 100 people on the street, most of them probably would think that they already have builder licensing because we have trades that are licensed and it seems like everybody out there has a licence for what they're doing." I brought that up, and I think it's a good point to make. We need to make sure that we're holding people accountable for the work that they do. That's one of the purposes of this, right? It's to protect our consumers and make sure Albertans have the protections that 75 per cent of other Canadians have.

I've also heard, you know, more general questions like: what difference is builder licensing going to make for Albertans? As I've stated before, home ownership is one of the largest investments, if not the largest investment, that a person can make. You know, we want to make sure that Albertans are informed and that they know that they're going to be protected and their families are going to be safe.

11:10

Previously there were no provisions to remove poor builders to protect consumers. Under our builder licensing framework builders who have demonstrated a pattern of disreputable behaviour or have consistently failed to meet standards may have their licence revoked.

Homeowners have expressed frustration with having limited access to information and not being able to easily or accurately

research their builders. With builder licensing consumers will have access to consistent, reliable online information about the licences and the licence holders to help them make these informed decisions.

Now, how will builder licensing benefit Alberta's residential construction industry? Builder licensing will support the overall integrity and reputation of Alberta's residential construction industry. We have a great many builders out there that are fantastic, Madam Chair, and we want to make sure that those guys are highlighted. We don't want, you know, one bad apple here and there to ruin it for the rest of them. I want to make sure that we get that on record, that there are some amazing builders out there. The vast, vast majority of them are very, very good builders. That's something we can be proud of in this province.

Builder licensing is about supporting, as I said, those who do good work and helping to differentiate them from the rest of the pack. Builder and licence information will be available online, and we will help consumers with that to be able to understand who they have building their houses so that they don't have builders that are going to go out there and cut corners and misrepresent their industry and try to gain an unfair market advantage by deceiving people.

What will be the requirements for builders under a builder licensing program? Builders will be required to submit an application, pay a fee of \$600 for the application and \$500 for renewal, and hold an active licence in order to build. The licence will be for a one-year period and allows a builder to apply for multiple building permits during that time, after which a builder will then have to apply for a renewal.

The application process will require builders to submit information about their history – their track record, financial standing, and corporate structure – and it will allow the registrar of the new-home buyer protection office to assess all licence applications and determine whether an applicant presents a risk to the consumer. To avoid duplication of activities where possible, the application process will incorporate many of the existing requirements for a builder under the NHBPA, and the registrar will then determine if the applicant meets the licence criteria.

Will builders be required to take courses in order to obtain a licence and maintain an active licence? Builders have expressed a need for better training for practices outside of trades such as siding installation and installation of windows. Courses are not being considered at this time. We want to implement builder licensing first and phase in courses over the next few years. By phasing in training or course requirements, we will be able to first assess the program, determine strengths and gaps, and better align any required training to address those gaps. Both British Columbia and Ontario have had builder licensing in place for some time and have just recently introduced some of their course requirements.

What are the proposed licensing fees? How do proposed fees compare to other jurisdictions? Does government collect any other fees from builders? As I said, the proposed fees are \$600 for a new application and \$500 for the annual renewal. Ontario charges \$2,500 for a new application and \$500 for the renewal, and this involves warranty application fees. B.C. charges \$600 for a new application and \$500 for an annual renewal. Quebec charges \$1,048 for a new general applicant and \$1,378 for a specialized licence, with a range of renewal fees depending on licence type.

Will builder licensing apply to the construction of condominiums? Simply, yes, it will. We all know about leaky condos. We've heard about them here and in B.C. in the past. We want to make sure that people who are buying condos are protected as well.

Now, how will builder licensing be applied to renovations? This is a big one that we need to clarify about how this is going forward. Builder licensing will be required for substantial renovations where

at least 75 per cent of the home's footprint is changed such as a full rebuild or top-floor redesign. This aligns home warranty requirements under the NHBP where renovations that alter 75 per cent of a home's footprint are defined as buying a new home and therefore require warranty. Applying builder licensing only to substantial renovations will prevent overregulation of the industry.

