



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Third Session

Alberta Hansard

Tuesday afternoon, May 16, 2017

Day 34

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

The 29th Legislature

Third Session

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

Jabbour, Deborah C., Peace River (ND), Deputy Speaker and Chair of Committees

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

Aheer, Leela Sharon, Chestermere-Rocky View (W)
Anderson, Hon. Shaye, Leduc-Beaumont (ND)
Anderson, Wayne, Highwood (W)
Babcock, Erin D., Stony Plain (ND)
Barnes, Drew, Cypress-Medicine Hat (W)
Bilous, Hon. Deron, Edmonton-Beverly-Clareview (ND),
Deputy Government House Leader
Carlier, Hon. Oneil, Whitecourt-St. Anne (ND),
Deputy Government House Leader
Carson, Jonathon, Edmonton-Meadowlark (ND)
Ceci, Hon. Joe, Calgary-Fort (ND)
Clark, Greg, Calgary-Elbow (AP)
Connolly, Michael R.D., Calgary-Hawkwood (ND)
Coolahan, Craig, Calgary-Klein (ND)
Cooper, Nathan, Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills (W),
Official Opposition House Leader
Cortes-Vargas, Estefania, Strathcona-Sherwood Park (ND),
Government Whip
Cyr, Scott J., Bonnyville-Cold Lake (W)
Dach, Lorne, Edmonton-McClung (ND)
Dang, Thomas, Edmonton-South West (ND)
Drever, Deborah, Calgary-Bow (ND)
Drysdale, Wayne, Grande Prairie-Wapiti (PC),
Progressive Conservative Opposition Whip
Eggen, Hon. David, Edmonton-Calder (ND)
Ellis, Mike, Calgary-West (PC)
Feehan, Hon. Richard, Edmonton-Rutherford (ND)
Fildebrandt, Derek Gerhard, Strathmore-Brooks (W)
Fitzpatrick, Maria M., Lethbridge-East (ND)
Fraser, Rick, Calgary-South East (PC)
Ganley, Hon. Kathleen T., Calgary-Buffalo (ND)
Gill, Prab, Calgary-Greenway (PC)
Goehring, Nicole, Edmonton-Castle Downs (ND)
Gotfried, Richard, Calgary-Fish Creek (PC)
Gray, Hon. Christina, Edmonton-Mill Woods (ND)
Hanson, David B., Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills (W),
Official Opposition Deputy House Leader
Hinkley, Bruce, Wetaskiwin-Camrose (ND)
Hoffman, Hon. Sarah, Edmonton-Glenora (ND)
Horne, Trevor A.R., Spruce Grove-St. Albert (ND)
Hunter, Grant R., Cardston-Taber-Warner (W)
Jansen, Sandra, Calgary-North West (ND)
Jean, Brian Michael, QC, Fort McMurray-Conklin (W),
Leader of the Official Opposition
Kazim, Anam, Calgary-Glenmore (ND)
Kleinsteuber, Jamie, Calgary-Northern Hills (ND)
Larivee, Hon. Danielle, Lesser Slave Lake (ND)
Littlewood, Jessica, Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville (ND)
Loewen, Todd, Grande Prairie-Smoky (W)

Loyola, Rod, Edmonton-Ellerslie (ND)
Luff, Robyn, Calgary-East (ND)
MacIntyre, Donald, Innisfail-Sylvan Lake (W)
Malkinson, Brian, Calgary-Currie (ND)
Mason, Hon. Brian, Edmonton-Highlands-Norwood (ND),
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McCuaig-Boyd, Hon. Margaret,
Dunvegan-Central Peace-Notley (ND)
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McLean, Hon. Stephanie V., Calgary-Varsity (ND)
McPherson, Karen M., Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill (ND)
Miller, Barb, Red Deer-South (ND)
Miranda, Hon. Ricardo, Calgary-Cross (ND)
Nielsen, Christian E., Edmonton-Decore (ND)
Nixon, Jason, Rimbey-Rocky Mountain House-Sundre (W),
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Orr, Ronald, Lacombe-Ponoka (W)
Panda, Prasad, Calgary-Foothills (W)
Payne, Hon. Brandy, Calgary-Acadia (ND)
Phillips, Hon. Shannon, Lethbridge-West (ND)
Piquette, Colin, Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater (ND)
Pitt, Angela D., Airdrie (W),
Official Opposition Deputy Whip
Renaud, Marie F., St. Albert (ND)
Rodney, Dave, Calgary-Lougheed (PC),
Progressive Conservative Opposition House Leader
Rosendahl, Eric, West Yellowhead (ND)
Sabir, Hon. Irfan, Calgary-McCall (ND)
Schmidt, Hon. Marlin, Edmonton-Gold Bar (ND)
Schneider, David A., Little Bow (W)
Schreiner, Kim, Red Deer-North (ND)
Shepherd, David, Edmonton-Centre (ND)
Sigurdson, Hon. Lori, Edmonton-Riverview (ND)
Smith, Mark W., Drayton Valley-Devon (W)
Starke, Dr. Richard, Vermilion-Lloydminster (PC)
Stier, Pat, Livingstone-Macleod (W)
Strankman, Rick, Drumheller-Stettler (W)
Sucha, Graham, Calgary-Shaw (ND)
Swann, Dr. David, Calgary-Mountain View (AL)
Taylor, Wes, Battle River-Wainwright (W)
Turner, Dr. A. Robert, Edmonton-Whitemud (ND)
van Dijken, Glenn, Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock (W)
Westhead, Cameron, Banff-Cochrane (ND),
Deputy Government Whip
Woollard, Denise, Edmonton-Mill Creek (ND)
Yao, Tany, Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo (W)

Party standings:

New Democrat: 55

Wildrose: 22

Progressive Conservative: 8

Alberta Liberal: 1

Alberta Party: 1

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Shannon Dean, Law Clerk and Director of House
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Christina Gray	Minister of Labour, Minister Responsible for Democratic Renewal
Danielle Larivee	Minister of Children's Services
Brian Mason	Minister of Infrastructure, Minister of Transportation
Margaret McCuaig-Boyd	Minister of Energy
Stephanie V. McLean	Minister of Service Alberta, Minister of Status of Women
Ricardo Miranda	Minister of Culture and Tourism
Brandy Payne	Associate Minister of Health
Shannon Phillips	Minister of Environment and Parks, Minister Responsible for the Climate Change Office
Irfan Sabir	Minister of Community and Social Services
Marlin Schmidt	Minister of Advanced Education
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STANDING AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

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Dang	Taylor
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Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

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Standing Committee on Private Bills

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Anderson, W.	Kleinsteuber
Babcock	McKitrick
Drever	Rosendahl
Drysdale	Stier
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Kazim	

Standing Committee on Privileges and Elections, Standing Orders and Printing

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Coolahan	McPherson
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Ellis	Schneider
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Hanson	van Dijken
Kazim	

Standing Committee on Public Accounts

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Luff	

Standing Committee on Resource Stewardship

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Dang	Malkinson
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Hanson	Rosendahl
Kazim	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Tuesday, May 16, 2017

[The Speaker in the chair]

The Speaker: Good afternoon. Please be seated.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

Ms Miller: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to introduce to you and through you 74 students from the wonderful school of Eastview in Red Deer-South. They are accompanied by teachers Kim Foster, Isaac Terrenzio, and Tracy Beingessner and chaperones Jodi Quintal, Gail McDonald, Sandi O'Brien, Mike Hudak, Angie Desharnais, and Laurette Woodward. Would you all please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-Castle Downs.

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's my absolute pleasure to rise today and introduce to you and through you 43 students from the amazing school of St. Timothy. They are accompanied today by Miss Kyra Reilly and Mrs. Kristina Schmidt. I would ask all the students and their teachers to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other school groups here today?
Seeing and hearing none, the hon. Member for Peace River.

Ms Jabbour: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today on your behalf to introduce to all members of the Assembly Ms Wilma Shim, chair of Special Olympics Alberta; Mr. Johnny Byrne, CEO of Special Olympics Alberta; Mr. Brian Varga, chair of the provincial games; and the athletes, volunteers, and staff of the Special Olympics. An hour ago we saw the torch run final leg relay kick off on the front steps of the Legislature with the Law Enforcement Torch Run as guardians of the flame. In 52 days the Special Olympics Alberta Summer Games will take place in Medicine Hat, from July 7 to 9. It will be a thrilling weekend for over 1,000 athletes from all over Alberta, full of incredible competition and celebration of the Special Olympics community.

Ms Shim, Mr. Byrne, Mr. Varga, and the participants of the Special Olympics are seated in your gallery, Mr. Speaker. I would ask them all now to please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, it would be amiss – I didn't know until after the event, but one of the torch runners is, in fact, a sister of the hon. Minister of Service Alberta. And I would advise all of you – I'm sure you'll be on a waiting list – that when you come down to Medicine Hat to spend some of your money in July, we'd be more than happy to have you there.

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

Ms Gray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly some special guests from the Canadian Franchise Association. With

us today is Mr. Ryan Eickmeier, vice-president of government relations and public policy for CFA, along with 20 representatives from some of Alberta's and Canada's biggest franchises. There are too many for me to name individually today, but I want to thank them all for joining us. I will point out that our guests are here on a special occasion for their organization, Franchise Awareness Day. It also marks the 50th anniversary of the CFA. There are 40,000 franchisees operating coast to coast; 60 per cent of their membership operates in Alberta. I thank them for joining us today, and I'd like to ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly Mr. Tim Parnett. Tim is the founder of Mightywheels.ca, an advocacy website for people with physical disabilities. Tim is joined today by his father, Glen Parnett; his mother, Kelly Parnett; as well as my devoted constituency office assistant, Joscelyn Proby; our social work placement student, Adiatu Kuyatah; and another constituent, Jennifer Easaw, who joins us here in the House for the first time today to witness the proceedings. I invite them now to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Advanced Education.

Mr. Schmidt: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you the following incredibly smart and hard-working individuals from the Department of Advanced Education, which is indisputably the best department in the government of Alberta. In the gallery with us today we have Charles Barnard, Cheryl Naundorf, Claire Tunney, David Williams, and Lauren Chomyn. I also want to recognize people who are not here today but have contributed significantly to some work that we have recently accomplished: Debbie Andre, John Muir, Kelly Turner, Natasha McKenzie, Peter Pagano, Roderick Wiltshire, Sandra Wagenseil, and Waqas Yousafzai.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the hard work, dedication, and expertise that these people have so generously contributed in guiding our ministry, stakeholders, and the province through the legislation of Bill 7, An Act to Enhance Post-secondary Academic Bargaining. I'm very proud of my department and of the comprehensive rigour that they have applied to the process on everything from gathering data through the many consultation avenues to getting right the fine print of the actual bill. They were instrumental in helping us listen to all Albertans so that we could find the right balance and deliver the long-neglected rights that Bill 7 ensures. I'd ask them to please rise to receive my heartfelt thanks and the recognition of all in this Assembly.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a privilege to rise and introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly representatives from the Boys and Girls Club of Strathcona County. I will be speaking about their work later on in my member's statement. Tyler Roed is the executive director, who has worked hard for many, many years to achieve the success of the club, and from the board of directors are Brock Day, Helen Conroy, Leta Shannon, and Sean Jenkinson. I would like them now to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Minister of Service Alberta and of Status of Women.

Ms McLean: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like very much to take this opportunity to introduce to you and through you to the House my sister Jessica McLean. Jessica is here today with the Special Olympics torch run. As you mentioned, she was one of the torch runners. She is an athlete and an accomplished swimmer with Special Olympics. She has competed at the national level, winning numerous gold medals. She is a member of their masters' swim club, and she is on the Edmonton and provincial athletes' committee. I am very proud of her and her accomplishments. Seeing her run today brought a tear to my eye. I'm honoured to have the opportunity to introduce her today in the House. I'd ask that she rise and please receive the warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: A special welcome to you.

Members' Statements

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

Sunalta Community in Calgary

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I want to speak about a neighbourhood in Calgary-Currie that is working hard to create a welcoming community for all. That neighbourhood is Sunalta. Built in the early 1900s by the CPR, its name is a fusion of sunny plus Alberta, hence Sunalta. Today Sunalta is home to Albertans who live in one-, two-, and three-storey walk-ups, who live in basement suites, condos, side-by-sides, and you name it. Some, unfortunately, do not have a place to call home, but everyone is welcome in Sunalta.

1:40

I am so proud of the work Sunalta does to foster inclusion. This summer the Sunalta Community Association and five other organizations are creating a 10-day camp for immigrant and refugee youth aged 13 to 17, calling this initiative My Summer Journey YYC. Youth will participate in urban art projects, go on field trips to local tourism destinations, and explore Calgary by bike. The goal, Mr. Speaker, is to engage recent immigrant and refugee youth in hands-on art and cultural activities as well as to teach technical and practical skills.

Another example is Jane's walk, part of an international initiative to help communities foster growth. This walk was attended by myself and people of all ages. We visited what was once a vacant lot that has since been transformed by the community members into a wildflower garden with picnic tables, memorial stepping stones, and a crabapple tree.

Sunalta is also home to local businesses like One Way Foods, where you are greeted with the aroma of banana bread, and Mikey's juke joint, a well-known local music venue.

Sunalta is where I met a man using solar panels to heat his garage eager to know more about our energy efficiency programs. It's also where I met a couple who provide services to people with disabilities eager to hear about my Henson trust consultations.

This is Sunalta, Mr. Speaker. Sunalta has been welcoming change, families, and diversity for well over 100 years, and I hope they will continue to welcome everyone for many more years to come.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Federal and Provincial Government Policies

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The NDP government just does not have the backs of Albertans, especially when this NDP government deals with their BFF, Justin Trudeau. There was the closing of the Vegreville immigration centre, killing hundreds of good rural jobs. When Trudeau brought legislation forward solidifying the tanker ban along the B.C. coast, where was the NDP? Missing in action. Does the NDP even understand the significance of the tanker ban and the impact it will have on our oil industry? Either they don't understand, they don't care, or, worse yet, they actually revel in the potential demise of Alberta's number one industry.

Last week the Prime Minister's hand-picked panel recommended moving the National Energy Board from Calgary to Ottawa. Where was the NDP? Out in left field. Is there anyone over there in left field that understands that the heart of Canada's energy industry is right here in Alberta? The federal government continues to kick Alberta when it's down, with things like GST on the carbon tax and billions in unfair equalization, and the NDP remains complacent if not complicit in these actions.

Let's face it. Social licence is a hoax. Those opposed to our oil and gas industry still oppose it today. The tanker ban is a classic example. The highly touted carbon tax, the biggest tax increase in the province, got us nothing. Well, it did get us free light bulbs installed by an out-of-province company. Albertans don't need light bulbs. They need timely health care, quality education, safe communities, well-maintained highways, and jobs.

This government simply does not have Albertans' backs, but they do have their bestie Trudeau's back and the backs of environmental radicals from around the world. This government has brought forward three brutal, debt-laden budgets in a row. These budgets are creating record levels of debt, and Albertans will be paying billions in annual interest payments.

This government has done nothing to create a stable, business-friendly environment. In fact, it has taken every opportunity to destroy the Alberta advantage. Without business investment, there can be no jobs and prosperity.

Wildrose believes Alberta's government agenda should be to put Albertans first. We need to build relationships with the rest of Canada and the world, relationships built on trust and respect, with strength, rather than to cower and appease. If we have just one plea . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Government Accountability

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. One of the constant criticisms of this Legislature is that we as legislators too often put partisan politics before the best interests of our constituents. That's a fair criticism. Members on both sides of the House have been accused of being in the pocket of big business or unions or of lacking compassion or not respecting democracy or deliberately acting against the best interests of Albertans.

Often these complaints are not based on the actions of the specific member being accused. In our system of government members answer to the actions of caucus colleagues past and present because one of the most important aspects of representative democracy is that there is someone answerable to the people. We wear the collective history of our political affiliation because the people who elect us bear the weight of the decisions made in this Chamber.

It's true that the Progressive Conservatives, after 44 years of governing this great province, have more history to account for than any other party in this House. While we wear that history proudly with names like Klein and Lougheed, finding admirers across the province as well as across party lines, we also acknowledge that we've made our fair share of mistakes. We've taken our lumps from the government for some of those mistakes.

That is why I find it so disappointing that the government is taking question period as simply another opportunity to repeat key messages and attack the opposition, when a question about transitions for worried coal communities draws accusations from the minister that these communities were being ignored by the opposition instead of actually taking the opportunity to inform concerned Albertans, when questions about the safety of children in care are brushed off by the Premier because that specific case didn't happen on her watch.

Mr. Speaker, a preference for your own political team is to be expected. But when that preference for your own team or your disdain for the opposition continues to cloud your better judgment and prevents you from answering questions given to us justifiably by concerned Albertans, then your preference has become a prejudice and an obstacle to good governance.

Thank you.

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

Asian Heritage Month

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak about Asian Heritage Month. Here in Edmonton Asian Heritage Month has been around since 1998, and in 2002 May was declared Asian Heritage Month by the government of Canada. This month gives us an opportunity to reflect on the contributions made by individuals of Asian descent to Canada and its culture. Our society is a rich mosaic of diversity and inclusion, and a significant part of that mosaic is due to the many individuals of Asian heritage who make this province home. As the Canadian Heritage Minister reminded us earlier this month, "Whether from East Asia, South Asia, Western Asia, Southeast Asia or the Middle East, Asian Canadians have helped our country prosper and grow."

