



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Third Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday evening, May 29, 2017

Day 40

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

Legislative Assembly of Alberta
The 29th Legislature

Third Session

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

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Party standings:

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

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Legislative Assembly of Alberta

7:30 p.m.

Monday, May 29, 2017

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Please be seated.

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

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

Bill 16 An Act to Cap Regulated Electricity Rates

The Chair: Hon. members, are there any questions, comments, or amendments with respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

Mr. Panda: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise to speak to Bill 16, An Act to Cap Regulated Electricity Rates. I have not been impressed by this bill that tries to help the poor, only to end up taking the money out of their pockets through higher taxes. I'm also not impressed with the sign that this bill will send to our industry, that they should expect a significant increase in rates in the near future. The NDP has set us up on a path that will force rates to soar, hurt businesses, hurt our job creators, and truly upset Alberta's economy.

Madam Chair, we talked about the different policies of this government in the past, too. We gave them honest feedback on most of their policies in the past, and here we are again trying to make their unreasonable bills better in the interests of Albertans. We are here again at that work.

That's why I actually wanted to introduce an amendment to this bill. I'll read the amendment, and I have the requisite copies. I'll give them to the page here.

Madam Chair, my amendment reads as follows. I move that Bill 16, An Act to Cap Regulated Electricity Rates, be amended as follows. The following is added after section 2:

Economic impact assessment

2.1(1) One month after the date on which this Act receives Royal Assent, the Minister shall prepare a projection of the economic impact of the imposition of maximum rates established in section 2 on electricity consumers who are not regulated rate customers.

(2) The Minister shall lay a copy of the projection prepared under subsection (1) as soon as practicable before the Assembly if it is then sitting or, if it is not sitting, within 15 days after the commencement of the next sitting.

In part B section 8 is struck out, and the following is substituted:

Coming into force

8 Sections 2(2), 3 and 6(1)(c) and (d)(iii) come into force on the later of the following:

(a) January 1, 2018;

(b) 30 days after the date on which the Minister lays the projection prepared under section 2.1(2) before the Assembly.

Madam Chair, that's my amendment, which is very reasonable. Now every member has a copy of this. They have the opportunity to read this.

Madam Chair, we gave lots of feedback on NDP policies in the past, and we talked about the economic impacts of their policies. I don't know how many antibusiness policies have been promoted by

this government without looking at the big picture. Just look at the big picture: that's what you used to say when you sat on this side, but now you've lost sight. You've stopped looking at the big picture.

The corporate tax hike: you never thought it through; you never did the economic impact analysis. The minimum wage 50 per cent hike: you didn't think it through; you didn't do the economic impact analysis. We asked for it. If you have done that, you didn't share it with us. It takes the *Calgary Herald* or someone else to leak that after the session is over. That's what happened last time. [interjection] Yeah, we'll stay tuned to what else you leak after this session.

Now, the labour bill, which is just your ideology, with no analysis of how many jobs it will kill... [interjections] Yeah, you've already killed 100,000, so you should have the joy of the killjoy by now. [interjections]

The Chair: Hon. members.

Mr. Panda: You should be on the high. Minister of technical education, you should be on the high of that killjoy.

The Chair: Hon. member, we are on Bill 16, amendment A1.

Mr. Panda: I'm speaking to that, Madam Chair. If I'm engaged, I have to answer them.

The Chair: Through the chair, please.

Mr. Panda: Sure.

The Chair: Thank you.

Mr. Panda: As long as they direct to you, I'll direct through you.

Madam Chair, we talked about some of those risky ideological policies like a 100-megatonne cap. We asked when they introduced that and when they brought in Bill 25, Bill 27, Bill 30, at every stage of those bills, for a simple economic impact analysis, and we never got it. That's why I made one more attempt here to get the message across the aisle. If they consider the big picture and consider this reasonable amendment to this important bill, that will help all Albertans. It is clear that the Department of Energy believes that electricity rates are going up significantly over the next four years. You're only there for two years, but it's going to go up for four years.

Those rate increases are going to happen over the lifespan of this bill, Madam Chair, yet we have not seen the economic impact assessment for the job creators that will not qualify for the RRO, the regulated rate option. As all of the MLAs in this House should know, the regulated rate option is only offered to residential and small-business customers who consume less than 250,000 kilowatt hours per year, leaving our job creators to face market rates.

An Hon. Member: You believe in the market, don't you?

Mr. Panda: Yeah. If it is truly the market, we do believe in that, but you're trying to tinker with the free-market system here.