Renovations vary significantly and range from painting to deck building to finishing a basement or replacing a furnace to a full rebuild of a home. Builder licensing is focused on ensuring quality construction. Renovations such as painting or tiling are cosmetic and less complex and do not have safety impacts for the most part, unless I'm doing it. As a result, these types of renovations will not be covered under the builder licensing as they are also regulated under Service Alberta's prepaid contracting business licensing regulation. Renovations such as putting in new electrical wiring or finishing a basement are more complex and require journeypersons and permitting. The prepaid contracting business licensing regulation also applies to many of these renovations, and as a result, these types of renovations are regulated.

How will builder licensing impact trades or subcontractors? Trade subcontractors would not be required to be licensed. The builder is responsible for managing the project, including which subtrades to hire and how much financial risk they assume. Subtrades are not covered under the builder licensing because they are the responsibility of the builder. Alberta has a strong system of qualified tradespeople and competent builders. Builder licensing is about supporting those who do good work and helping them to differentiate themselves from those who don't. Builder licensing will not impact the trades.

Builder licensing would apply only to the construction of new homes, as I said, which does include condominiums and major renovations to most or all of an existing home. The majority of renovations requiring tradespeople are less complex and already covered under existing permit systems and, as I said, prepaid contracting regulations.

Will builder licensing pass extra costs on to consumers? Will builder licensing result in increased home prices? Home ownership is, as I stated, probably the largest investment people are going to make in their lives, and Albertans have told us that they want to be protected. The average builder in Alberta builds approximately seven homes per year. Using the proposed \$500 fee for licensing renewal, the yearly cost per home will be roughly \$80.

In general, housing prices are determined by supply and demand and much less directly by underlying costs such as materials like lumber. Ultimately, high demand by consumer confidence and availability of supply will determine housing prices. An underlying cost in the form of a licensing fee is therefore unlikely to be passed on to the consumer anyway. The overall affordability of housing in Alberta is appreciably below the Canadian average and will not be significantly impacted by builder licensing.

Who will be exempted from builder licensing requirements? Owner-builders constructing their own home would not be required to maintain an active builder licence. Charitable organizations such as Habitat for Humanity could also be exempt from builder licensing because they have a different business model. Builder licensing is focused on regulating those in the business of being a builder.

What's the definition of a builder? Under the New Home Buyer Protection Act

"residential builder" means a person who engages in, arranges for or manages all or substantially all of the construction or reconstruction of a new home, or agrees to do any of those things, and includes a general contractor, but does not include an owner builder.

What other questions can I answer for people here? What will be the requirements for a builder to be licensed – for example, education or experience, project track record – and who will evaluate? The bill proposes that the builder submit information about their history, their financial standing, and their corporate structure. The new-home buyer protection office would review this information. They would evaluate the builder's demonstrated experience, knowledge of legal responsibility, ability to undertake and complete home construction, and ability to manage finances. Any formal training and certifications would be considered a benefit. When looking at these elements to evaluate a builder, the key question would be: does the builder's track record demonstrate building competence, and are there any patterns of behaviour that could be deemed risky to consumers? There are many excellent builders in Alberta, and this program would highlight those good track records.

How will a so-called bad builder be determined? Will it be a complaint system, and how will it be evaluated? Will there be an appeal system? If a builder has committed fraud in the past, has had their licence revoked in any other province, or has outstanding bankruptcy proceedings, a builder licence would not be issued. Court proceedings for past bankruptcies or violations under other acts will be considered along with the builder's history of construction when making these licensing decisions.

Is the annual fee a flat rate regardless of company size? Yes. The licence application and renewal fee will be the same for all builders regardless of size.

Will builders be responsible for the trades they subcontract, or will providers such as roofers, finishers, et cetera, also have to be licensed? I did touch on this before, that trades and subcontractors would not be required to be licensed. The builder is responsible for managing that project, including the subtrades that they've hired and the financial risk they would assume. Subtrades are not covered under builder licensing because they are the responsibility of the builder. In addition to protecting Albertans and bolstering the reputation of the residential building industry, better licensing would help protect subcontractors by recognizing builders' strong financial and legal track records.