Asian-Canadians and Asian-Albertans have been here in Alberta for many generations, Mr. Speaker. I myself am proud to be a second-generation Asian-Albertan that has the opportunity to celebrate my heritage right here in this House.

I know that our Asian communities across this province are extraordinarily proud and vibrant. In fact, every single year I attend numerous new year events across the province for weeks on end, Mr. Speaker, to celebrate and share in the prosperity a new year brings to our communities. Here in Edmonton during Asian Heritage Month there are opportunities to experience films, choirs, and even opera. I encourage all members to seek out and attend these and other events in your communities.

Our Asian communities are working people in this province. They're business leaders, they're doctors, they're teachers, they're nurses, they're labourers, and indeed even MLAs, Mr. Speaker. So I'm proud of this province for being inclusive and for the opportunity that it offers to our diverse communities. Our province and indeed our nation are better because of the unique diversity that our Asian heritage and culture bring to the table.

Diversity and inclusion are something that I am proud this government stands for, and I hope all members of this House will strive to uphold those values and be strong ambassadors for the

diversity in this province, whether that's for our Asian culture or any other. Alberta is stronger together.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Sherwood Park.

Boys and Girls Club of Strathcona County

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Boys and Girls Club of Strathcona County has been hard at work in my community since 2001. Starting with one small program, they have expanded to serve more than 750 youth through the support of businesses, community groups, and family and community services.

One of the things that makes the Boys and Girls Club unique is their sole focus on serving young people. No child is ever denied access to the wide range of programs due to their inability to pay.

Programs at the Boys and Girls Club are created to provide opportunities that build leadership and character for every individual through every stage of their lives. This strength-based perspective and capacity-building focus have earned fantastic results and have been adopted by many other groups. My own practice as a community and social planner has benefited from learning about this asset-based philosophy.

The club has grown so quickly in Strathcona county that they have recently opened a third location in Sherwood Park. Executive Director Ty Roed has said that one reason for their growth is that the Boys and Girls Club offers an affordable solution in a tough economy.

They have worked hard to become a part of the community. I particularly like how the two satellite locations are situated in schools to offer before and after school programs. In addition to before and after school care programs, the club runs summer programs and adventure camps, where there are opportunities for kids to go on trips to places like Banff, Calgary, Drumheller, and maybe the Legislative Assembly.

I strongly encourage you all to visit your local Boys and Girls Club to meet the dedicated teams that work to deliver these important services and to learn more about the multitude of ways in which this club strengthens communities by always seeing the best in our youth.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

1:50

Property Rights and Bill 204

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to express my disbelief that this government, that claims to champion protecting property rights for Albertans, would be so completely out of touch on the matter. Despite their claims to champion this topic while in opposition, when the rubber hit the road, they drove straight into the ditch, throwing one of their few rural MLAs under the bus in the process.

The now Infrastructure minister even had his picture on a glossy brochure titled *Your Land, Your Rights*, which contained all sorts of indignant quotes on how evil some of the sections of bills 19, 24, 36, and 50 were. It's ironic, considering that when this side of the House gave them the opportunity to actually fix some of these egregious parts, they failed landowners completely. The hon. minister even once stated, "I find it ironic in a way that it's the New Democrat opposition that is standing up and has stood up from the beginning for the [property] rights of [Albertans] in this province." Well, Mr. Speaker, we know from yesterday's actions by the

government that they say one thing and do another. I believe that meets the definition of two-faced.

The government made no efforts to work together to address any concerns they had with this bill. They could have proposed meaningful amendments or even suggested sending it to committee so that they could hear from experts on the subject. An all-party committee even recommended unanimously that the government abolish adverse possession. Then the same government members of that committee voted yesterday to destroy this bill in the House, a disgraceful position to take from a party who had released property rights propaganda stating, "Together we can change these laws that trample on important rights of citizens."

Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is that this government once more failed its citizens, not just rural Albertans but all Albertans, by destroying this bill. Albertans have long memories, and they will remember who voted for property rights and those that failed to do so. The Wildrose Party was formed in large part because of attacks on property rights. This is important to Albertans. Any government would be wise to remember that.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. members.

I wonder if we could have unanimous consent to introduce guests that were missed in the earlier introductions.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

(continued)

The Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and to all members of the Assembly two guests today. Kathleen DeSousa has just completed her social work diploma program at NorQuest College and is completing her practicum in my constituency office this spring. In the fall Kathleen will be entering the bachelor of social work degree program offered here through the University of Calgary. Arike Akomolafe is a first-year social work diploma student from NorQuest College who is doing her practicum with the New Democrat caucus this spring. She also will be continuing her education at NorQuest in the fall and hopes to work with families and children after graduating.

I want to wish both of them the very best in their education and their future. I would ask them to please rise and accept the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Federal-provincial Relations

Mr. Jean: Earlier today I sent a letter to the Prime Minister urging him to use common sense when it comes to proposed changes to the National Energy Board and the pipeline approval process in our country. I'm deeply concerned that the idea is being floated right now to have the headquarters of the NEB moved from Calgary to Ottawa. The Prime Minister might think it's okay to alienate the west, but the everyday Albertans I talk to would truly disagree. What pressure is the Premier putting on Ottawa and Trudeau to keep the NEB in our province?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, I must say that it is always a pleasure to be able to get up and speak to something where the Leader of the Opposition and I are in fundamental agreement, because we absolutely agree that it is not a wise decision to move the NEB to Ottawa. We made that position very clear to the crew that was reviewing the NEB previously, and just today as well we had a press conference, at which point I made it very clear that our government was absolutely opposed to the NEB moving and that we would continue our work to oppose that because it makes no sense. It makes about as much sense as moving the Atlantic marketing board to Winnipeg, and that doesn't make sense either.

Mr. Jean: The threat to move the NEB is just the latest in a string of decisions that clearly show that Ottawa is ignoring our province and Albertans. While the Premier may be comfortable with her current complacency with Trudeau, Albertans are getting a raw deal during really tough times. The Infrastructure Bank went to Ottawa, not Calgary. Valuable jobs are moving away from Vegreville, and now the NEB could be closing up shop in Calgary. Will the Premier just admit that she is failing to defend Alberta's interests with the Trudeau Liberals?

Ms Notley: Well, in fact, Mr. Speaker, I think what I just outlined is the very opposite of that. We are of course always working to promote and create jobs here in Alberta and to preserve those that we have. Of course, it makes obvious sense for the NEB to stay in Alberta, which is, of course, the centre of the energy industry for all of Canada. In fact, as we move forward in terms of growing the ability of our energy industry to diversify our markets, it makes sense for the NEB to stay here with those people who are leading that growth, and that is the message I will continue to deliver to Ottawa each and every day.

Mr. Jean: The Premier can't say that she's using diplomacy when she spends her time taking potshots at our neighbouring western provinces, who should be our greatest allies. Albertans are rightly frustrated. They're losing out on their hard-earned dollars to the NDP's carbon tax, all in the name of social licence. The federal government is suggesting that the pipeline approval process should take three years now instead of 15 months. This is unacceptable. Will the Premier wake up to the facts and realize that she doesn't have a friend in Trudeau and that Alberta is being hurt in the process?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, what I will of course remind the members opposite is that after a decade of a Conservative government here in Alberta and a Conservative government in Ottawa we didn't get a pipeline built. But you know what we are doing? We have gotten a pipeline approved – construction is scheduled to start this fall – and that happened because our government is working hard on addressing and accommodating national interests, including those with respect to climate change, because that is the way you lead. I am very proud that that is exactly what our government is doing.

The Speaker: The second main question.

Oil and Gas Transportation to the West Coast

Mr. Jean: Alberta isn't just being overlooked in the federal government's eyes; we're also being ignored when it comes to major policy decisions. Last week Trudeau introduced legislation that will establish a ban on tanker ships along the central and northern coast of British Columbia. Out of this government, not even a peep. The tanker ban is a direct attack on the viability of

Alberta's oil and gas industry. Why did the Premier sit on her hands while the federal government was firing the latest shots in its war on Alberta?

Ms Notley: Again, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is misinformed. In fact, our government was very clear in our representations to the federal government about how they should move forward with respect to the northern coast port possibilities. We believe that we still need to leave it open for more upgraded product to be able to leave those ports, and we'll continue to engage in conversations with the federal government on exactly that point.

Mr. Jean: This tanker ban will have a real negative impact on our province, but the NDP is only willing to support our energy industry when they're embarrassed into doing so. That's the only reason they supported our Wildrose motion to urge the government to not have a tanker ban. Since then, they've been entirely silent on the issue. Albertans aren't having the wool pulled over their eyes on this. Is the shell game of a Premier that you'll say one thing, then do another to serve your NDP world view?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, what our government is going to do is that we are going to look at all the issues that are being considered when it comes to building national energy infrastructure, and we're not going to point fingers and yell at people from inside our echo chamber and pretend that there aren't legitimate issues that other provinces need to consider. It is that approach that got us the approval for Kinder Morgan, and it is that approach that is going to ultimately see that pipeline built.

Mr. Jean: Not that it matters to the NDP, but the tanker ban means Northern Gateway will never, ever happen. The Northern Gateway pipeline project proposed a safe, reliable option for transporting Alberta oil to world market. It was supported by a majority of the First Nations along the proposed route. It would have resulted in thousands upon thousands of jobs for Albertans, and it was approved by the rigorous NEB process. When the province is experiencing hundreds of thousands of lost jobs, why in the world did the Premier fail to advocate for an important project like the Northern Gateway pipeline?

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, the reason that the Northern Gateway pipeline was rejected by the courts was because of the way in which the members opposite and their government approached decision-making: plug their ears, not listen to anybody, call people names, demonize their opposition, and absolutely destroy the process so that, as a result, the courts reversed the decision. That is not the way you build a nation. That is not the way you get infrastructure built. That's not the way you build an economy. We have a different approach, and it's working.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

2:00

Pure North S'Energy Foundation

Mr. Yao: Mr. Speaker, the Deputy Minister of Health, Dr. Carl Amrhein, has been accused of personally lobbying for Pure North. What's worse is that he was pushing his private agenda while maintaining his post as the most senior official at Alberta Health Services. This kind of nepotism and insider trading is exactly why Albertans voted out the last government, which is why the Wildrose has written to the Ethics Commissioner asking for an investigation. Albertans want to know: does the Minister of Health think the actions of her deputy minister are appropriate?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. I want to reiterate that under the previous government \$10 million was awarded in funding. If you have questions about that funding for the wellness program, please ask the Member for Calgary-Lougheed because he was the associate minister at the time. If you have questions about what's happened under this government, I'm proud that this government has worked outside the box to find a nurse practitioner program. That's a program that is very different from the wellness program that's been spoken to in the past. My deputy gave advice twice not to fund the wellness program, but the previous government did.

Mr. Yao: Albertans are tired of hearing the NDP's secrecy, and they're tired of seeing this government work so hard to cover up their own mistakes. On April 10 we asked if the minister knew of this issue, and she said no. We have now seen a brief from September 2016 that says otherwise. The minister and her staff are refusing to comment on this very serious issue and have repeatedly dodged the media. Why has the minister been silent on an issue of this magnitude, and what are you hiding?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise in this House and speak to the matter of this case. Specifically, the pilot project that's being referred to I believe today was evaluated by three committees led by the Institute of Health Economics and includes leading national nursing researchers and educators. With regard to the program of the past I absolutely agree. That's why I refused to fund extensions on the program of the past. I don't believe that that was a proper use of funds, and that's why this government stepped up, did things differently, and refused to move forward with what the Member for Calgary-Lougheed clearly endorsed at the time.

Mr. Rodney: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. [interjections]

The Speaker: Order, please.

The second supplemental.

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. When this government is spending Alberta's tax dollars, they better be sure they're getting the best value for the dollar spent. This means picking contracts based on a fair, transparent proposal and bidding process. Sadly, this concept seems to be completely lost on this Health minister. To the Premier: what are you doing to ensure that all contracts and Albertans' hard-earned money are being awarded based on facts and not personal relationships, and will you dismiss this deputy minister?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, I have all the confidence in the world that this process was appropriate. As the members opposite have heard, the minister in question was involved in a decision about a completely different issue than that which they are trying to confuse everybody else with. If they're concerned about that other decision, that was made based on personal relationships, I suggest they look to their left and ask their dance partners why they did that, but in the meantime the minister is making contracting decisions in the appropriate way.

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

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The left doesn't look that good.

AIMCo Board of Directors

Mr. McIver: The NDP has proudly proclaimed that now all Albertans can apply to be on all boards appointed by this government. When it comes to handling \$90 billion as an AIMCo board member, I'm not sure I want just any person in charge unless, of course, they're well qualified. To the Premier: why can't you admit that your socialist dogma does not make all people equally able to manage \$90 billion, and will you re-establish minimum requirements that let only qualified people do this important job?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, let me begin by saying that we have very great confidence in the professionals at AIMCo to make sound investment decisions. Indeed, this is why we're seeing excellent outcomes as a result of their work. But I'd just like to read the following quote:

In making an appointment, the Lieutenant Governor in Council shall have regard to the desirability of having a board that is comprised of individuals who, in the aggregate, have the full range of skills, knowledge and experience necessary to ... [run] the Corporation.

That is in the regulation, that is the rule that we are following, and I suggest that the member opposite judge us on our record.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. McIver: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. AIMCo manages \$90 billion, including the heritage trust fund, and about \$70 billion in pension funds belonging to Alberta workers. Here's what the NDP took out in section 5: "proven and demonstrable experience and expertise in investment management, finance, accounting or law or experience as an executive or a director in a senior publicly traded issuer." Much different than what the Premier just said. Premier, where can we look up something comparable to that, not what you just put in but something that actually has teeth and is specific and makes people be qualified?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, to begin with, I think it's important for the members opposite to understand that what I just read actually ensures exactly what he's referring to.

In addition, the board of AIMCo is looking at guidelines that will also include exactly the additional issues that he's talking about. And you know what? The quality and the competence of the people that this government has appointed to that board are absolutely stellar, and nobody could possibly criticize them. So I would suggest that the member opposite look at our record rather than looking for problems that aren't there, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. McIver: All the qualified people the Premier refers to were appointed before these changes that they made.

Premier, there are four new members coming on. Section 6 required a nominating committee to keep AIMCo at arm's length to stop political interference. Albertans don't trust that that won't happen. To the Premier. I ask you once again: will you assure this House and all Albertans, after admitting that you need to make more changes, that you will not stack this board with your friends simply to propagate the NDP world view?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much for the opportunity to address this. You know, look at the quality of the people who have been appointed recently. Those people were appointed in October. We changed the system, Mr. Speaker, in September. Ken Kroner, who previously managed \$4 trillion in assets, was appointed. Phyllis Clark, formerly the vice-president and CFO of the U of A, also

came on. We've got several more appointments going. Judge us by the people who come onto the board. They're going to be stellar, like these people are. [interjections]

The Speaker: Hon. members, you may want to listen sometimes, not keep talking all of the time.

Pure North S'Energy Foundation (continued)

Dr. Swann: Mr. Speaker, the former PC government gave a \$10 million grant to Pure North for a vitamin/mineral supplement program against the advice of medical officials who expressed concerns over its effectiveness and potential health risks. The NDP last year gave another \$4.2 million to the same group for a nurse practitioner program led in a primary care clinic. Fourteen million dollars represents a significant investment in a group that third-party reviewers said should not receive funding. The Minister of Health claimed to have no knowledge of her ministry's concerns before approving the grant, but an AHS briefing note suggests otherwise. To the minister: given the concerns ...

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. member.
The Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. On what he does say about the \$10 million for the wellness program, I have to agree. That's one of the reasons why my department gave me advice not to extend the funding that was granted under the former government. Twice they gave me that advice; twice I acted on their very important advice.

When it came to nurse practitioner demonstration projects, I think all members of this House – I hope all members of this House – would agree how valuable nurse practitioners are, particularly in working with vulnerable populations, and there are a number of different nurse practitioner demonstration projects currently under way just to prove that thing, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. Swann: CBC news reported that former AHS official Carl Amrhein reportedly has a history of participating in and lobbying for Pure North. This raises serious concerns about a potential conflict of interest in the awarding of both these grants. Albertans deserve to know what role he played and whether or not his involvement biased the approval process. I've asked the Auditor General to investigate, but perhaps the minister could set the record straight. Were you aware of your deputy and his conflict of interest, and if so, when?

2:10

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and again to the member for the question. It's my understanding that Dr. Amrhein made his disclosure to the Ethics Commissioner. If the Ethics Commissioner wishes to look into this further, we certainly welcome that, and it's my understanding that there were also questions today brought forward to the Auditor General. Again, if the Auditor General chooses to pursue that, we welcome that. The nurse practitioner project has very rigorous oversight, and we welcome that to any of the other decisions that were made under the former government, of course, as well.

Dr. Swann: It doesn't sound like the minister wants to answer the question.

In Public Accounts today I asked the assistant deputy minister if he was concerned that the latest \$4.2 million grant to Pure North for

a nurse practitioner led clinic program would be used to further the supplements of vitamins and minerals. He denied any connection to Pure North, which clearly views this as an extension of their program. Can the minister assure us that no megavitamins are being handed out by this clinic and table their contract?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much. Just to clarify, the disclosure was made to the Ethics Commissioner. I don't recall any discussions that spoke to that specific matter with regard to the previous question.

With regard to the nurse practitioner grant agreement, which this question relates to, the agreement very clearly spells out that Pure North must obtain written permission to use any of the information outside of the agreement, which has not been granted. If any organization does not follow the grant agreement, Pure North or any other, their funding could be discontinued. Clinicians are beholden to their colleges as well as to those who are granting this funding. We, of course, work in partnership with the colleges, but these are for nurse practitioners, RNs, LPNs, and health care aides.

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

Support for Persons with Disabilities

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans who use wheels to be mobile like my friend Tim Parnett, who joins us today in the Legislature, often report difficulties in navigating parts of everyday life due to barriers many of us take for granted. To the Minister of Community and Social Services: what strategies has this government taken to make sure Albertans with physical disabilities have accessible options?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. Our government is protecting and investing in things that make a difference in the lives of Albertans. We have heard loud and clear from advocates: nothing about us without us. That's why our track record is very clear that we are working with advocates, we are working with service providers, and we are working with individuals with disabilities to make sure that the policies respond to their needs.

Thank you.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Many Albertans with disabilities are reporting long wait times for approval of new AISH applications. To the same minister: tell us what is being done to alleviate the backlog of AISH approvals.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. For 55,000 Albertans who rely on this program, it's more than a cheque, more than a government program. We have increased funding to this program, and we have a comprehensive set of benefits through Health that supports this program. We have put together an AISH action plan which actually sets out the details on how we will address the long-standing issues under the previous government.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Alberta building code was recently updated, in the fall. However, Alberta's Barrier-free Design Guide, which is part of the building code, has not been updated since 2008. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: does the government plan to update this guide given new advances in technology and increased awareness of accessibility issues facing people with disabilities?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'd like to thank the hon. member for the question. Alberta has established the Barrier Free Sub-Council, and this group deals specifically with barrier-free access and is in place to review all code changes. This council is responsible for producing a guide to help builders, municipalities, and Albertans transition towards more accessible, barrier-free communities. It is my understanding that the subcouncil completed work on an updated guide in March, and a finalized version should be available in early June.

Coal Workers

Mr. MacIntyre: Float like an indifferent butterfly and sting like a killer bee: that was the Minister of Municipal Affairs' approach to answering the questions from concerned coal workers last night on the telephone town hall. Minister, the Albertans that called in weren't looking for your repetitive talking points. They were really looking for hope. I'm going to give you another shot to answer their questions. To the Minister of Municipal Affairs: please answer the mayor of Hanna's question. Will the Advisory Panel on Coal Communities' report be made public?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, I did have a telephone town hall, two hours of it last night. I listened to concerned citizens and workers from around the province, and I was glad to take their questions, as I took the mayor's question. I did tell him that once we get the feedback from the coal transition panel, we will be making it available.

Mr. MacIntyre: The Albertans that called in needed compassion, not canned talking points. Given that one caller pointed out, "You talk about the power companies receiving financial benefit, but I haven't heard anything yet about how you're going to help the coal miners," and given that in response the minister spoke about a transition from coal to natural gas plants and that skilled coal miners aren't trained to work in natural gas plants, Minister, what is the compensation planned for coal miners losing their jobs due to government policies?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Yes, the conversations last night were centred mostly around the power plants, and that's what we were discussing, the three companies that did receive funds to help these workers transition. Those plans are ongoing. We will work with those communities, as we have been, and with those workers and those leaders in those areas on what that transition is going to look like. I'm not going to deal in hypotheticals, even though they want me to, until we have all of the information that comes out. We will wait for that, and we will work with it when we get it.

Thank you.

Mr. MacIntyre: Coal workers know that the companies they work for are in no position to commit to retraining opportunities. That is why they were asking you, Minister. Given that 69 per cent of the callers were looking for retraining opportunities and that we're two years into this plan and these workers and their families are desperate for the NDP to offer specifics, Minister, will there be any training funding for laid-off employees? Yes or no?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just for your information, 12 out of the 18 coal plants were going to come offline by the feds with zero help from anybody. Unlike the previous federal government and what these guys would do, we're working with the communities on a transition plan to make sure that we do what's best for all of their unique circumstances.

Thank you.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster.

High School Education Funding Formula

Dr. Starke: Mr. Speaker, thank you. It's high school graduation season, and while graduates are excited about finishing grade 12, many principals and teachers I've spoken with are gravely concerned about the reduction in funding from 60 to 45 credit enrolment units in this year's Education budget. It's estimated that this change translates to a \$6.4 million funding cut to 24 of Alberta's rural school boards. To the Minister of Education: why did you make this reduction that disproportionately harms rural school boards and, more importantly, rural students?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. In regard to the high school credits, first of all, we were looking for efficiencies, certainly listening to the members opposite to find efficiencies, and we found that the majority of high schools are now using the high school redesign programming. We also found that the average high school student is taking 37 credits, so the cap that we put at 45 credits was, I think, a pretty reasonable way to deal with this because we're looking to make sure that we spend public money in the most efficient way possible.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that statistics show that rural students average a higher number of CEUs than urban students, in fact, 41 versus 37, and given that this funding change could result in some rural boards having to either lay off teachers or restrict educational options for students and given that this is surely not what this minister had intended, to the minister: what are the total savings that you expect to realize from this funding change, and what projected impact will it have on high school completion rates?

2:20

The Speaker: The hon. minister

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Those are both very good questions. We did look at all of those issues. I just made an announcement, for example, to put \$16 million over the next four years into dual credit programming, which is focused very much on rural high school students. As well, I don't think it's a mystery to anybody that we have been putting money in for enrolment, building and modernizing schools across the province, including in

the hon. member's area. We're looking for ways by which we can make a shift to make sure that we are funding schools and making life better for Alberta families.

Dr. Starke: Well, Mr. Speaker, given that the analysis of statistics from one school division showed only 28 students taking more than 60 CEUs but some 249 taking over 45 CEUs, fully one-quarter of the high school enrolment, and given that these additional CEUs are often earned in dual credit, green certificate, and work experience programs that this government, as has just happened, has been eager to promote and given that this means students in rural Alberta will have reduced choices in attempting to finish high school, to the minister: will you consider revisiting this change in your funding model?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, it's important to make difficult decisions, but it's also important to be modernizing and moving along as we build a proper high school funding formula. The high school redesign program has now moved into the majority of all of the schools here in the province of Alberta. It allows flexibility for students and for teachers and principals to make decisions that are best for their education. We can see discernible improvements in high school completion rates, in attendance and so forth. [interjections] So, yes, we're putting more investment in dual credit, more investment in green certificate as well, and we're making sure that we are funding our . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Hon. Member for Innisfail-Sylvan Lake, please keep your volume down.

Provincial Deficit

Mr. Fildebrandt: The budgets are all in for 2017. All provinces in Canada will run a combined deficit of \$12.8 billion this year. Of that number, 80 per cent is Alberta. Every other province running a deficit, minus Alberta, adds up to \$2.5 billion. This government, though, with a projected deficit of \$10.3 billion, is literally running a deficit the size of the rest of the country combined multiplied by four. The sheer recklessness is breathtaking. Does the Minister of Finance believe that this is responsible?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much for the question, Mr. Speaker. What we're doing is making the lives of Albertans better. We will balance by 2023-2024, and in doing that, we're bringing down the operational spending, that in the past was all over the place. Sometimes it was as high as 11 per cent year over year by that side over there. We are going to be reducing our spending under population plus inflation. That will get us back to balance.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Weak sauce, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, given that the Premier's role model, Kathleen Wynne of Ontario, has run their province into the ground, spending recklessly, driving energy costs through the roof, and indebting an entire generation to pay for it, and given that, despite this, Ontario, with three times the population of Alberta, will run a smaller deficit by the NDP's accounting standards – if the Premier has national ambitions, she's on track because she's running a national level debt – is the Premier's next goal to exceed the federal deficit?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to point out that the economy is turning around in this province. We have full-time employment that is rising for the third straight month. Rigs are up 100 per cent since last year. Exports are up. Manufacturing is up. We are doing the things in this province that we need to do to get back to balance. We'll continue on that path because that's the path that Albertans require and that we were elected on.

Mr. Fildebrandt: A hundred thousand out-of-work Albertans disagree.

Given, Mr. Speaker, that under a best-case scenario our debt will reach \$71 billion by 2019 – and that best-case scenario requires this minister to keep spending within his budget, something he's never done, and this best-case scenario also requires oil to be 40 per cent higher than it is today – and given that the Minister of Finance has grossly exceeded his deficit projections in all three of his budgets, he clearly can't do his job. If the Minister of Finance exceeds his deficit target for a fourth time, will he just quit?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm quite enjoying this job, I want to say. Faced with the collapse of the world oil price, we rejected the reckless path that the government over there put us on. Members opposite would make reckless cuts to important public services that would harm Albertans. We're not doing that. We'll get back to balance. We're going to be turning the province around because of the work of this government.

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

Educational Curriculum Review

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Albertans are concerned. I received another e-mail just yesterday from someone who understands that specially chosen members of interest groups are invited to participate in community face-to-face engagement sessions to work on the curriculum rewrite. As you can imagine, they're extremely concerned that the new online survey will be another attempt at a nod to stakeholder engagement. Will the minister make the answers to the written submission portion of the first survey available to Albertans, and will he make the written part of the second survey available when it is completed?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. Yes, we launched the second phase of our curriculum interface with Albertans, and in the first day we already have 2,000 submissions. That's very good. We had 32,000 last time. I'm trying to open it up even more so that we in fact have more public interactions with the working groups and have more participation and presentations to those groups as well. I'm open to any suggestion that continues to make this the most successful process by which we have transparency . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mrs. Aheer: I'd really like to see those written submissions, Minister.

Given that agriculture is a critical industry in Alberta and given that our farmers are world leaders in the industry and some are becoming extremely successful in diversifying the industry to include uses for hemp and expanding markets for pulses and other products and given that our agribusiness opportunities are growing and diversifying, how is the government including this industry and

all its complexities, seed to table, in the curriculum rewrite and ensuring that resources and professional development are available to teachers to meet the learning needs of all students?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the excellent question. We know that the second-largest industry and probably one of the fastest growing industries continues to be agriculture here in the province. It forms a really important opportunity for us to make that bridge between urban and rural, between food and table and so forth. In our curriculum we will definitely be working to strengthen that across different subject areas and across all grade levels, too, because – you know what? – we want to make sure that we build and continue to build the strongest education system in the country.

Mrs. Aheer: Well, we've heard many times in this House and all over the province that there needs to be changes and that education should focus on literacy and numeracy and also develop 21st-century competencies. This is what's been stated by the government. Given that these guiding statements are of vital importance to those working on the revisions and given that it is important to be clear about the meaning of these terms, to the minister: what exactly does 21st-century competencies mean, and how will it be guiding the new curricula?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. This is a great opportunity for all Albertans to make sure they are engaging in building this new curriculum because the most important investment that we can make in our future is to ensure the highest quality education for our students. So 21st-century competencies are making sure that we have those basic skills in numeracy, in math, basic skills in communication and language, and we're moving them across all subject areas so that students are looking at content, yes, but they're looking at building those basic skills that they can carry with them for the rest of their lives so that we can improve our economy, diversify, and to make sure . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

The Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

2:30

Educational Delivery Choices

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Alberta's proud history of supporting school choice is an undeniable success which has resulted in better results for our entire education system, including within the public system. Now, unfortunately, a group of NDP-linked front groups have continued their attacks on school choice, demanding that long-standing funding be rescinded. Parents and students are concerned that this government is going to oblige ideological allies and end school choice. To the Minister of Education: will you unequivocally commit today that the funding model for Catholic, charter, private, and home-schooling will indeed remain the same?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you. I find it interesting that every few months I have to stand up to the same question because we have from the very beginning as a government invested in education. We've invested in enrolment to fund increases in enrolment in all forms of education. We continued to do so in this budget even during very difficult economic times. We made sacrifices in other areas to make

sure that we fund education right across the board. I won't apologize for what we have been doing. You know, when you cast aspersions like this member does, it only causes a bigger problem.

Mr. Rodney: Here's why the question keeps coming up. Given that members of the current government, when in opposition, demanded an end to school choice and given that Public Interest Alberta, the group spearheading the attack on school choice, has well-established links to the governing party and given that the executive director used to work for the Minister of Infrastructure and that their president is a former NDP candidate and that their founder is now the chief of staff within the government, Minister, is your government quietly encouraging PIA in an attempt to build the political conditions to introduce policy that you long advocated for while you were in opposition?

Mr. Eggen: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, while the member opposite likes to concoct conspiracy theories like he wants his own TV show or something, we are funding for education, we are making sure that we're building schools, and we're making sure that we're actually strengthening our education system in all of its different manifestations across the province. While other people cast aspersions, as the hon. member is doing here, we're actually getting the job done. We're doing a great job, and I think Albertans think so, too.

Mr. Rodney: No aspersions, just facts.

Given that the minister of seniors is a former vice-president at Public Interest Alberta and the Member for Edmonton-Ellerslie chaired a special PIA education task force and that this government is clearly very closely aligned with this organization and given that a number of the other NDP MLAs and their partners, including the Premier, have very close ties to a number of the 14 organizations listed on PIA's website, to the minister: have you or your staff had any direct or indirect discussions about changing the current school funding model with any of the 14 organizations lobbying against school choice?

Mr. Eggen: I would like to see after a couple of years that the opposition member, while fitting into his opposition role, would actually ask questions that are meaningful and actually constructive. In fact, we are building to strengthen education, and each time someone like the member opposite is spreading rumours in order to knock public education down. You know what? You've got to rise above it. We certainly do, and we make sure that our students get the very best education here in the province of Alberta. That's why the member opposite got voted out of office, because they didn't do that.

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

School Construction in Edmonton-South West

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My constituents expect and deserve the best quality education in our communities. Given that the new Kim Hung school in my constituency has already been delayed for opening this year, to the Minister of Education: what is the status of this school build after the site caught fire last week?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks for the question. Our department has been working very closely with Infrastructure and Edmonton public's planning department to get the impact and still have the opening in January 2018. We're hoping that the

damages will be found to be minimal and will have no impact on the time of completion.

I want to take this time as well to commend our hard-working first responders, whose quick response prevented the complete destruction of this facility. Your constituents should know that as soon as the investigation is complete – construction is still ongoing, and the insurance is being finalized – our top priority will be to make sure we . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

First supplemental.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To the same minister. As I've asked many times already, the constituents in Edmonton-South West need more schools, specifically high schools. Given that I continue to hear from my constituents about how the previous government failed to open schools, can the minister tell this Assembly how this government is taking the needs of our students seriously?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you. Our government is committed to making life better for Albertans. Our Budget 2017 has funding for 26 new schools, and we're managing the very largest school build in Alberta's history. It's going very well. I can tell you that as I travel around the province opening new schools, I hear from people how grateful they are that they have a government that's actually getting the job done building those schools and making sure that we are reducing school fees, funding for enrolment. It's a very, very good time for education.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again as I've asked before, given that my constituents deserve a modern and effective high school, can the minister detail to this House if we can expect space in school to provide quality and much-needed education for my constituents?

Mr. Eggen: Well, Mr. Speaker, we know that we have a growing population. We can see it from the enrolment. We announced five new schools here in Edmonton, one major modernization. Those were K to 9 schools. So guess what? Of course, we're going to need to build high schools to meet those graduates coming from those schools. We will make sure that we have adequate space in all areas, not just in Edmonton but right across the province. You know what? The New Democrats get the job done.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Drumheller-Stettler.

Health Care Capital Funding in Central Alberta

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week my colleague asked about the gross inequity of funding to AHS central zone. Instead, the Minister of Health spoke about projects outside of central Alberta. Minister, this isn't good enough. The central zone has the longest wait times in the province, and Albertans deserve a real answer. Is solving the inequity of per capita funding to AHS central zone a priority for this government? If not, why not?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. It's a priority that we make sure that no matter where you live in Alberta, you get the right care. That's one

of the reasons why we're moving forward with a very long overdue Calgary cancer hospital in the city of Calgary. That's one of the reasons why in Edmonton we're building a new hospital. It hasn't happened in Edmonton since 1989. Of course, there is need in central Alberta, but I'm not going to stop spending money in other parts of the province. I'm going to make sure that we get the projects we need for all of Alberta, including central Alberta.