11:20

How will you avoid processing delays since builders will need to be licensed for the building season? Government will work with the industry to make sure that licensing requirements do not impede a builder's ability to prepare for the building season. Steps will also be taken to ensure continuity throughout the process and that builders and homeowners will not be interrupted by unnecessary bureaucratic delays. Because of the integrated system being proposed and the ability to leverage the current registry system, Municipal Affairs will be able to work with our existing partners to mitigate delays and find agreeable solutions.

How many new staff will you hire for this program? We touched on this before. The program will be administered through reallocation of existing staff resources.

Aren't we just creating a duplicate system when both insurance companies and the banks already vet builders for financial risk? The financial vetting currently done by banks and warranty providers will consider liquidity and other financial indicators. The warranty providers are currently key partners in the NHBP system, and we will continue to work with them to implement builder licensing, utilizing existing information. Government will meet with warranty providers to see if their financial review processes could support builder licensing rather than government duplicating the process.

Will this be a barrier to a new builder? No, this will not be a barrier to a new builder. We will look at a range of factors beyond

experience, including financial and corporate structure, to determine licensing decisions. New builders will be given the opportunity to build a profile with the department over time. The builder licensing program will provide oversight and guidance for the new builder.

As for some of the regulations, many of the specific details of the builder licensing program will be laid out in the regulations. These will include details on appeal processes, fees, classes of licence, application process, renewal process, suspension or cancellation of licence, terms and conditions of licences, requirements for corporate licence holders, and some other things, obviously, that will be coming through. Government will continue to listen to stakeholders and industry to make sure the implementation of builder licensing is smooth and that through the drafting of regulations we are listening to everybody going forward.

I'm sure there's a lot more that I could say, but I know there are a few others that would like to speak. I just want to say that I really appreciate, again, my staff and all the hard work that they're doing on this and all the good, positive feedback we've been hearing from our different ridings and from different people around the province about this.

You know, I was just with a few gentlemen the other night, friends of mine, and one of them works in the oil patch. He had said, "It's about time; up in the oil patch we've got to have licences and permits," and he kind of listed off a bunch of things that they do. He's a tradesman himself, and he had kind of laughed about it and said: "It's about time. You know, people need to be licensed and protected." It was a nice thing to hear from him. I talked to a couple of builders on the weekend that said similar types of things. You know, we continue to get messages, as I had stated before, on social media and through e-mail and things like that. Hopefully, we continue to get more information from people and more feedback like that and make sure that we catch all of that feedback in a positive way. [Mr. S. Anderson's speaking time expired]

There you go. Perfect.

The Chair: Any other questions, comments, or amendments? Calgary-Northern Hills.

Mr. Kleinsteuber: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I rise this morning to speak in Committee of the Whole to Bill 12, the New Home Buyer Protection Amendment Act, 2017. Clearly, a new-home purchase is one of the biggest financial decisions any family will make, and Albertans should be protected. They need the confidence that the home being built is being built to the highest standards by builders with a good track record.

I was surprised to find out that 75 per cent of other Canadians in other provinces are protected by builder licensing programs, and the provinces of British Columbia, Quebec, and Ontario each have a licensing program that has proven to benefit both consumers and the home-building industry.

Buying a new home is one of the biggest investments that a person will ever make in their lifetime, and when Albertans make that investment, they deserve to be able to make an informed decision about their builder. They need to feel secure in the knowledge that the builder they have chosen is qualified and that the builder doesn't have a history of mismanagement and fraud. Currently new-home buyers are vulnerable, and there are no specific requirements for a residential builder.

Madam Chair, like most members of this Legislature, I have bought a new home a few times in my life. The first time was a 1,400-square-foot condo unit. It was one unit in a six-unit building, and I was lucky enough to have bought a unit without any significant problems. However, being in a shared condo space of

townhouses, I heard from neighbours about problems and complications within their units. For example, if plumbing or electrical wiring in a block of units was not completed in a proper way, I could have found myself affected by the failures or the low quality of work even though it may have not been in my unit.