The Speaker: The first supplemental.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the central Alberta health zone has increased in geographical size and has a ballooning population and given that the per capita funding received by central Albertans is a small fraction of its neighbouring zones, residents are rightly concerned. Again to the minister: how much longer do central Albertans and front-line workers have to put up with substandard infrastructure?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to assure everyone that they are in safe hands. I have to say how proud I am of the work we're doing to invest in communities like Red Deer. Certainly, the families that are benefiting from having those new labour and delivery spaces and recovery spaces at the Red Deer hospital, for example, or the families who are going to be receiving care in Sylvan Lake because this government worked with the community instead of doing things to the community – we've worked in partnership. I'm very proud of the progress that we're making. Is there more to be done? Absolutely. What would undo that? Having the member opposite in government because they're pushing for \$9 billion in infrastructure cuts. Keeping this government here is what's going to make life better.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Strankman: Thank you. Again, Mr. Speaker, given that consulting residents and doctors and nurses and other stakeholders is a positive step towards finding a solution to health care delivery in central Alberta and given that these meetings will mean nothing if the minister does not act on the repeated legitimate outcries of the community, when is the minister going to eliminate this gross inequity and provide front-line workers the infrastructure that they need to deliver the care that central Albertans need?

Ms Hoffman: Speaking of central Alberta, Mr. Speaker, I was really proud during the last constituency break to spend some time with front-line workers in the Red Deer hospital. We had a very productive meeting not only with the physicians in the community but also with registered nurses, people who work in diagnostic imaging, and people who work as porters. Do you know what they told me? They are so glad that they have stable funding. They're glad that they're not seeing billions of dollars in cuts, as proposed by both parties opposite. Yes, they want to work with us on long-term infrastructure plans, and we want to work with them, too.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

2:40 Growing Forward 2 Agricultural Policy Framework

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Last week during the committee meeting on Public Accounts the deputy minister of agriculture mentioned that the minister was meeting with the federal minister of agriculture to discuss specific elements of the new Growing Forward 3 program after Growing Forward 2 expires in 2018. To the minister of agriculture: what specifics came out of

this meeting, and what progress have you made on Growing Forward 3, if that's what we're calling it?

The Speaker: The hon. minister of agriculture.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It would be my bet that it will be called Growing Forward 3. Yeah, we had an opportunity to meet with all the agriculture ministers across Canada, including the federal minister, last week in Ottawa. It gave us a good opportunity to look at our priorities going forward to the larger federal-provincial-territorial meeting on the next national policy framework, which will be happening in St. John's. Discussed at this last meeting in Ottawa was everything from risk management policies to trade and other issues as well. It was a very fruitful meeting. I'm looking forward to the meeting in July.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.
First supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that current funding from the Growing Forward 2 program is helping our agricultural industry increase innovation, sustainability, and profitability and given that this program is a key part of diversifying Alberta's agricultural industry, to the same minister: how are you ensuring a smooth transition to the new GF 3 program?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. It is true that the last five years of the current Growing Forward 2 program have put \$400 million into the agricultural industry in Alberta. It's a very successful program, with everything from business risk management for crop insurance, that kind of thing, to grant programs for infrastructure and agrifood processing. It's a great program. I'm looking forward to working with my colleagues across the country to ensure that funding continues in Alberta. There will be different types of discussions. There will be bilateral discussions, Alberta with the federal, and also multilateral with all the provinces. I'm looking forward to it.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that there is a wide array of programs funded by the current GF 2 and given that some programs which are not currently available in GF 2 could help Alberta farmers if added to Growing Forward 3, to the minister: how are you ensuring that the new GF 3 gives Alberta enough flexibility to address specific Alberta priorities?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the very good question. As I said in my previous answer, there are opportunities to do bilateral discussions as well, you know, on assistant deputy minister, deputy minister, and minister levels. In those bilateral discussions we'll talk about what the member is actually asking: is that flexibility available with the province and the federal government for those funds to help specifically our agriculture industry right here in Alberta? I'm looking forward to those discussions. It's an opportunity to support the industry right across the province.

Notices of Motions

The Speaker: The Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm giving notice that tomorrow I will move that Bill 205, the Advocate for Persons with Disabilities Act, be moved to Government Bills and Orders on the Order Paper.

Introduction of Bills

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Bill 14

An Act to Support Orphan Well Rehabilitation

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I request leave to introduce Bill 14, An Act to Support Orphan Well Rehabilitation.

Mr. Speaker, we all know that safety around oil and gas sites that are orphaned is a concern for all Albertans. The proposed bill allows us to take additional and immediate action to close and reclaim infrastructure from upstream oil and gas companies that no longer exist, the results of which will be more jobs and a healthier environment for Albertans.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Motion carried; Bill 14 read a first time]

Tabling Returns and Reports

The Speaker: The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to table the 2015-2016 annual report of the Family Violence Death Review Committee, and I have the requisite number of copies for that.

Thank you.

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

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Today I received information from Onoway liquor, but it's with regard to highway 777 south. This morning the grader got stuck in the middle of the road, and their concern is with the secondary highway, that it is a disgrace and needs significant repairs, so bringing it to the attention of this House. I have five copies.

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

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Today in my member's statement I referred to Your Land, Your Rights, in which the NDP opposition mentioned they have a petition to repeal bills 19, 36, and 50. They had the opportunity to change that yesterday, and they failed to do so.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Energy.

Ms McCuaig-Boyd: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to table five copies of a letter I sent to Canada's Transport minister, Minister Garneau, with copies to the Minister of Natural Resources, Minister of Environment and Climate Change, and Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard, regarding the oil tanker moratorium. In this letter I make our government's position clear in pressing Ottawa to ensure that Alberta energy products have access to international markets.

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a few tablings. The first is from Alberta Health Services to the minister relating to applications by Pure North S'Energy Foundation funding requests,

in which a number of medical experts suggest to the ministry that this not be funded and that it, in fact, may risk people's health.

The second set of tablings has to do with the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes and relevant World Health Organization resolutions, which have been copied to the Minister of Health. First is a request to stop the marketing of infant formula, which decreases the rate of breastfeeding both in our communities and beyond. The second is a copy of the World Health Organization code and how Alberta is violating the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes.

The third is my letter to the minister advising that we need to address this as a matter of urgency.

Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

2:50

The Speaker: I believe we had a point of order today. The Member for Calgary-Lougheed.

Point of Order

Allegations against a Member

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a point of order. I will cite the notations Standing Order 23

- (h) makes allegations against another Member;
- (i) imputes false or unavowed motives to another Member;
- (j) uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder.

Mr. Speaker, very shortly after 2 p.m. today the hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo asked questions related to the current Health minister's deputy minister. The hon. member was not asking questions about me politically, professionally, or personally, yet the Minister of Health made it clear not once but twice that I made an endorsement and/or signed something.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Health knows very, very well that neither of those things occurred, yet she said that they did on two occasions today and on a separate occasion on a different day. Clearly, there was an allegation made against another member, false or unavowed motives were referred to, and the language did indeed – we saw it – create disorder. I would simply ask that you would rule that the minister simply apologize and withdraw her remarks.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: The Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I listened carefully to the Minister of Health when she was responding to the question. The question had to do with an allegation of lobbying on the part of one of her officials with respect to a program. That program was a vitamin therapy program approved by the previous government, and the hon. member was the Associate Minister of Health at the time that program was put into place. Previous to that, from January 2012 to May 2012, he was the parliamentary assistant to the Health minister, and the wellness program received its funding on December 23, 2013, from the previous government while the hon. member was the associate minister.

What the Health minister merely said was: if you have questions about the program, you should direct them to the hon. member because he was associate minister. Now, either he didn't know about the program, in which case I think he's not doing his job, or he did have some knowledge of the program. It has to be one or the other, Mr. Speaker.

I would just indicate that I don't believe there's any point of order. Unfortunate as it may seem, it is not against the rules to hurt the feelings of the hon. member.

The Speaker: Hon. members, specifically, section 494 of *Beauchesne's* is relevant here for the point that "statements by Members respecting themselves . . . must be accepted." There are very rare occasions that something is different. This does allow these two versions, opinions about the case at hand.

So in this particular instance I believe that there is no point of order. I would hope, however, that mutual respect continues in the House as we direct comments across the aisle.

Privilege Access to Information

The Speaker: I will at this point in time make a ruling on the point of privilege which was raised by the hon. House leader for the third party on May 11, 2017.

Hon. members, on May 11 the House leader for the third party raised a purported question of privilege with respect to statements made by the Minister of Children's Services in Oral Question Period the previous day. He alleged that the minister repeatedly delayed answering questions in this Assembly so that it could be shared first with the media. I've listened to the arguments with respect to the purported question of privilege, and I am now prepared to rule on the matter.

Dealing first with the procedural requirement under Standing Order 15(2):

A Member wishing to raise a question of privilege [must provide] written notice containing a brief statement of the question to the Speaker and, if practicable, to any person whose conduct may be called into question, at least 2 hours before the opening of the afternoon sitting.

My office did receive a letter from the House leader for the third party on May 11 at 10:55 a.m. indicating that he would be raising a question of privilege with respect to the hon. Minister of Children's Services later that afternoon. The letter does not indicate whether a copy was also provided to the Minister of Children's Services or anyone else, nor is the basis for the purported question of privilege set out, hon. member, as required in Standing Order 15(2). Though my office did forward the notice to the House leaders, the onus as we move forward, hon. members, is on the member raising the question to ensure that the notice is provided to all parties involved.

The purpose of the notice requirement in part is to provide a member implicated in a purported question of privilege with sufficient notice prior to the afternoon sitting to effectively respond to the allegation being raised or to have another member do so on their behalf. In this case all members wishing to speak to this matter have been given the opportunity to prepare and to make arguments. I therefore find that the requirements under Standing Order 15(2) have been met. I would however urge all members to keep in mind the purpose of the notice requirement, and I would hope and expect that they will be observed more carefully going forward.

As members well know, when a purported question of privilege is raised in the Assembly, it's the role of the chair to determine whether there is a prima facie breach; in other words, whether there is a breach of privilege upon first appearance. The House leader of the third party indicated on May 11 that during Oral Question Period for the preceding day the Minister of Children's Services repeatedly refused to answer questions with respect to the child welfare system in Alberta and instead indicated she would share information with the media before giving it to the members. This refusal, he argued, prevented members from discharging their duties as elected representatives, and her actions were disrespectful to this Assembly.

The Minister of Justice and Solicitor General responded yesterday by referring to *Beauchesne's*, sixth edition, at page 13,

paragraph 31(10), which states that there is no precedent to justify the suggestion that members are entitled as a part of their parliamentary privilege to receive information ahead of the public. In short, the government is expected to govern, and it is well within its rights to make announcements in public without first providing notice to this Assembly.

The House leader for the Official Opposition, for his part, noted that while the government may not be required to provide answers to the opposition, there may indeed be a situation where a prima facie question of privilege could arise where a deliberate attempt is made to deny answers to an hon. member.

The statements made by the Minister of Children's Services that are at issue can be found starting at page 966 of *Alberta Hansard* for May 10, in which she states in response to the second main question from the Leader of the Official Opposition: "I will be speaking further to Albertans on this matter later this afternoon, but I want to remind members that when people make statements without all the facts, inaccurate information is given to the public." In a following supplemental response, also found on page 966, the minister again states: "I will be sharing more information about this matter this afternoon." Finally, in response to a question from the Member for Calgary-West, found on page 973, she states: "Mr. Speaker, again I will say that I am sharing more information for Albertans later this afternoon. I do want to continue to caution the members of this House about making statements without the facts."

3:00

Well, the arguments made with respect to this matter have touched upon several different points. I find that the central issue being raised by the purported question is whether the dignity of the Assembly was offended as a result of the minister's statements indicating that she would share information about the child welfare system outside of the House before providing it to members.

As I have done previously, I will start by clarifying that the question being raised in this case is properly called a contempt, which is more a form of a question of privilege. Speaker Zwozdesky commented on a somewhat similar question of contempt in connection with the disclosure of information in his ruling on November 7, 2013, which can be found on page 2845 of *Alberta Hansard* for that day. In that case, a concern was raised about a government press release that was provided to select reporters, detailing a decision to increase funding to postsecondary educational institutions. The former Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills argued that selectively giving information to journalists but otherwise refusing to make the information public prevented members from discharging their duties both inside and outside of the Assembly.

In his decision Speaker Zwozdesky noted that "governments are at liberty to share . . . information in whatever way they wish . . . provided it's done within the rules and conventions" of this House. The government is not required to inform members prior to a news conference or a policy announcement, despite the fact that it may be difficult for the opposition to respond and to comment. This is not necessarily a form of contempt.

Speaker Levac of the Ontario Legislative Assembly came to a similar conclusion on June 9, 2016, which can be found on page 9998 of the Ontario *Hansard*, in response to a question of privilege raised with respect to the government's proposed climate change action plan. It was argued that the release of the plan to the media before its announcement or tabling in the House amounted to a contempt. Noting that Ontario has no procedural ruling requiring notice be given to the Assembly prior to the government making a policy announcement, Speaker Levac found that a prima facie case of contempt could not be established. In so ruling, he emphasized

the important role of the Legislative Assembly in its claim to be first recipient of major announcements.

Referring to a November 2, 2009, ruling, Speaker Levac stated:

I and my predecessors have repeatedly conveyed our deep concern about how these types of extra-parliamentary announcements erode the stature of Parliament. Speakers have repeatedly implored governments to consider the impact of this erosion and how it damages the reputation of the foundation institution of this province . . . In an ideal world where the legitimate and historic role of the Legislative Assembly, and specifically of the loyal opposition, were given first consideration, I expect that what a previous Speaker referred to as these types of 'administrative discourtesies' would not arise.

Returning to the matter at hand, while I must find there is no prima facie question of contempt with respect to this matter, I'm a bit troubled by the suggestion that a minister would be answering members' questions at a media event instead of in the Assembly. Although there may not be a rule under which the government is obligated to provide important and timely information to members before disclosing it outside of this Assembly, it is a principle of responsible government that the executive branch is accountable to this Assembly.

It is incumbent upon all members to respect our system of parliamentary democracy and to demonstrate respect for this institution. Declining to share significant information in this place diminishes the reasons we come together, and I would encourage the ministers of the government to carefully consider the important role of this Assembly when deciding when to share information. While Oral Question Period may not be the best forum to communicate complex and often sensitive policy decisions, I also want to note that the ministers have other means of providing information to this Assembly such as ministerial statements, and I would encourage them to do so when appropriate.

I hope all members carefully consider my comments today. This matter is now concluded.

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

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

Bill 11

Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Amendment Act, 2017

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

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have a suggested amendment for Bill 11, the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Amendment Act, 2017, which I'll circulate.

The Chair: This will be known as amendment A2.
Go ahead, hon. member.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Madam Chair. My amendment is that Bill 11, the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Amendment Act, 2017, be amended in section 39 by striking out the proposed section 52 and substituting the following:

Proceedings of Commissioner subject to review

52(1) Subject to subsection (2), no decision, report or proceeding of the Commissioner is invalid for want of form.

(2) A decision of the Commissioner may be questioned or reviewed by way of an application for judicial review seeking an order in the nature of certiorari or mandamus if the application is filed with the Court of Queen's Bench and served on the Commissioner no later than 30 days after the date of the decision, report, proceeding or reasons, whichever is latest.

(3) The Court may, in respect of an application under subsection (2),

- (a) determine the issues to be resolved on the application,
- (b) limit the contents of the return from the Commissioner to those materials necessary for the disposition of those issues, and
- (c) give directions to protect the confidentiality of the matters referred to in Part 4.1.

The intent of this amendment, Madam Chair, should be clear. Under the current writing of the bill there's no appeals process. This, I think, would give all of us some sense that no one is inviolate. There should be access to some kind of an appeals process based on circumstances, contingencies, specific facts of the concerns, and that any officer of the government should be subject to a second review. Currently there's no ability to appeal in the bill as it's written.

This is simply an attempt to ensure that if an error has been made or there are extenuating circumstances, an individual may be able to have recourse to an appeal.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

3:10

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Madam Chair. I, of course, didn't have advance notice that this was coming, but I have to say that it seems pretty common sense to me, and it seems like a good idea to consider that decisions have an appeals process. All of us being human beings and with the frailties that go along with that are subject to making an error now and again. As such, it seems to me to only make sense that there should be an appeals process to look after those circumstances when an error may occur from time to time.

I'm in support of this, and I would encourage other members of the House to also be in support for those reasons. Thank you.

The Chair: Any other speakers to amendment A2? The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'd like to thank the Member for Calgary-Mountain View for submitting this amendment. As the Member for Calgary-Hays rightly noted, you know, we hadn't received advance notice of the amendment, so I think it's worth taking some time to carefully consider this amendment. I know that the Member for Calgary-Mountain View is very passionate about the principles of natural justice, and the appeals process is potentially something that we can look at and consider for the bill. But I think it's going to take us a bit of time to carefully consider that a little bit more.

I know that the members of the all-party committee that looked at the public interest disclosure amendment act took a lot of time going through the clauses of the act to consider the different amendments that they might suggest for improvements going forward. I wasn't personally on the committee myself, but I understand that they've undertaken a great deal of work in looking at the various clauses, perhaps the appeals process as well. I know that there are some other members of the committee here in Chamber

today who might be able to speak a little bit more about the appeals process or how that was considered during the committee hearings.

You know, I think that when we're looking at a piece of legislation of this magnitude, that has such far-reaching implications, it serves us to spend a little bit more time considering amendments like this, asking questions and clarifying intentions because we want to make sure that when we're making these kinds of substantive changes, we're doing what's right for Albertans.

I plan to speak a little bit later this afternoon to the bill itself, perhaps, if the opportunity arises. For myself as a registered nurse whistle-blowing and sort of the aim to do the right thing is very central to nursing practice. Also, you know, the amendment speaks to an appeals process whereby someone doesn't feel that the principles of natural justice have been adhered to or if there are questions arising from that decision of the commissioner. I think it's something that's worth considering.

If there are other members of the committee that might be able to expand a little bit on the concept of an appeals process and how that fits into the legislation, I would certainly welcome hearing from them on that very issue. Perhaps they might want to chime in on that.

The Chair: Any other members on the amendment? The hon. Member for Strathcona-Sherwood Park.

Cortes-Vargas: Thank you, Madam Chair. I was actually just trying to briefly go back to when we did the PIDA review and we had the summary of submissions. I don't remember having discussed an appeals process within it. I could see some of it. I mean, honestly, we looked at how to make sure that we strengthen it to make sure that there are mechanisms within the PIDA amendments that we're introducing that allow for better capacity to really review the allegations and what is being brought forward early on to make sure that it's kind of set up for success. I was just wondering if the member could clarify if there was a point when that was brought forward that I'm just not remembering that talked to the appeals, who would bring this forward, and what kind of a background there is to it.

Dr. Swann: Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't actually remember discussing this at the committee, but I, too, have lost time and memory around the details of the discussions. What I can say is that the appellant could be the individual who has blown the whistle and feels not appropriately addressed by the commissioner, or it could be a lawyer on behalf of that individual, or indeed, I suppose, it could be the employer who for whatever reason decides that the decision was not appropriate. It's trying to create a fair playing field for both sides to resolve where there is still dispute.

The Chair: Any other speakers to the amendment? St. Albert.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, not being a lawyer, I actually had to look up your terms, some of the terms in the amendment, because I wasn't sure what the Latin words were. I think, you know, like the member indicated, it's been a while since we sat as the all-party committee. I was fortunate to be a member for the entire time. I do think that we looked at a lot changes. One of the things that we thought we would do is: let's go with step 1 first, and let's see how that works, then we can come back and look at it.

I think, just having heard from the commissioner and having heard about the recommendations that he made around the processes and also being able to look at restitution, although I understand where the member is coming from with the desire to give people an opportunity to appeal a decision that is made and,

really, that impacts their lives, that it's important to take this a step at a time. I think that we've expanded the scope and the depth and the ability to award restitution in the cases. I think that that indeed covers a lot of the problems that we heard of, and it covers a lot of recommendations that we heard from the experts and some of the submissions.

While I certainly appreciate where this is going, I don't know that it's necessary at this time. Anyway, thank you to the member.

The Chair: Any other speakers to the amendment? The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to speak against the amendment, and I will explain the reason for that. Section 52(1), the way it's drafted now, essentially doesn't violate any principles of natural justice in that it may sound like that it's restricting a review by a higher court; what it does is that it gives the commissioner kind of more authority, more flexibility on its own process so that his decision is not challenged, as you have mentioned in your amendment, just for want of the form, just from some procedural point of view, just for lack of jurisdiction. So he can look at any matter in a more holistic manner to address the issue properly while in subsection (2), if it's the substantive content of that bill, any person will still be able to challenge the commissioner's decision. So I would suggest to all members that 52(1) is more about the procedural matters and extending flexibility to the commissioner – that should stay the same – while on the substantive matters his decision certainly is challengeable, and anybody can challenge that as outlined in this section.

Based on that, I would suggest that members vote against this amendment. Thank you, Madam Chair.

3:20

The Chair: Any other speakers to amendment A2?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

[Motion on amendment A2 lost]

The Chair: We're back on Bill 11. Any further questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

Mr. Dach: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to rise to speak to Bill 11 in Committee of the Whole. Our government is committed to having accountability, ethics, and transparency front and centre in Alberta, and this bill will ensure that.

I tried to recount my working life in the 10-year period between the time I graduated from high school and the time I ended up as a new real estate agent at age 27. In those 10 years I did a lot of things, some which I've recounted in this House, but I don't think I ever actually mentioned that I was a public servant working for the housing ministry for a short period one summer during a STEP program position. It was a short position. It was counting calculators and staplers and so forth. It was an inventory job, and I really found that it wasn't my cup of tea after a few weeks, but nonetheless I know that during that period of time as a public servant working within the housing ministry, had I at that point in time come forward with a complaint of wrongdoing, I wouldn't have had the protection under the act that this legislation prescribes.

I tried to think about what my decision-making process would have been at that time as a young employee within the government ministry for the first time and whether or not I'd be inclined to go ahead with a complaint given that there was a fear of potential reprisal or fear of losing a job in that young working life at that point in time that I was at. One of the biggest fears of employees

and one of the reasons they don't come forward is the fear of reprisal by their employer. A younger employee especially, newer to the workforce, would be less likely to come forward than somebody who had a bit more experience. I can think back to those early days of my working life within the housing ministry and know that I would really have a limited amount of confidence in proceeding with a complaint of wrongdoing even if it might have been egregious.

Now, there is some protection in regard to the right of reprisals. Any employer in the public sector can be prosecuted for punishing an employee who exposes a wrongdoing, but there is no mechanism in place to determine what kind of restitution should be made to the whistle-blower if they are subject to such an unlawful punishment, so I'm proud to say that the new legislation would enable the Labour Relations Board to order remedies when there has been a reprisal. The board may decide that the whistle-blower deserves to get their job back if they've been fired or that they might be entitled to compensation. In the end, it will be up to the board to decide what is appropriate, and the board's order would be enforceable, much like a court order.

Now, our government hopes that these changes will encourage whistle-blowers to feel safe in coming forward. Thinking back to those early days within the housing ministry as a young employee relatively fresh to the workforce, knowing that legislation protected my ability to come forward with complaints of wrongdoing might have given me some comfort in deciding to bring to light of day a wrongdoing had I been in a position where I felt I had to report something or felt that something should be reported in the workplace while acting as a public servant in the housing ministry in my early days of employment.

Now, another problem with the old legislation is that it doesn't protect political staff working in ministers' offices or the Premier's office, and as well, Madam Chair, Members of the Legislative Assembly aren't covered at all. This just doesn't seem right. As Members of the Legislative Assembly in this province we should be leaders in ethics and accountability, not people who are excluded from being held accountable. I support the changes this legislation makes in these areas as well. If passed, this bill will mean that MLAs, ministers, and the Premier can all be investigated when an accusation of wrongdoing is made to the Public Interest Commissioner.

Now, we know that this has to be subject to parliamentary privilege, and matters regarding parliamentary privilege would still be ruled on in the Legislative Assembly by the Speaker. This is where Alberta will once again be a leader, Madam Chair. Right now no other jurisdiction in Canada has whistle-blower legislation that applies to MLAs in this way, and Ontario is the only jurisdiction that covers ministers. If this recommendation is accepted, it will help make our government one of the most honest, transparent, and accountable governments in Canada.

Now, when I was that young worker in the housing ministry, I may have had cause to raise issues of wrongdoing that I may have witnessed; however, I may not have actually known how to go about it, how to blow the whistle. This new legislation would also improve the reporting process and ensure that whistle-blowers are protected when they need it.

Currently each government department or public-sector entity has a designated officer to handle whistle-blower complaints, and a potential whistle-blower has to report to a designated officer before a wrongdoing will be investigated. They are not protected from reprisal until that time. This can create some problems and concerns and possibly prevent whistle-blowing from occurring because of fear of reprisal, but this new legislation will help the process by

allowing whistle-blowers to approach their supervisor or the Public Interest Commissioner directly. Also, this new legislation means that whistle-blowers will be protected from reprisal as soon as they approach their supervisor and not to have to wait until the designated officer is informed.

Madam Chair, the all-party special ethics committee did a lot of work on this bill, as we have heard, and it has been some time since that committee met and made recommendations. I want to acknowledge the hours that were spent by many members thinking through this legislation and preparing a final report.

One of the things that this committee spoke about was that contractors hired by the government and some designated service providers such as some physicians and some nursing home operators do not currently fall within the scope of the act. This government supports the idea that this act should extend to some of the service providers who provide services paid for with taxpayer money. However, it is also important that everyone takes time to review and consider which services should be included and how they should be included. Therefore, our government supports the part of this new legislation which would consult with government contractors and designated service providers to see how best to move forward without stepping over the line into the private sector. One of the recommendations of the all-party committee was to ensure that these regulations do not affect the private sector, and our government supports the committee's recommendation on that.

3:30

Madam Chair, in order to make this legislation effective and in order to create an atmosphere where whistle-blowers feel secure coming forward regardless of whether they're brand new to the workforce or whether they're closer to their retirement years and considering the pension period that they might be looking at, it is critical that their identity be protected. In the existing legislation it is already clear that FOIP does not apply to records held by the Public Interest Commissioner. However, there is an exception to this, and that is when a designated officer initiates an investigation rather than the commissioner. In that case, it is possible for a third party to submit a FOIP request asking for records connected to the investigation. This is not a secure situation for the whistle-blower. The new legislation will ensure that the names of the whistle-blowers and other identifying information are exempted from such FOIP requests, therefore ensuring that the identity is not exposed and that the safety of and ability for the employee with the concern to move forward are enhanced.

The new legislation will also require that more details be reported annually by the Public Interest Commissioner. This will help everybody, both in the Chamber and in the public, see that these issues are being taken seriously and what the outcomes of the investigations are.

Madam Chair, everybody in this Chamber knows and everybody in the public knows that most whistle-blowers merely want to help fix mistakes and make things right. I know that as a young worker I may have been worried, perhaps even scared, to come forward with wrongdoing that I may have witnessed in my early workplace in the housing ministry. In this position, knowing that there are many young people in their early careers working for various ministries in various areas of our public service throughout the province, I'm proud of legislation that, I hope, will make legitimate whistle-blowers feel more secure in coming forward with their concerns. Everyone in this Chamber can agree that when it comes to public money and resources, opportunities to identify and correct mistakes should be welcomed. I'm confident that this legislation, if passed, will help to make that happen and help to protect those who come forward.

This is just one way that our government is working to make life better for all Albertans and to increase the transparency and accountability of the public sector. I support this legislation, and I hope that everyone in this Chamber does as well so that individuals, no matter what stage of their career they're at within the public service, feel absolutely confident that they can come forward and do the right thing and report wrongdoings without fear of reprisal, know that there's a process that is clear and transparent for them to follow when they do see fit to make such a report, know and understand that in coming forward with their wrongdoing reports, they will be protected by law, surrounded by due process, and, as well, make an effective, positive contribution to their workplace, the public service of Alberta, and also, going forward, to the working environment of those in the provincial sector, transferable by right of example to other workplaces throughout the province.

With that, I conclude my remarks.

The Chair: Thank you.

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

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

(reversion)

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's my pleasure to rise and introduce to you and through you to the members of this House some very important people that do very important work in this province. As I mention their names, I'd like them to stand: Lance Sheppard, who is a primary care paramedic and council member with the Alberta College of Paramedics, and Pete Helfrich, who is the president of the Alberta College of Paramedics and an advanced care paramedic. These are two people that do important work in this province along with other council members and the registrar and other administrators. I just thank them for their service and their dedication to Albertans. I would ask the House to give them a warm welcome.

Thank you.

Bill 11

Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Amendment Act, 2017

(continued)

The Chair: Are there any other hon. members wishing to speak to Bill 11? The hon. Member for Red Deer-South.

Ms Miller: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm proud to stand in the House today in support of Bill 11, the public interest disclosure act, also known as whistle-blower protection. This legislation will better protect employees already covered by whistle-blower legislation, and it will increase the number of people who would be protected, like staff in the offices of the Premier and the ministers.

I'm a proud union member and proud of the rights that we as members have negotiated in our collective bargaining agreements. We have protection from reprisal. In our last set of negotiations my union was able to include time during training to explain what the new employees' rights are. It was included in the health and safety training I provided to every employee. Our CBA gives my fellow members the ability to report bullying and harassment, unfair labour practices, or serious wrongdoings. They don't have to fear

losing shifts or being given less desirable shifts or losing their jobs for reporting incidents. They know who to turn to.

But not all workers have this type of protection. This bill will make sure that public-sector employees feel safe to report serious wrongdoings and are free from reprisal. This is the right thing to do both for employees and for all Albertans. A good public service and a fair and honest public sector are something that Albertans count on, and we are making it better. Our government wants to ensure that serious wrongdoings in the public sector are reported and addressed. Often employees are the ones who see things going on that shouldn't be, and many are afraid to report these incidents for fear of losing their jobs or of other types of reprisal. These wrongdoings need to be reported and investigated. This legislation is going to strengthen the current law and better protect whistleblowers from reprisal.

Currently each government department or public-sector entity has a designated officer to handle whistle-blower complaints. A potential whistle-blower has to report to a designated officer before a wrongdoing will be investigated, and they are not protected from reprisal until that time. This new legislation will help the process by allowing whistle-blowers to approach their supervisor or the Public Interest Commissioner directly.

I can give you a real example. An employee – well, let's call him Tom – had his wife call the office and say that he was sick and wouldn't be in that day. The person taking the call – we'll call her Sally – knew that the supposed sick employee was actually facilitating a seminar in another province as a consultant. This bothered Sally as Tom was getting his work pay and a consultant fee, and she thought it was wrong. When it happened a second time, Sally reported it to her supervisor. It ended up that the supervisor wasn't the designated officer, and he was also Tom's good friend. Sally ended up losing her job when the supervisor eliminated her position. Because she had not reported it to the right person, she was not protected.

3:40

One of the biggest fears of employees and one of the reasons they don't come forward is the fear of reprisal from their employer. There is some protection in that regard. Right now any employee in the public sector can be prosecuted for punishing an employee who exposes a wrongdoing, but there is no mechanism in place to determine what kind of restitution should be made to the whistleblower if they are subject to an unlawful punishment. I am proud to say that the new legislation would enable the Labour Relations Board to order remedies where there has been a reprisal. The board may decide that the whistle-blower deserves to get their job back if they have been fired, or they might be entitled to compensation.

Another problem with the old legislation is that it doesn't protect political staff working in ministers' offices or the Premier's office. As well, Madam Chair, Members of the Legislative Assembly aren't covered at all. This doesn't seem right. As Members of the Legislative Assembly in this province we should be leaders in ethics and accountability, not people who are excluded from being held accountable. I support the changes this legislation makes in these areas. If passed, this bill will mean that MLAs, ministers, and the Premier can all be investigated when an accusation of wrongdoing is made to the Public Interest Commissioner. This is where Alberta will once again be a leader. Right now no other jurisdiction in Canada has whistle-blower legislation that applies to MLAs in this way. Ontario is the only jurisdiction that covers ministers.

We have to make it easier for people to report serious wrongdoing or any kind of wrongdoing without the fear of losing their jobs, their livelihoods. I sat on the Ethics and Accountability

Committee, and I believe we came up with a good bill from our consultation. I urge everyone in this House to support this bill.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to stand and speak in support of Bill 11 this afternoon. I'd like to begin my remarks by referring to part 2.1, regarding disclosure to the commissioner, and I'd just like to preface my remarks by reading briefly from the bill.

15.1(1) An employee referred to in section 9 may make a disclosure directly to the Commissioner . . . and any provision in the procedures established under section 5 . . .

(2) If an employee referred to in section 9 has made a disclosure to the designated officer, the employee may also make a disclosure directly to the Commissioner even if the designated officer has made recommendations or concluded the investigation.

I read that to preface my remarks.

I'd like to bring my perspective as a registered nurse to the table this afternoon. One of the articles that I'll be happy to table tomorrow and that I will refer to this afternoon is by the Canadian Nurses Association. It's an ethics in practice series, and this particular one revolves around whistle-blowing. The title is *I See and Am Silent / I See and Speak Out: The Ethical Dilemma of Whistle-blowing*. This may seem a little elementary, but I think it's worth putting in the context of nursing in terms of the question of: what is whistle-blowing?

Whistleblowers are people who expose negligence, abuses, or dangers, such as professional misconduct or incompetence, which exist in the organization in which they work. The decision to blow the whistle on a colleague, associate, or employer is never an easy one; unless there is a legal obligation to report, it should be considered a step one takes when all else has failed.

In health care institutions, threats to patient safety may come from prescribed treatments, environmental hazards, staffing inadequacies, or illegal, incompetent or unethical conduct of any employee or person such as a family member or volunteer. Employees, especially nurses, may be the first to recognize unsafe practice or to identify actual or potential hazards. However, a nurse may often be caught between the values and standards of the profession and the values and norms of the organization in which he or she works.

In the above cases, nurses face a decision: should they disclose information learned in the course of their work?

Madam Chair, the tension that I mentioned there at the conclusion of that paragraph, that a nurse may be caught between the values and standards of their profession and the values and norms of the organization where they work, is central to the question of whistle-blowing.