I later joined the condo board of our condo units and served as director and soon found out that my worst fears were realized and that the roofing and shingles were poorly installed, and a few units had leaky roofs. We attempted to fix the work and used our condo reserves to approach the builder to get the job complete. To make a long story short, it took two years to get a proper settlement and the shingles fixed, but it came at a cost to the condo board, and the fee increase affected all residents. In this case, although it was a reputable builder, still we confronted these challenges. Fortunately, we came to a resolution on the matter, but it doesn't make the process any easier.

However, I was happy to see that condominium construction was included in this bill as well. The construction of condominiums is regulated under the New Home Buyer Protection Act, as is any new-home construction, and I'm encouraged to know that the builder licensing will apply to condominium developers as well.

Madam Chair, I'll tell you another anecdotal tale of another home that I purchased in the past. In this case, it was a semidetached unit. When I think about the spot, I often miss it. It had a great view. However, after moving into the neighbourhood in this new home, I was surprised to learn that a lot of other neighbours were still having issues with their homes. The builder managed to resolve most disputes, and the neighbours were satisfied in the end for the most part, but we found it necessary to form a community association to work with the builder to further resolve some of those issues as well.

In the case of my building, my neighbour always asked me in the wintertime about my unit and if the master bedroom was warm enough. I didn't have any problems with my unit, and eventually, after the second winter, my neighbour ended up moving away because of the heating issues in their unit. After the new neighbours moved in, while I was over socializing one night, after a few drinks of milk and juice, of course, I found out that the vent from the furnace to their master bedroom was missing about half a foot of pipe. Yes, Madam Chair. There was literally a half-foot gap between the pipe and the connecting piece to the master bedroom. The basement was toasty warm in the winter while the master bedroom was not.

I went to have a peek at this deficiency, and I was surprised to see this not only because the final inspectors missed it – and not only that; the previous family had missed it as well – but because the consequences of that deficiency were so irritating that the family moved away. They were great neighbours. But to the credit of the new neighbours, I enjoyed their company as well. Once again it just highlights how a small deficiency like that can have such surprising consequences.

Madam Chair, I am certain that this bill and the builder licensing is going to make a big difference for Albertans. In February and March 2017 Municipal Affairs conducted a targeted stakeholder engagement to hear stories from Albertans and to determine the appropriate scope of a builder licensing program in Alberta: 1,269 Albertans responded to the online survey, and 130 participants attended 11 engagement sessions across the province. Seventy-eight per cent of survey respondents were in favour of government exploring options for licensed builders. Eighty-one per cent of members of the public support government exploring options for the licensing of builders compared to 69 per cent supporting those of the building industry. Forty-one per cent of all respondents indicated that they were dissatisfied with the current state of residential construction in Alberta. As well, several builder survey

respondents noted the challenges of competing with poor builders and that they would welcome a builder licensing program.

11:30

Through the consultations we heard frustration from homeowners, who felt they were on their own when it came to the residential construction process, with no assurance that someone was looking out for them. Builder licensing combined with mandatory home warranties will help increase builder accountability, with homeowners feeling confident that mechanisms are in place to protect their interests.

Madam Chair, I'm impressed with the direction of this bill, and I think it's time that we take action to protect Albertans when they're making the biggest investment decisions of their lives. I'll be supporting Bill 12 in Committee of the Whole, and I encourage others to do the same.

Thank you.

The Chair: Hon. members, I've had a request to revert to Introduction of Guests.

Okay. I've been advised that we can't actually do that in committee as we can't set aside the standing orders. We'd have to actually be in Assembly. So if someone would like to move that we rise and report progress and then go back, then we could.

The hon. Government House Leader to help us out.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I think we need to revisit that rule, but I will move that the committee rise and report progress.

[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 certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 12.

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

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I would request unanimous consent to briefly revert to Introduction of Guests.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

Mr. Hunter: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'd like to introduce a school to you and through you to all members of this Assembly. The Spring Glen junior high school has come up from the southern parts of the province. They've travelled a long way, and they were hoping to be able to be introduced in the House, so I'd like to do this at this time. Their principal, Jamie Barfuss, is here, a great guy even though his students say otherwise. We went to school together. I'd like to have all of them please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

Thank you.