In terms of the nursing profession it's interesting to see and study the trajectory of a brand new nurse who has just graduated and entered the profession. Oftentimes you'll hear nurses describe that perhaps the first couple of years of their practice is spent learning how to be a good nurse, just how to get things done, where the supplies are, how to organize yourself and make the best use of your time. You know, new nurses will come across these ethical dilemmas of whistle-blowing when they're new, but they have so much on their plate in trying to learn the profession, sometimes they don't know how to deal with these situations. As a nurse goes through their trajectory, becoming more of an expert, you get much better at the job and much more proficient, and then with these ethical dilemmas that you've encountered, you have a little bit more headspace to tackle these difficult issues.

I think something that was brought up a little bit earlier, about the fear of reprisal, is also central to this question because especially,

you know, as a new nurse you're worried that if you bring things up, you might lose your job. Certainly, nurses go through a great deal of education and spend a lot of time and a great deal of money getting their education, and once they get a job, they aim to keep it. There can sometimes be a perception of: "I don't want to rock the boat. I'm new here. I'm going to take care of patients the best way I possibly can, but I'm afraid that if I speak up, I might lose my job."

This is particularly so in smaller institutions and in rural and remote settings because that nurse might be the only nurse there. You know, it's a very special calling when health care practitioners go to these rural and remote communities because they are often either the only health care provider or one of the very few that are there. If they start to question or ask themselves – you know, in health care we refer to these as ethical dilemmas or moral dilemmas. People in these remote situations might ask themselves: if I rock the boat, I don't want to lose my job. But, at the same time, they have a very deep professional interest in taking care of their patients.

Based on my experience in the operating room – you know, I was fortunate to have entered the operating room after several years of practice on the floor. We call it the floor, working on a unit. By this point I felt like I was a fairly proficient nurse, and I was in the space where I could start asking these difficult questions. It was interesting because I started in the operating room in about 2006, and I quit my job when I was elected in 2015. Working there for about 10 years, even in that short time period I saw a dramatic culture shift with new doctors coming into the operating room.

I'd like to refer a bit to the culture of health care and how that's changing and how that influences whistle-blowing behaviour. There are some parallels that are used between the airline industry and the operating room. Both are very complex and technical environments that require multiple levels of support staff and also tend to have an ingrained or entrenched hierarchy, if you will, of people that may be considered more important or less important than others. Of course, we all know that it's a team that is required to make these things happen, so to say that one person is more important than the other isn't really accurate. We all do different jobs. We all have different levels of experience and training. But, you know, a nurse can't do their job without a housekeeper who cleans up in between and a sterile instrument processor who uses their professional skills to make sure that they have clean instruments to take care of patients.

3:50

In referring to the culture and airlines, that is what I'm getting at here. Quite some time ago the airline industry examined their practices and why they were having accidents, and one of the conclusions that they reached was that oftentimes, you know, those considered lower on the hierarchy may have had concerns about the aircraft or some other maintenance issue, but in the past they were afraid to bring that up for fear of the pilot or a more senior person having some act of reprisal or speaking down about them. So there was a culture of being afraid to speak up and say what was on your mind and sort of, so to speak, challenge those who may be seen as superiors. The airline industry recognized this as a safety concern, so they changed the culture so that it allowed all members of the team to speak in a more equal manner to each other so that they weren't afraid to bring these safety concerns forward.

This was a culture shift that was also adopted by the operating rooms and surgical suites because, you know, there's a very similar, invisible hierarchy in the operating room. Surgeons and anaesthetists might tend to be at the top, and housekeepers or whatnot may be at the bottom, but, like I said, we're all part of a team. Everybody there is focused on patient care. So in the operating room we learned

some lessons from the airline industry about shifting the culture in terms of feeling more free to speak up and identify safety concerns, and that was a paradigm shift. That's what I referred to.

In my brief 10 years or so that I was in the operating room – and I should say that, by and large, in 99.9 per cent of staff interactions in the operating room people feel free to speak up and say what they want. You know, there's a misperception that surgeons are *prima donnas* and that it's their way or the highway. I can tell you that, by and large, that's not the case. The vast majority of surgeons and anaesthetists and other doctors appreciate any level of staff bringing concerns forward, so I want to reassure Albertans that in their health care system they've got absolutely professional staff dedicated to caring for them.

I want to just use a couple of examples of things that I had experienced myself in terms of – you know, maybe “whistle-blowing” in the context that I'm about to describe is a little bit overboard, but it's still with the same intention. I had an instance where in a former job that I'd had I identified some safety concerns where I was working, and I tried to go through the proper processes to have those addressed by talking to the nurse clinician and making my case and saying what I identified as a problem and how I think we could solve that.

I didn't get a satisfactory resolution at that level, so I took my concerns up to the manager, and it was a very troubling situation, even reflecting on it to this day. Like I say, in the majority of cases Albertans are absolutely safe. What I'm about to describe may alarm some people. Guess what the manager that I spoke to about the safety concerns that I had described to him and that I hadn't had a satisfactory resolution to told me, Madam Chair? He said: if you don't like it, go work somewhere else. And my jaw must have dropped to the floor. I couldn't believe he had said that. In fact, that person was a registered nurse as well, which made it even more shocking. You know what? After hearing that, I still tried to take measures to correct the situation and went above that manager to the director, and I did see some resolution at that level.

You know, I think what the bill contemplates is escalating levels of whistle-blowing, so to speak, that there are processes in place that should be followed to make sure that we're going through a proper chain of command, and that is to say that the first time we notice something wrong, we don't necessarily go to the commissioner or the media right away. Of course, it all depends on the context of a person's work situation, but we always owe it to our managers and whatnot to bring those things to their attention first and try to seek resolution at that level and then escalate as necessary.

There is a concept called duty of fidelity, and that is whereby an employee owes it to their employer to give the employer every opportunity to fix situations that the employee may see as unsatisfactory and that the employee also has an obligation not to paint the employer in a negative light in public, because the relationship of the employee and the employer hinges on this duty of fidelity. I think that's important, but at the same time we don't want that to limit people to not come forward and blow the whistle.

I think that in the nursing profession nurses and, I think, all health care providers, for that matter, are driven by a strong desire to do the right thing. They're in this for the right reasons. Certainly, nursing is an incredibly rewarding job, but it's not very glamorous, or oftentimes it's not. You know, we're looking after people's bodily functions and whatnot. There's no shame in that, Madam Chair. When you go talk to your family and they say, “What do you do at work?” I used to say, “Well, I change diapers for adults.” That's kind of a pejorative way of putting it, but sometimes, in essence, that's what nurses do in different circumstances. I don't

mean to demean that. It's an extremely important job because of skin integrity and personal dignity and whatnot. It's an extremely important job.

I'd like to describe another scenario that I encountered. We were doing an operation where we were going into the chest cavity, and in these circumstances you have to have an experienced surgeon and a resident. At the time the two operators were a fellow and a resident, a first-year resident for that matter, and going into the chest cavity is kind of a big deal. I informed the surgeon that, you know, there is a policy that the surgeon had to be at least in the room and ready to scrub in if necessary. So I called the surgeon and described the situation. I'm paraphrasing, but this is relatively accurate. He told me: if you don't tell me how to do my doctor job, I won't tell you how to do your nurse job. I was gobsmacked. That's the kind of culture that we're aiming to change.

We want it so that new doctors coming into the profession would never say something like that. They'd say, “Thank you for letting me know; here's the reason why I made that decision” or whatnot, but they would certainly never seek to demean another professional. Certainly, in a situation where if a doctor noticed me doing my quote, unquote, nursing job in a fashion that they had a concern about, I would welcome them to bring that to my attention. That's the kind of culture we're seeking to change, and I think that's absolutely important.

There is another section in the bill that I wanted to refer to because I think it also speaks to going about whistle-blowing sort of in the appropriate fashion. I'll just read briefly this one section. This is from section 20 in the bill.

Before beginning an investigation into a disclosure where the disclosure alleges gross mismanagement in relation to employees, the Commissioner must be satisfied that all applicable mechanisms, including any human resource processes or processes under a collective agreement, to address bullying, harassment or intimidation . . . have been used or considered.

I'd like to speak about something that I know relatively intimately, which is the professional responsibility clause in the United Nurses of Alberta's collective agreement. This is a fantastic clause because it speaks to precisely that article in the bill. That is that when nurses encounter a professional responsibility concern in their workplace here in Alberta and elsewhere in Canada – I believe they have similar provisions in collective agreements across the country – there's a defined mechanism in the collective agreement for nurses to bring professional responsibility concerns forward.

4:00

I'd really like to applaud the United Nurses of Alberta because they have taken this matter extraordinarily seriously. They've hired researchers and nurses that do research on professional responsibility to examine this exact matter. Especially under the management of the former government, who would make cuts to health care and put patient care at risk by their gross mismanagement of public resources and political interference, the United Nurses of Alberta really ramped this up. They were afraid that the decisions of the former government were going to put patients at risk.

This is something that I was involved with. Frankly, that's one of the reasons I ran for election. When the PCs were planning to cut a billion dollars out of health care, I knew that the system was already strained and that nurses and staff were doing everything they could to hold it together.

If the PCs had had their way and cut that significant amount of funding, things may have gone a much different way. The United Nurses of Alberta have taken this very seriously. They have committees, and they have a professional responsibility adviser. They've done an admirable job, you know, looking at the essence

of what nursing is and making sure that all health care situations are safe across the province.

With that, Madam Chair, you know, I think this is an excellent bill. I know that the minister has done a fantastic job of putting this together in terms of consultation and captured the various scenarios that we can encounter here in Alberta. I'd also like to thank the members of the Ethics and Accountability Committee, who put so much work into creating the recommendations, working long hours and through difficult circumstances as they contemplated the various aspects of this legislation. I'd like to encourage all members to vote in favour of this bill.

Thank you.

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

Ms Fitzpatrick: I've said many times in this room that I spent 20 years as an activist in my union. I worked for the federal government and the territorial government for 32 and a half years within corrections, and throughout that time there were certainly a number of incidents that occurred that I felt were incidents that needed to be reported. Anybody who knows me – well, the Member for Banff-Cochrane used a phrase about rocking the boat. One might have been able to use the words “boat rocker” as an indicator for me. When things happened and my instincts said that there was something wrong – guess what? – there was probably something wrong.

I have a number of incidents and a number of issues on reprisals. When I worked at the jail in Yellowknife, I was a recreation supervisor when I started there. The gym was a little short, so we talked among management about what we could do because a couple of the offenders had injured themselves running into the wall when playing floor hockey or basketball. We came up with a solution. We were going to put a wood frame along both end walls, and we were going to use all the exercise mats as padding on those walls, but the only time we could do it was during the night because the gym was in use from 7 o'clock in the morning until 10 at night. So I decided that I would get a crew of offenders who wanted to volunteer to do this, and I brought them into the gym at about 11:30 at night on a Friday night. We took all the wood we were using, sanded it all down, put some varnish on it, and put Velcro on the top so that we could hook the mats up.

The rule in corrections is that there have to be rounds done every hour. All the inmates have to be counted. You want to make sure everybody is there, and you want to make sure everybody is safe. As I said, I went into the gym at 11:30, and I never saw anybody until 2:30. At 2:30 one of the guys on duty came in, and he said: “We're just getting supper for the staff, so the inmates can come and have something to eat.” I said okay. I asked them, and they said that, all right, they'd go for something to eat. We went into the dining room. He had frozen fish and chips out for the offenders, and he had steaks and some other goodies out for the staff. He said, “You can have a steak.” I said: “Well, no. I'm going to have exactly what the offenders are having.” That's the procedure in the jail during the daytime, that whatever is on the meal plan for one group is on the plan for everybody. So we ate fish and chips, and then we went back to the gym.

We finished the job at 4 o'clock, and I didn't see anybody else coming to count the offenders or to check on us. I was in there with 10 guys who were offenders, who were in jail for committing crimes, and nobody came to check on me. Nobody came to check on them.

Anyway, we finished, and they went back to their units. I went to the front door of the jail, and there was smoke coming out of the

front door. What I realized was that they had a barbecue between the front door and the outside door. That's the only exit from the jail. They've got a barbecue in there, and they were barbecuing their steaks. I was a little perturbed, and I spoke to the officer in charge. I said: “What the heck are you doing? You can't have a barbecue between the two doors. You're putting the whole building at risk. You're putting everybody's life at risk.” And he said, “What are you going to do about it?” I said: “Well, you've put me at risk, you've put all the staff at risk, and you've put every offender in this jail at risk. This is against the rules.” He said, “What are you going to do?” I said, “I'm going to report this incident.” And he said, “Just remember that nobody is going to have your back if something happens.”

Anyway, as I said, I'm a boat rocker. If you're not going to put the safety of everybody in the jail first, then somebody has to do something about it. So I reported it to my supervisor, and my supervisor reported it to the superintendent. The officer in charge was disciplined, and he was suspended for three days. I can't remember what his position was, but he would be the senior person for the correctional officers in that jail who assigned shifts. They were a little ticked that I made that report and that he was suspended, so they scheduled him for overtime so that he wouldn't actually lose any money. To me, that was such a lack of integrity.

Again I went back, but this time I went to the superintendent, and I said: “This person was disciplined for what they did, which put everybody at risk. They didn't observe the schedule to check on inmates or staff in the institution every hour, yet they had written it in the book that they had done that.” You had lots of witnesses because all of the offenders who were in the gym with me remarked that no staff came to check on them. There was no other way to check but to come in the door and come into the gym. Anyway, I went back, and I reported it.

4:10

There were certainly reprisals. I got left in the gym with some remanded offenders. If two of those offenders hadn't stood by my side and backed the other offenders off in a particular situation that happened, I could have been killed. Again I reported the situation. It was the same shift supervisor who had done it on the night shift. You've got to report that. It finally went to the head of corrections in the Territories before any action actually happened.

That was one example. I've had enough experience in my life that I'm not going to put up with any kind of baloney like that that's going on. I stand up, and I say something.

Eventually I get to a parole office. An incident happened when one of my colleagues was being sexually harassed by another one of our colleagues. She went to the district director and said: this is what's happening; I need you to take some action. The person who was doing it was a friend of the director. He did nothing. So she came to me and said: I need to file a grievance against management for not following our own procedure and policy on harassment. The first thing he should have done was to separate the two of them so that she would be safe.

It took two years before that was resolved, and it meant that I had to continue all the time fighting this. Somebody said to me: like, what are you prepared to give up? My career was in the tubes as far as advancing within corrections in that work setting. But I could not let something like that happen without standing up and saying: no, this is not going to continue, and there are going to be consequences for that behaviour.

As I said, my career didn't go anywhere while I was in that office. It wasn't that I didn't apply in competitions that I was more than qualified for and certainly more qualified than those people that they put into those positions. But I wasn't going anywhere. In fact,

the district director told me that I wasn't going anywhere. I couldn't keep my mouth shut, so I wasn't going anywhere.

It wasn't until I went to Ottawa that, in fact, my career did progress. Because I was a union rep, there were people who came to me when things happened. In Ottawa I didn't mess around. If something didn't happen right away, I went to the commissioner. We had a policy in the federal government on harassment, on bullying, on sexual harassment, and the department was going to follow it because if not, I was going public with it. He knew that I'd go public with it. One of the things I learned in those years of being a union rep was to document every little bit of evidence that had occurred in every one of those cases. So you fix it, you do the right thing, but as I said, my career was impacted for a long time because I did that.

This legislation will change that. Hopefully, it will change that culture that I talked about. Certainly, there was a correctional culture when I was there, but that culture, I've found, is in many other places as well. There are always people who want to bully you and don't want their actions to be made public. Except, their actions are causing pain to somebody else. They are causing pain to the institution.

In corrections one of the things that you were expected to do was to be a good example. If we wanted offenders to change their behaviour, we needed to model good behaviour. What went on in Yellowknife when I was there at that jail was not good behaviour, and those offenders that were there saw that it wasn't good behaviour.

If we want things to get better, yes, this legislation needs to go forward. We need to change that culture about respect and to stop bullying and those power games that are going on.

With that, I'll sit down. I have lots of other examples, but I think I'll leave it at that. To be very honest, I expect everybody in this room to support this bill.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other questions, comments, or amendments to Bill 11? West Yellowhead.

Mr. Rosendahl: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I'm going to try and work my way through this. I've got a real bad cold, so hopefully I can work my way through my speech.

I'm proud to stand in the House in support of Bill 11, the Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblower Protection) Amendment Act, 2017. I say that it's about time. It's long overdue. The old legislation that was in place: a lot of people thought it was okay, but it was weak. I always said that it was full of holes like a sieve, which is unfortunate, but a lot of people and employers took advantage of it.

One of the biggest fears that employees have is the fear of reprisal from employers. In some cases it even goes beyond that to peer pressure from other workers that you're working with because when you raise an issue, they're afraid that it's going to be a reflection on them as well. I guess I learned early on that you have to stand up. Like Maria, you know, you're not afraid to stand up and say that this isn't right.

Maybe that's why I was very well respected in the union in later years, because I had that opinion. It didn't matter whether it was something that the employer did or whether or not it was about issues of harassment and those kinds of things that went on in different workplaces that I dealt with. Once again, it was the fact that I wasn't afraid to stand up. It took us a while, even where I worked in the union at the plant in Hinton, where I really got my training and those kinds of things, to really understand workers' health and safety, for example, or when you're looking at the

chemicals that we dealt with in the plant, what was going on with it. Of course, a lot of the issues that we dealt with in there were environmental concerns because the chemicals that we dealt with in the plant had a huge repercussion on the environment in one way or another if there were spills or leaks or anything else that occurred.

4:20

I learned early on in my employment career, when I worked for a government agency, for example, that when we found some silly things – and I'll say that it was silly things – that went on and when we raised the issue with our boss, who was our immediate supervisor, we were told to shut up or face reprisals one way or another. You could end up with a shortened career, which isn't right, but that's the way it was then.

In later years I was working for another employer, that was doing some kind of an experiment, and the animals that they were looking after were near starvation. I said: "This isn't right. You can't do that. Even in an experimental situation you do not have a right to treat animals like that." Well, I won't go into the harassment and stuff that I ended up with because I stood up and said: "No, you can't do that. These animals need to be fed. You don't have a right. You're breaking the law." I was subjected to all kinds of things, but I said: "You know, this is important. You don't have a right to do these things."

When I went to work for – and I'm going to be clear about the pulp mill in Hinton. In the early '70s, of course, there weren't a lot of environmental things there. Sure, they had their operating licence and everything else. They did all kinds of I won't say stupid things, but some people made some real bad decisions. It wasn't good for the environment, for sure, but we learned the hard way, in some cases, in standing up to them and saying that you can't be doing these things. Some of us got days off for sticking up for workers and those kinds of things.

Through that we learned that we had to look at our collective agreements. Through our collective agreement we had to make considerable changes and address the issues of environment, for example. We also had to address the issues of harassment in the workplace. Of course, it took us a few years to get that recognized in the collective agreement as being a real problem because the laws in Alberta really didn't help the workers in there if you stood up and said something against the employer or whatever.

That's why this is so important today, because when you're dealing with a workplace that is dealing with all kinds of chemicals like we did and in quite a vast amount – in some cases the large vessels that we had of various material could certainly harm the environment. When we stood up to that employer because they decided to drain the vessel for repairs or wash the stuff out and not deal with it in a proper manner, we had to stand up to them and say: "This isn't right. You can't do that." Because of my steadfast relationship in looking after air and water and those things, we ended up forming an environment committee, for example, in the plant to try and deal with it so that we all had a collective voice. Meanwhile we've had employees get time off, including myself on a few occasions, when I was threatened or even just about fired a few times because I stood up.

What was good in that case, though, was that because it was a union environment, the union workers stood with me. That's the only way that we could stand up to the employer that this isn't right, what you're doing. In some cases it was so bad we had to phone or even report the mill for environmental laws that they were breaking or whatever. We had to do that. It's too bad that we had to go through all those things. Meanwhile the employees, including myself and a few others, had to endure harassment and bullying in

some cases because we were standing up and believing that what we were doing was the right thing to do.

That's why this Bill 11 is so important. It gives a voice to people and the ability to stand up and say: "Look, you can't do that. You can't threaten me with firing or removing my livelihood because I don't think that what you're doing to me is the right thing to do." Being the president of the labour council in West Yellowhead for many years, we ran into that from several other employers, whether it was some people at McDonald's or whether it was some workers at the different hotels or whatever, some of the things that went on dealing with harassment and bullying in the workplace. Of course, I got told on several occasions that I should mind my own business, that I shouldn't interfere, that because it wasn't a unionized workplace, I should butt out or a few other things. What we were thinking was the fact that nobody should have to work under those conditions.

Another case – and I'll say it this way – was that my wife was working for an employer, and she does not see well. She's technically blind, carries a CNIB card. She was working for this employer, and the manager of the hotel cornered her in the hotel room while she was making the bed and made some gross advances to her. She cornered herself in the closet, called me when she had the opportunity, and, needless to say, I went over there. I won't repeat what I said to the guy, but she didn't work there anymore either because we don't need to put up with that. That's harassment. It's not right, especially the fact that when they do this to people with disabilities, it's even more concerning because they can't fight for themselves. They try their best to do the job, and, if anything, they try harder than anyone else to prove themselves, that they can do these things.

4:30

In another case my wife was working for another employer because she was bound and determined that she had a right to work, which she does, and I supported that, but this employer would do nasty things: hide her cleaning supplies and then complain that she took too long to do her job. She would phone me and say: "The stuff is missing. Can you come and help me find the stuff so I can do what I need to do?" So I would go over there and help her out. My wife can't see blue on a piece of paper. If you write a note in blue ink, for example, she can't read that, so what this employer would do is write a note half in blue ink and half in black and then complain to her because she couldn't read the note. What we did for that, once we found out that this was going on: she would send me a picture of the note. I would read it for her so that she knew what it said. This is wrong.

This is why this is so important, to protect people like that from this kind of thing. It's important that we look at that because, like I said, people with disabilities try their hardest. They work harder than some people because they're trying to prove that they can do it. That's why I'm so much in support of this. It's not only for them; it's for other people to stand up and say: this is wrong.

I know I've got issues going on in West Yellowhead right now. I know that there's a case in another situation where another worker is being harassed because of their age. It's wrong. I confronted the employer about it just a little while ago. This individual needs the job because, unfortunately, her husband died and didn't really leave her much of a pension. She's trying to make ends meet, so she needs this bus-driving job so that she can pay her rent and stuff. She's being harassed, which is ridiculous. There are other cases out there where this is going on. It's not right. This is why it's so important that I support this.

Everybody in the Chamber knows and everybody in the public knows that most whistle-blowers merely want to help fix things and make things right. That's the principle that we've got to look at because that's what they're trying to do, whether it's a supervisor that's dumping chemicals when they shouldn't or out in the oil and gas sector, for example.

Of course, I'm always out there when I have the chance, poking around and seeing what's going on, and I find that a whole bunch of chemicals are leaking from a bunch of old barrels that are left on an abandoned oil site. Boy, did that stir up a hornet's nest. I got harassment phone calls and a few other things. I got told to mind my own business and a few other expletives in there. It's important that these kinds of things should be reported. Everybody should have a right to report these things without the fear of bullying and harassment and threats.

That's why I'm in full support of Bill 11. I think that we need to look at this, and I think that we need to pass it a hundred per cent. With that, I'll sit down.

Thank you very much.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Madam Chair. It's always tough to follow the Member for West Yellowhead, but I will do my best. It is my privilege to rise and speak in Committee of the Whole about the amendments to the public interest disclosure act. One of the things that I wanted to touch on was talking about reprisals. There is some significant work that's been done in terms of reprisal being captured in the legislation, so I'll just go over a bit of what's in the legislation, in the amendments.

We know that one of the most important parts of public disclosure legislation is having employees have faith in the system of being able to come forward with information that would otherwise not come to light. Unfortunately, one of the things that happens in that process is that there can be reprisals against that employee in the workplace. I know that for the many public service employees that I've had the privilege of meeting in this role as MLA, all of them take what they do quite seriously in service of the province, and I thank them absolutely for all the work they do.

Some of the sections where section 24 would be repealed and substituted would be:

- 24(1) This section applies to an employee or a prescribed service provider who has, in good faith,
- (a) requested advice about making a disclosure as described in section 8 or, in the case of an employee of a prescribed service provider, the regulations made under Part 1.2, whether or not the employee made a disclosure,
 - (b) made a disclosure under this Act,
 - (c) co-operated in an investigation under this Act,
 - (d) declined to participate in a wrongdoing, or
 - (e) done anything in accordance with this Act, [and]
- (2) No person shall take or direct, or counsel or direct a person to take or direct, any of the following measures against an employee of a department, a public entity, an office of the Legislature, the Office of the Premier, an office of a minister or a prescribed service provider for the reason that the employee took an action referred to in subsection (1):
- (a) a dismissal, layoff, suspension, demotion or transfer, discontinuation or elimination of a job, change of job location, reduction in wages, change in hours of work or reprimand;
 - (b) any measure, other than one mentioned in clause (a), that adversely affects the employee's employment or working conditions;

(c) a threat to take any of the measures mentioned in clause (a) or (b).

(3) Subject to the regulations, no person shall take or direct, or counsel or direct a person to take or direct, any measure prescribed in the regulations against a prescribed service provider for the reason that the prescribed service provider or an employee of the prescribed service provider took an action referred to in subsection (1).

Of course, with reprisal, unfortunately, for very good reason it's one of the biggest fears that employees do have and one of the reasons that they don't come forward: fear of reprisal by their employer. We know that this has taken place, but there haven't necessarily been the remedies to actually deal with a reprisal that's happened. There wasn't the power of the office to be able to either prescribe or have a body that could prescribe a remedy for that person.

4:40

This is a step towards making sure that there is some protection in regard to that. Right now any employer that is in the public sector can be prosecuted for punishing an employee who exposes a wrongdoing, but there is no mechanism that is currently in place that would determine how that restitution would be made to a person who is the whistle-blower if they are subject to such an unlawful punishment. So one of the recommendations that was made by the committee was that there would be an ability to enable the Labour Relations Board to order remedies where there has been a reprisal. That board may decide that the whistle-blower deserves to get their job back if they've been fired or that they might be entitled to compensation.

Of course, in the end, it would be up to the board to decide what would be appropriate, but it's important to note, I should say, that the board's order would be enforceable like a court order. It's with that that this would provide encouragement for whistle-blowers to feel more safe coming forward with information about their workplace. We saw this legislation actually come into real-life experience when we saw that the Public Interest Commissioner was able to rule that there had been a contravention of the rules of Alberta Innovates: technology futures, that they had been found to be directing their staff to change information of parties that were engaging with AITF, and it was likely as a means to expedite the process of finding those – I shouldn't say companies – providers, those contractors that would partner in the office for work, and someone was brave enough to come forward. As I was saying before, you know, someone like this, that works in the public sector, would be doing that because they are wanting to ensure that there is accountability in the body that they're working in and that the resources that are in the office that they are fulfilling the duties of are being appropriately used.

When I was going through the clauses here, I thought that it was also important to note that it will also expand this act to ministers and MLAs. Right now that coverage is not currently in effect with ministers' offices or MLAs' offices. This will increase that scope of accountability so that if somebody has a similar sort of complaint in regard to someone not using public resources in a way that follows the rules and regulations of that office, they can go through the process of making that public disclosure in the interests of the province, really.

It's very important to talk about how those that go through the process of making a disclosure and could be putting their future livelihoods at risk are able to have more faith in the process. You know, it has been said that for people that do this or think about doing this, their concern is that they are really taking their entire practice, their training, their years of school, their years of service

to the public and they're putting it all on the line, not just in regard to their current livelihood but also going forward. They're worried about their future livelihood, earnings all being put at risk because often they do not believe that they will actually be able to return to the public sector to be able to gain employment.

So I want to thank those that have come forward with disclosures and those that will do so in the future because, just as the member previous was saying, it's incredibly important for people to be able to hold public institutions to account. It's important to have faith from the public in those institutions, and that's what I believe is the bedrock of this legislation.

That would be why I am proud to stand and speak in favour of this, because I know that a lot of people have put a lot on the line and also lost a lot in the interest of the public good. I want to again thank those people and thank the minister for democratic reform for tabling these amendments. I want to give them my full support.

Thanks, Madam Chair.

The Chair: The hon. Minister of Transportation.

Mr. Mason: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I 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 a certain bill. The committee reports progress on that bill, Bill 11. I wish to table copies of the amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

Government Bills and Orders Third Reading

Bill 8 An Act to Strengthen Municipal Government

[Adjourned debate May 11: Mr. Eggen]

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

Ms McKittrick: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's a pleasure to once again rise in this Assembly and talk about the Municipal Government Act. It's a pleasure for me because in my past life I actually worked in municipal government, and I knew the importance of the MGA in terms of the activities that it regulated in the municipalities that I worked for. In the Assembly we have spoken at length about the changes to the Municipal Government Act and the way that this act now strengthens municipal governments. When I worked for municipal governments, I would encourage residents to get involved in their local government decision-making, to engage with municipal candidates during elections, and, especially, to exercise their democratic rights by voting.

It has always disturbed me that often the percentage of persons who vote in the municipal election for municipal councillors, mayors, and school trustees is less than 50 per cent because, actually, municipal governments have the most impact on a

family's life. Through zoning regulations municipal governments have an impact on the affordability, style, and type of housing that is available. Through the municipal development plan municipalities decide where roads will be, green spaces, public amenities, schools, and the density of subdivisions. Municipalities set bylaws that can determine if your dog and cat need licences, if you can keep hens, bees, pigs, and so on in your backyard; set speeds on roads; decide on photoradar; fund libraries, affordable housing, seniors' lodges; support families and community services programs.

I want especially to talk about libraries, not only because we have a fantastic library in Strathcona county but because our government actually funds libraries as opposed to what happened in Saskatchewan, where library funding was cut.

4:50

Mr. Carson: They went back on it.

Ms McKittrick: Okay. Well, sorry.

Anyway, I'm always happy to visit my library, and I'm always reminded that it is a part of municipal government.

Municipalities also work to ensure industrial and retail tax bases, encourage economic development, honour volunteers and community leadership. As you can see, Madam Speaker, any revision to the Municipal Government Act has a huge impact on the life of every single Albertan.

I was very pleased to see the addition in Bill 8 of section 63, about the joint-use and planning agreements. During my school trustee days planning for schools and finding the appropriate land were an ongoing challenge. We were fortunate that our board and municipal government had established, at the staff and political level, committees to discuss planning for schools, joint-use agreements for parks, green spaces, and school facilities. The issue of joint-use and planning agreements is one which was advocated for strongly during the original MGA consultations by one of my boards, the Elk Island public board. I'm really grateful for their willingness to speak about this issue. My thanks to the former and current ministers of Municipal Affairs for having listened to Elk Island public board and all the other boards that spoke to the need of adding this section to the MGA.

Land, especially a portion of land big enough for a school, playground, playing fields, parking, and so on, is really hard to set aside in many urban municipalities. There is also the need for appropriate access to and exit from the schools, with provisions for emergency situations. Planning for schools must happen with attention paid to demographics, future growth, suitability, and to the kinds of businesses and developments that can be located close to schools. For example, you have to make sure that you don't build dangerous industries close to school sites. Land is also costly and hard to acquire if careful planning has not happened early on in any area structure planning.

The section that was added to the MGA in Bill 8 reads in part:

670.1(1) Where on the coming into force of this section a school board is operating within the municipal boundaries of a municipality, the municipality must, within 3 years after this section comes into force, enter into an agreement under this section with the school board.

(2) Where after the coming into force of this section a school board commences operating within the municipal boundaries of a municipality, the municipality must, within 3 years after the school board commences operating in the municipality, enter into an agreement under this section with the school board.

I won't bore the Assembly today by reading all of this section, as my colleague the MLA from Calgary did a few days ago, but I think everybody understands the importance of this section in terms of ensuring that municipal government and school boards meet early

on and really spend time thinking about the use of land within the municipal or county boundaries and how this land can best be used to ensure that the children that live in the area can have access to schools.

Bill 8 will make sure that each school board will sit down with their one or in many cases more than one, maybe even up to 10 municipal governments and discuss school site needs, suitability, demographics, and, hopefully, share each other's strategic plan as to programs and land use. I think of my own school boards, that have probably seven or eight municipal governments that they have to work with in terms of planning for schools. They have to work with not only Strathcona county but Fort Saskatchewan, Vegreville, for one of the boards Camrose, Mundare, Tofield, and so on. This section of the act is really going to encourage every partner in municipal governments to really think about the need to use land for schools.

Also, in many municipalities there is more than one board, as there is in my own municipality. In Strathcona county we have public, Catholic, and francophone boards. All three and the municipal governments, hopefully, will work together to figure how best to use land to the benefit of schools and public amenities. I'm really hoping that this part of the act will encourage not only the municipalities that come to agreement with individual boards but that all boards in one municipality will come into agreement jointly with the municipality so we can really use land as well as possible to create the kind of schools that we need.

I should also add, Madam Speaker, that I'm so pleased that the Minister of Education has worked so hard to build new schools not only in my own riding but in all of the other ridings. It's very timely that this section has been added to Bill 8 because it's going to establish the planning for years to come as the government initiates the building of new schools.

Madam Speaker, other members in the Assembly have spoken eloquently about the provisions that allow municipal government to establish parental leave policies and about the need for all municipalities to work and collaborate with their nearby First Nation communities. I myself had the opportunity to see the importance of this collaboration when I worked with a municipality in B.C. to develop their municipal plan. The plan was given in draft to the nearby First Nation communities and their feedback incorporated in the final draft. It was a very respectful process, that led to these communities' engagement with the municipalities on other matters, and I'm really hoping that that experience will be replicated in many, many of the municipalities in Alberta that are adjacent to First Nation communities.

I would like to also remind all members of the extensive consultation processes that led to Bill 8. Al Kemmere, who's the president of AAMD and C, stated:

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.

I again want to commend both ministers, the current Minister of Municipal Affairs and the former minister, for the time, the energy, and the way they carefully consulted with everyone who wanted to be part of revision of the act.

Madam Speaker, it is my hope that all members of this Assembly will support Bill 8 and will also work with their local municipalities, First Nation communities, and school boards to support collaboration and thoughtful planning.

Thank you.