Mr. Mason: Do you need a motion to go back into Committee of the Whole?

The Deputy Speaker: No. I think we're fine. You learn something new every day around here.

Thank you, hon. members.

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

The Chair: We're moving back into committee.

Bill 12 New Home Buyer Protection Amendment Act, 2017 (continued)

The Chair: Are there any further questions, comments, or amendments? Calgary-Hawkwood.

Connolly: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 12, the New Home Buyer Protection Amendment Act, 2017. I'm really proud to be able to stand today and speak, mostly because home ownership is one of the biggest financial decisions that any family will make. Albertans deserve to be protected and have confidence that their home is being built to a high standard by builders with a good track record. Currently you can never be too sure as to whether or not your home builder is well equipped, is licensed – well, there is no licensing program at the moment. You never know what their credentials are, but soon you will if this bill is to pass.

This is a fair and balanced measure which will help both consumers and the home building industry and has been put forward after consultation with the industry, consumers, municipalities, and, of course, other stakeholders. Currently new-home consumers are vulnerable because they have limited access to information about builders, like I was referring to earlier. There are no mechanisms to prevent a builder from operating even after instances of fraud or poor building practices. Builder licensing programs already protect 75 per cent of Canadians, and we need to be in line with the other provinces so that we're not a destination for bad builders from elsewhere, of course. Now, Madam Chair, this is just one of the more practical ways that we're making life better for Albertans, and I'm proud to be a part of a government that is focused on that.

Now, I just wanted to talk about certain parts of the bill. Of course, under part 1.1 of the act, Licensing:

- 4.1(1) The Registrar may, on application, issue a licence to a residential builder if
 - (a) the Registrar is satisfied that the residential builder meets the prescribed qualifications and conditions for licensing,
 - (b) where the residential builder is a corporation, the Registrar is satisfied that no individual about whom disclosure is required under subsection (3) would be refused a licence if the individual were an applicant, and
 - (c) the residential builder pays the required licence fee.

Of course, that's just referring to how the licensing program will be set up, Madam Chair, and how we can move forward.

- (2) The Registrar may
 - (a) require an applicant to take, or where the applicant is a corporation, to require any of its directors, officers or employees to take, courses and examinations for the

purposes of ensuring that the applicant or the applicant's directors, officers and employees meet the qualifications and conditions referred to in subsection (1)(a).

Of course, this just makes sure that everyone who does want a licence is properly informed of all the decisions, is informed of what the requirements to build a house would be.

Of course, Ontario, British Columbia, and Quebec already have builder licensing programs in place, so that means that over 75 per cent of Canadians, as I was referring to earlier, have the benefit of protection of builder licensing, and Manitoba is expected to introduce a licensing and warranty program in 2018.

Just to continue on with what I was talking about:

- (b) set and administer courses and examinations for the purposes of clause (a).

That's just referring to the first part I was talking about.

- (3) Where a residential builder applying for a licence or the renewal of a licence is a corporation, the residential builder must file a statement with the Registrar disclosing to the satisfaction of the Registrar the identity of all directors and officers of the corporation.

That's just so that there's a bit more transparency in the corporation.

- (4) If, after a statement is filed under subsection (3), there is any change in the information required to be disclosed, an updated statement must be filed with the Registrar forthwith.

- (5) A licence is not transferable.

Of course, that's just to make sure that if one corporation does close down or licensing does close down, they cannot create a new one and have that licence follow them with the new corporation.

11:40

Under Renewal of Licence:

- 4.2(1) A residential builder who holds a licence under this Part may, within the time prescribed, apply to the Registrar to have the licence renewed.

That's just to make sure that there is continuity.

- (2) The Registrar may renew the licence, with or without conditions and restrictions, if
 - (a) the Registrar is satisfied that the residential builder continues to meet the applicable requirements of section 4.1, and
 - (b) the residential builder pays the required renewal fee.

Again, just to make sure that there is continuity, making sure that they are still paying their dues as well as ensuring that everyone in the corporation or a certain builder is still qualified.