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

Seeing none, I'll recognize the hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Stier: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker, and good afternoon, everyone. I appreciate the opportunity to be able to speak once again to Bill 8. It is a fact that this bill had a significant number of topics in it, and it's difficult to actually pay proper attention to all the topics that it has, in fact, in the time that's allowed today, but I'd like to go through a few things if I could.

I'd like to start out just by saying that we identified from the briefings 44 different topics that were in Bill 8 that were under review. There were some proposed changes, and they were divided up into three or four major topic areas: governance, how they work together and plan for growth, and funding. These kinds of topics are important and vital to how municipalities work with the ratepayers in their areas.

5:00

I'm pleased to say and be able to say that I'm glad the government did come forward with some of these things. They were, for the most part, fairly welcomed, and I thought they were worth while to discuss. I only wish we had more time to discuss them in greater detail. There are a lot of them I'd like to touch on just a little bit, so I'll just mention a few of them.

The first one is collaboration with indigenous communities. That's certainly something that we do support. In the bill municipalities with adjacent First Nation reserves or Métis settlements are required to notify them of any new municipal development plans and area structure plans. It clarifies that municipalities are able to collaborate with their neighbouring First Nation communities, you know, on matters of regional service delivery, and it empowers municipalities to form collaborative agreements with those communities. While many municipalities are already doing this, during last summer's MGA tour it became clear, however, that there was and probably still is today some confusion. This amendment perhaps will give some clarity that may be needed there. I'm not sure how the indigenous communities feel about this – it will be interesting to hear back from them – but it's certainly a change that I support and that our party supports.

Conservation reserves were another interesting one. From my previous experience in municipal work we had conservation reserves in some manner but not to the extent that this is indicating now. It's the ability for a municipality to establish a reserve. That was actually created in Bill 21. The idea then was to address an issue that municipalities were facing when dealing with development requests. The change was largely welcomed by developers.

It looks like Bill 8 is going to enhance and expand the rules around that new idea. It'll allow for reimbursement, actually, of the purchase cost to be considered during annexation proceedings as well. It further restricts those funds to be used for conservation purposes only. It also clarifies that the conservation reserve land is exempt from municipal taxes, and it encourages municipalities to include conservation goals and objectives in their statutory plans. Finally, it does close a loophole that would have left municipalities unable to reclassify a conservation reserve that had suffered substantive changes that eliminated the land's conservation value; for example, when lands are often destroyed by flooding. Some of these changes are good, and I do support that one.

There was also another topic. It was taxation of provincial agencies. It makes it clear that any property held by a provincial corporation will be considered taxable for the purpose of property taxation. I welcome this acknowledgement on the part of the province, too. It was a responsibility that I think is important. The AUMA had a quote on that, and they thought it was good. They

said that it's "to compensate municipalities for the services the municipality provides." It's a change that I, too, support.

Another big one that was mentioned, I think, just a bit by the previous speaker: joint-use and planning agreements. Bill 8 proposes to establish the requirement for a municipality to establish joint-use and planning agreements, or JUPAs, with the school boards within its boundaries. These JUPAs will include basic things leading to the planning, development, and use of school sites; the transfer of municipal and school reserves in a municipality; the disposal of school sites; the servicing of school sites on municipal reserves in the municipality; and the use and maintenance of school and municipality facilities and playing fields in the municipality, including what the fees, if any, for use will be. The proposed changes should result in improved collaboration, I think, between school boards and municipalities, so it's definitely a change that I can support.

Unfortunately, Madam Speaker, all the good that this bill offers is overshadowed a little bit, in my opinion, by the government's insistence on maintaining complete secrecy over the phase-in of the 5 to 1 property tax ratio. Now, let me make this clear. I'm not opposed to the principle of linking nonresidential and residential property tax rates, nor am I opposed to the ratio being 5 to 1. But what I am opposed to is the government's complete unwillingness to provide any certainty with a timeline to those municipalities and all of their residents, local business owners, and industries that exceed the 5 to 1 tax ratio currently on when the government expects them to become compliant with the 5 to 1 linkage.

During the Committee of the Whole debate two reasonable amendments were proposed that would have established within the legislation itself the government's expectation in terms of a timeline for municipalities to come into compliance. We thought this was a reasonable request. We didn't think that it was something that could not be fairly considered by the government.

The first proposed amendment would have allowed a municipality until 2029 to bring their property tax rates into compliance. It did this simply by including the date in the body of the proposed bill. This was a timeline suggested by the communities that would be the hardest hit. The response from the government was that they didn't want to establish timelines in the legislation because it was too restrictive and that it didn't allow for flexibility for different municipalities that have different ratios and established a horizon that might be too long.

The second amendment accommodated the comments and concerns of the minister and proposed a different timeline of 2027, or 10 years, by which to become compliant with the 5 to 1 ratio. Again the response from the government members was a concern that the 10 years was too onerous a horizon by which these municipalities had to become compliant.

As my hon. colleague from Calgary-Hays pointed out that day, a compromise of 11 years seemed to be a number that fit nicely between 10 and 12. However, instead, as most people know, the government insisted that they had things well in control, that assurances had been made to the nonconforming municipalities, and that the only thing required was that they have a little trust in them. Well, frankly, Madam Speaker, trust-me clauses in this government are not necessarily appropriate, in my opinion. I'm unwilling to trust them to do what they say, and I think most municipalities that we've talked to have the same feeling.

I'd like to give a little reminder on a couple of key words that I'd given during Committee of the Whole. There was the word "uncertainty." Uncertainty can lead to speculation, and speculation in municipalities and marketplaces and all that kind of thing, whether it's in the stock market or in the municipal world, especially to do with real estate and the value of people's properties,

can lead eventually to economic difficulty if it's not managed correctly.

Instead, however, if you have predictability, you can have prosperity, whether it's the community itself or the businesses that are involved in that community or the ancillary businesses that are providing employment like in the Fort McMurray area with the oil sands operations. The oil and gas business is vital to the Canadian economy. It's vital to the Alberta economy. We support the oil and gas industry heavily on our side of the House, and we would really have appreciated having that predictability and that prosperity as a result of having a proper timeline in place. It didn't look like that was going to happen. We're disappointed with that.

While there are many things in Bill 8 that are improvements – and I'm happy to see them in this bill – since the government has failed to address the critical issue of bringing certainty to the timeline for the phase-in of that 5 to 1 ratio, I'm sorry, but I will be voting against this bill during this reading.

Thank you.

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

Seeing none, I will recognize the hon. Member for Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills.

Mr. Hanson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Like my colleague from Livingstone-Macleod, I'm happy to stand up and speak today to Bill 8, An Act to Strengthen Municipal Government, at third reading. I agree with him as well that there are a lot of good proposals contained in Bill 8, including enabling municipalities to create parental leave for councillors, a great idea; clarifying that municipalities may collaborate with First Nations reserves and Métis settlements on regional service delivery – I think, again, that's, you know, a gimme – and establishing a framework for municipalities and school boards within their boundaries to create joint-use and planning agreements, also a good choice, where we try to take advantage of every tax dollar that we can to make sure that it's utilized to its full potential.

5:10

There's also a requirement that a municipality initiating an amalgamation or annexation must notify all local authorities operating or providing services within the affected municipalities; exempting school boards from paying off-site levies on the construction of public school building projects, which is also good; allowing municipalities the freedom to provide receipts for taxes paid at the request of the taxpayer; clarifying that property held by a provincial corporation is taxable – I hear that quite a bit, especially in my community of St. Paul, where there are a lot of provincial buildings – clarifying that assessors may not compel a property owner to provide records during an inspection or respond to a request for information relative to the current assessment year if the property owner has filed a complaint about their assessment.

Unfortunately, all these good proposals are overshadowed by the proposed changes that grant the minister complete and total discretion to set the deadline for compliance to meet the required nonresidential to residential property tax rate of 5 to 1. I would just like to point out that the reason I have an issue with that is that some of the municipalities, especially up in northeastern-northwestern Alberta, are already facing issues with nonpayment of linear tax by companies that have defaulted or have gone bankrupt or insolvent. You know, they already have to sort of tack on some of this stuff as carry-over onto residential taxes, so this is just going to make it a little bit harder for the municipalities, especially the smaller ones, to meet their goals.

Now, while I don't have an issue with the ratio myself, granting the minister absolute authority to set the timeline is completely unacceptable. In some cases the decision of the minister could cause residential property taxes to increase by double or more. I understand that the minister has committed to working closely with municipalities on a case-by-case basis when developing the phase-in timeline for each nonconforming municipality, but without clearly laying it out in the legislation, it remains completely at the discretion of the minister, and it makes a few of the municipalities a little nervous. If they could have some set dates, if you're dealing with them on an individual basis, the sooner that we could get those dates set up with them, the better. Through the chair, of course.

I represent a constituency that includes two municipalities whose nonresidential tax rate exceeds its lowest residential property tax rate by more than five times.

An Hon. Member: Two municipalities?

Mr. Hanson: Two of them, yeah. I believe one has a ratio around 7.3; the other one is a little closer, at 6.25.

Compared to other municipalities who exceed the ratio, 6.25 may not seem that bad, and that may be correct. However, the fact remains that there are provisions within Bill 8 that require all municipalities that exceed the ratio to become fully compliant, with no mention of a specific and clear timeline in which to do so. That's where the issue comes in. I believe that in the previous legislation, that was passed here by this government, there was kind of a set timeline of five or 10 years for people to come into compliance, and this bill doesn't allow for that. It just puts it solely at the discretion of the minister. Like I said, it makes some of the industries and municipalities, actually, nervous because they don't have any real dates that they can set their priorities and their schedules and their funding on.

Instead, it provides for those deadlines to be established through regulation. Unlike legislation, which is required to be debated and voted on by the Legislature, regulations are established behind closed doors at the cabinet table. It's important to note that none of these regulations currently exist. The government is asking us to trust them to set compliance timelines for municipalities. I consider myself a reasonable person, and even for me that's asking a lot. I'm not prepared to bet my constituents' hard-earned money on this government's promise that they won't simply impose a timeline on municipalities unilaterally.

I'll close by reaffirming that there are many positive proposals offered in Bill 8. I agree with many of them. Unfortunately, without addressing the need for certainty around the 5 to 1 ratio, I will be unable to support it at third reading.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Mr. S. Anderson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the comments and the concerns from the members opposite. I appreciate that they like 99.9 per cent of the second-biggest piece of legislation in Alberta. That's fantastic. What I'm curious about is the fact that they say that they can't support it because the 5 to 1 is under the minister's discretion.

Well, everything is under the minister's discretion when it really comes down to it. The fact of the matter is that I've been in discussions with industry. They say that there are concerns. Fair enough. I've been discussing with them. Municipalities: there are concerns, granted. I've been discussing with them, and I've committed to them since I've been onboard as the minister that we are going to wait for their feedback to understand what their timelines are. They

didn't want me to impose timelines on them when we suggested those things. Now things have changed, apparently. I'm supposed to believe the members opposite. They say that they don't want to trust me. Well, how can I trust that? The conversations that I've had personally with a lot of different people out there: I will go on that, thank you very much.

I do appreciate the comments and the concerns, you know, but to not want to support a bill like this, where you agree with so much of it, almost the whole thing, because I've said that I made a promise and a commitment to the municipalities and industry to work with them in collaboration to set timelines that they can agree with rather than dropping the hammer and using my ministerial power – I would rather not have to do that. I can if I want, but I would rather work with people because that's the way we get things done in a good way, moving forward, to make it sustainable. I will continue to work with these communities, going forward, because I think that when we work together – the whole point of the MGA is collaboration, making sure that what we're doing is better for residents. I don't think my dropping the hammer and just setting a hard timeline that might not work for certain communities is appropriate for a lot of the communities out there, so I don't want to do that unless I have to in the long run.

We've committed for this regulation itself, apart from the rest of the bill and the other regulations, that we'll take the time it needs to make sure we get it right with these communities, working in collaboration going forward. As I said, the MGA is meant for that. It's meant to make sure that we're here working for the residents and our constituents. You know, I'm not here about power or any of these types of things, about taking things back or any of that. It's all about working for the people, and I've committed to that, and I will continue to do that. I want my kids to know that the promises that I make they can count on. When I look a person in the eye and shake their hand and commit to something, then I will commit to that, and I will continue doing that. I'm not going to go back on my word. That's not how I was brought up.

I understand their concerns and what they're saying, but I don't appreciate trying to sit here and pretend that by throwing hard timelines down, I'm going to end all of the uncertainty out there. The uncertainty is coming from over there. I would appreciate it if we go on the facts, which they did for 99.9 per cent of this bill, but to spread things about the 5 to 1 ratio and start talking about this after I've had all these conversations, to try to bring things up that haven't been brought to me, you know, I don't appreciate. I'd appreciate it if maybe you bring them to me next time. I'm here to work in collaboration. I'm here for the people of this province. I'll say it every single time I'm in here. That's how I was brought up.

Going forward, you know, I understand they say: "Oh, you don't want to trust the government. You don't want to trust anybody that's saying things on the opposite side." One of the reasons why I got involved in politics was because I was sick of that. I didn't like it when people would get up and say things that weren't true or purposely mislead or misconstrue things. Then the public would shrug and say, "Well, that's politics." No, it's not. We're elected officials, and we should be accountable to our people and our constituents. That's a promise that I made, and it's a promise I'm going to keep.

Thank you. I appreciate the comments from the other side, but I will continue to work with the people out there that I promised to work with, and we'll make sure that we have positive outcomes in the end.

Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Lac La Biche-St. Paul-Two Hills, you have 15 seconds.

Mr. Hanson: Fifteen seconds? Oh. Well, I'll sit. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker: Any others wishing to respond in the few seconds we have left under 29(2)(a)?

All right. The time has expired on that. I'll recognize Calgary-Glenmore.

5:20

Ms Kazim: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It is my pleasure to rise in the House today in support of Bill 8, An Act to Strengthen Municipal Government. When I look at this act, the first word that comes to mind is collaboration. What a beautiful word, "collaboration." It's bringing people to the same table for discussions, getting their opinions, getting their views, including people, including Albertans. That's what the province is about. Albertans define Alberta.

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 a more resilient and diversified economy for Alberta families. There are so many people across 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. The process of engagement was involved, which means that it's collaboration, once again, getting people involved in how they would like to pursue things together, the sense of togetherness.

We made some of the changes in the form of 40 additional amendments to the Modernized Municipal Government Act last fall before it was passed unanimously in December 2016. This bill incorporates feedback received during engagements with municipal leaders, families, young people, school boards, indigenous communities, small businesses, and industry, which included new ideas for how the MGA can support sustainable and collaborative communities. Again I highlight the words "sustainable and collaborative communities."

This bill delivers ideas that were heard from Albertans. A key focus of the MGA's modernization is municipal collaboration because we believe that all Albertans benefit when municipalities are good neighbours, working together to provide services and strengthen the economy. It's a sense of developing synergy when people are all together on the same boat for a common objective, the betterment of the province and Albertans.

I would like to specifically highlight the indigenous communities aspect because I'm very grateful and honoured to be the representative of Calgary-Glenmore, which is adjacent to Tsuut'ina Nation. Working with that particular nation as my neighbour, it is my privilege that I have this opportunity to do so, to have more engagement and develop that sense of understanding with each other and strengthen our relationship with the First Nation.

Indigenous communities intersect with municipalities through regular interactions for a variety of reasons such as utility service delivery. Our government is committed to implementing the principles of the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. As such, it is 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 with respect to land-use planning and service delivery.

Municipalities will be required to notify neighbouring indigenous communities of any new municipal development plans or area structure plans. Madam Speaker, I can tell you that these changes are a first step to improving the relationship between indigenous communities and municipalities. As we look at the history, this is

what was missing when it came to strengthening our relationships with indigenous communities, engagement and collaboration.

Requiring municipalities to notify adjacent indigenous communities of any new municipal development plans or area structure plans mirrors current legislation regarding statutory plan preparation, where municipalities must notify adjacent municipalities of the plan preparation. The MGA review has included meetings with Treaty 6, Treaty 8, Siksika, Tsuut'ina, Stoney, Kainai, Metis Settlements General Council, and the Métis Nation of Alberta Association. We talk about and say with pride that we are on treaty lands depending on where we are in the province, but when we acknowledge that, we need to ensure that they have the voice at the table when the decisions are made.

This MGA is actually that bridge, that road that is leading towards strengthening those relationships, thus strengthening our communities. In preparation for this bill Municipal Affairs sent e-mails and letters to all First Nation bands and Métis so that they would know what amendments were coming forward. The MGA doesn't apply on indigenous lands but can be used to help bridge

the gap between indigenous communities and municipalities by creating an avenue for collaboration and conversation. Again, I repeat the words "collaboration" and "conversation." The MGA is bringing in a new era of collaboration for all Alberta communities. This approach should include First Nation and Métis communities. Bridging the gap is important to build a strong Alberta.

Therefore, I'm very proud to say that I'm supporting this bill with pride, and I'm amazed how collaborative it is and how it is conveying or encouraging the message of friendships and relationships through this modernized MGA.

Now I would like to move to adjourn the debate. Thank you.

[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

Mr. Mason: Good progress today, Madam Speaker. I would therefore move that we call it 6 o'clock and adjourn until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 5:27 p.m.]

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