Under Conditions:

- 4.3 Subject to the regulations, the Registrar may at any time impose conditions and restrictions on a licence issued or renewed under this Part.

You never know what may happen, so you have to make sure that the registrar has the right to impose conditions.

Under Expiry of Licence:

- 4.4 Subject to section 4.5, a licence expires one year after the day it was issued or last renewed or, if an earlier expiry date is specified on the licence by the Registrar, on the specified date.

That is just, of course, making sure that people are able to renew the licence.

- 4.5(1) The Registrar may refuse to issue or renew or may at any time suspend or cancel, as the Registrar considers appropriate, the licence of a residential builder

- (a) for any reason that would render the residential builder ineligible for a licence under section 4.1 if the residential builder were applying for a licence under that section,
- (b) if the residential builder has made a false statement about a material matter in the application for the licence or renewal or refuses to provide information

about a material matter when requested to do so by the Registrar.

Of course, that's just keeping everything more transparent.

- (c) if the residential builder is convicted of an offence under this Act or a prescribed offence under another Act,
- (d) if the residential builder has breached a condition of the licence or a restriction on the licence,
- (e) if the Registrar considers that the application for the licence or renewal is not or was not made in good faith,
- (f) if the residential builder has failed to comply with a compliance order or a prescribed order or direction under another Act,
- (g) if the residential builder has failed to pay an administrative penalty under this Act or a prescribed Act,
- (h) if the licence was issued in error.

Of course, that would be if it was issued without compliance with the other parts under 4.5.

- (i) in any other circumstances in which the Registrar considers the refusal, suspension or cancellation appropriate to avoid or reduce a risk to the public or any person.

That's, of course, just keeping with public safety.

- (2) Subject to the regulations, the Registrar may reinstate a licence that has been suspended or cancelled if the Registrar is satisfied that it is appropriate to do so and that the issues that resulted in the suspension or cancellation have been addressed.

Again, making sure there's transparency, making sure the registrar has the rights to do as they need to.

Under Notice of Decision and Surrender of Licence:

- 4.6(1) If the Registrar refuses to issue or renew a licence or suspends, cancels or imposes conditions or restrictions on a licence, the Registrar shall serve the residential builder with notice of the decision.

- (2) The notice must

- (a) include written reasons for the Registrar's decision, and
- (b) advise the residential builder of the right under section 17 to appeal the Registrar's decision to the Board.

So making sure that the home builders still have rights if something does happen to their licences.

- (3) Where the Registrar suspends, cancels or refuses to renew the licence of a residential builder, the residential builder must forthwith surrender the licence to the Registrar.

So making sure that the registrar does have rights to suspend at any time instead of just having to wait until the renewal.

Under Holding Out:

- 4.7 A person who does not hold a valid licence under this Part shall not represent or hold out, expressly or by implication, that the person is licensed under this Part.

Section 5 is amended

- (a) in subsection (1)
 - (i) by striking out "shall issue" and substituting "may, on application, issue";
 - (ii) by striking out "an individual who intends to build a new home for personal use if the individual" and substituting "an owner builder if the owner builder";
- (b) by repealing subsection (3).

The current act says:

- 5(1) Subject to section 6, the Registrar shall issue an authorization, subject to any terms and conditions the Registrar considers appropriate, to an individual who intends to build a new home for personal use if the individual

- (a) registers the new home with the Registrar,
- (b) meets the prescribed criteria, and
- (c) pays the required fees, if any.

Of course, this just makes it so that if someone does own their own home or is an owner-builder, they have their own rights under this act.

Section 6 is repealed, and the following is substituted:

Refusal, suspension or cancellation of authorization

6 The Registrar may refuse to issue an authorization to an owner builder or may at any time suspend or cancel, as the Registrar considers appropriate, an owner builder's authorization

- (a) if the owner builder does not meet the prescribed criteria referred to in section 5(1)(b) or does not pay the required fees, if any, under section 5(1)(c),

Of course, that was the section that I just read and we have amended.

- (b) if the owner builder has made a false statement about a material matter in the application for an authorization or refuses to provide information about a material matter when requested to do so by the Registrar,

This is making sure that they are accountable under the registrar once more.

- (c) if the owner builder is convicted of an offence under this Act,
- (d) if the owner builder has breached a condition of the authorization or a restriction on the authorization,
- (e) if the Registrar considers that the application for the authorization is not or was not made in good faith,
- (f) if the owner builder has failed to comply with a compliance order,
- (g) if the owner builder has failed to pay an administrative penalty, or
- (h) if the authorization was issued in error.

Of course, this just mirrors what's done for other builders.

Section 7(2) is being repealed. It presently says: "If the Registrar suspends or cancels an owner builder's authorization, the Registrar shall notify the permit issuer that issued the building permit to the owner builder." It will be substituted with:

- (2) If the Registrar suspends or cancels an authorization held by an owner builder to whom a building permit has been issued under the Safety Codes Act, the Registrar shall notify the permit issuer.

That's just making sure that the registrar still has the right to permit the issuer.

Section 9(1)(a) will be repealed. It presently reads:

9(1) The Registrar shall establish and maintain a registry that must include information on

- (a) authorizations and exemptions issued or applied for under this Act.

That will be repealed, and the following will be substituted:

- (a) licences applied for, issued, renewed, suspended, cancelled or reinstated under this Act,
- (a.1) authorizations applied for, issued, suspended or cancelled under this Act,
- (a.2) exemptions applied for or issued under this Act.

Of course, that's to make sure that the registrar can maintain his registry and include certain information.

11:50

The current section 11(1)(a) and (b) shall be repealed. It reads:

- 11(1) For the purposes of this Act, a compliance officer may
 - (a) require an owner builder to produce
 - (i) the owner builder's authorization, including any declaration in support of the application for that authorization, or
 - (ii) any records relating to the owner builder's exemption from a requirement under this Act.

That will be repealed, and the following shall be substituted:

- (a) require an owner builder to produce any or all of the following:
 - (i) proof of the owner builder's authorization;
 - (ii) any records relating to the application for the authorization;
 - (iii) any records relating to an exemption from a requirement under this Act,
- (b) require a residential builder to produce any or all of the following:
 - (i) proof of the residential builder's licence;
 - (ii) any records relating to the application for the licence;
 - (iii) proof that a new home built or under construction by the residential builder has the required home warranty coverage;
 - (iv) any records relating to an exemption from a requirement under this Act.

Of course, that makes it so that the residential builder shall produce any proof that they are a residential builder to a registrar or those who are taking care of the law in this regard.

Section 12(3)(a) is amended by striking out "an authorization" and substituting "a licence or an authorization," just to make sure that we have full compliance under the law.

Section 15 shall be amended in subsection (2) by striking out "in respect of a new home, including a dwelling unit within a multiple family dwelling that is a new home." That means, in respect to the act, that a penalty may be imposed by the registrar. Currently that subsection reads:

- (2) An administrative penalty may be
 - (a) a single amount, or
 - (b) an amount for each day that the contravention or failure to comply continues.

It will also be amended by adding the following after subsection (2).

- (2.1) Where a contravention or failure to comply referred to in subsection (1) is in respect of a multiple family dwelling, a separate administrative penalty may be imposed for each dwelling unit that is a new home within the multiple family dwelling.

It will also be amended in subsection (4) by striking out "under this section."

It will also be amended by repealing subsection (6) and substituting the following:

- (6) An administrative penalty may be imposed on one or more directors, officers or other persons who authorized, permitted or acquiesced in a contravention or failure to comply by a corporation for which an administrative . . .

The Chair: Pursuant to Standing Order 4(3) the committee will now rise and report progress.

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

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

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration certain bills. The committee reports progress on the following bill: Bill 12. I wish to table copies of any amendments that may be considered by the Committee of the Whole, but seeing none, there won't be any tabled.

Thank you.

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

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Yeah. Madam Speaker, I move that we call it 12 o'clock and adjourn until 1:30 this afternoon. [Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:56 a.m.]

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