If I know the public servants – and I'm starting to now, Madam Chair; after two years in this job I'm getting to know the public servants – they would have figured this out and identified this problem and have likely done some kind of economic impact assessment on the business community to find out what doubling electricity rates, as this cap projects, will mean to those businesses. But in case the public servants have not done their homework for the minister, I'm giving them a month to produce a report. As per this amendment that is just 20 working days.

Madam Chair, 250,000 kilowatt hours per year is a lot of electricity. [interjections] This is not a laughing matter for the job creators. You know, it's not a laughing matter, Madam Premier. There are employers in Alberta who will use even more than 250,000 kilowatt hours per year. There are lots of them, and they will not be protected by this bill. No. Will those employers pack up and leave and go elsewhere because of rising electricity prices? Possibly. You were very successful in driving out those businesses so far.

So that's why this amendment. Please check out the amendment. It's very reasonable. Electricity costs are a key input for industry and often a determining factor in whether a company stays in a jurisdiction or not. I'll give you an example. The aluminum smelter in Kitimat, B.C., was set up there because of the cheap electricity available at that location. That's why they have a smelter for aluminum there and not in Alberta.

7:40

Ontario has seen a mass exodus of industry overseas and to the U.S.A. because of the outrageous power prices. Ontario gets the double whammy of Kathleen Wynne's green jobs, a coal phase-out, a natural gas phase-out but also aging facilities like Pickering and Darlington nuclear generation, that need to be replaced, refurbished, or phased out. We don't want to follow Ontario's route here.

When an Albertan loses their job, Madam Chair, it doesn't matter what the price of electricity is. They just aren't going to be able to pay their bills because they don't have a job. This cap is fundamentally wrong. If you use power, you pay for it. It's a simple principle. When you use power, you pay for it. It's that simple. No gimmicks that saddle the taxpayers with the burden and then rob the ratepayer through their income tax or other taxes. My colleague here from Innisfail-Sylvan Lake: he educated us so many times that there is only one ratepayer and one taxpayer. Somehow we miss that point every time.

That's why, Madam Chair, we have to look at this amendment. Don't get me wrong here. I like the renewables, but this is not the way to do it. The NDP need to turn back the clock on the reckless, expensive, and ideological transition to plan the renewables. That's why I have brought this amendment forward. Albertans deserve to know what the economic impact of this policy is. If the NDP truly isn't worried that electricity rates will double in the next four years, then you would table an economic impact study showing that that isn't the motivation for the bill.

I see some of the backbenchers over there nodding in agreement. They know I'm right. They know their government is wrong on this, but for some reason, whatever it is, they'll support team orange and green – we'll see some news across the neighbouring province tomorrow – their brothers and sisters in their misguided do-goodism, Madam Chair.

That's why I encourage everyone to look at this amendment and do what is right for Albertans. In this industry, which uses more than 250,000 kilowatt hours per year, they can't afford such high electricity prices. As a result, they close the shop and move to other jurisdictions. That's why I challenge the members to recognize the economic impact that this bill will have and to work to amend the bill to table an economic impact assessment.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: Calgary-Klein.

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the Member for Calgary-Foothills for the amendment. He's talking

about us missing the big picture. Well, it seems like he's watching the feature-length film with his eyes closed, but that's okay.

You know, to have the economic impact assessment for those who aren't RRO customers, it doesn't make any sense at this point because if they aren't, they're locked into a different contract anyhow. We won't know what that result is for four years down the road, anyway.

Also, we have to understand that with this bill there's no intention to put retailers out of business whatsoever. I mean, the rate cap is not designed to hurt competitive retailers in this space. Its intent is to protect Albertans from high electricity prices. There's no intent to phase out the electricity market either. You know, this actually provides opportunities for retailers to come up with innovative products that work for consumers and help keep the costs low as well.

In terms of customers that use over 250,000 kilowatts, I mean, again, with the big picture, the big film here that we're talking about, actually, the design of this program is to move into a greener, more stable electricity environment for these customers as well.

Mrs. Littlewood: That's going to be a blockbuster.

Mr. Coolahan: It's going to be a blockbuster, Madam Chair. A blockbuster.

Anyhow, with that said, I'm going to say thank you for the amendment, but I will not be supporting it at this time. Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose.

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you, Madam Chair. I as well will not be supporting this particular amendment because part of it is asking that we provide an impact study showing what the cap's impact will be on Albertans. I would like to see their impact study showing that the cap is indeed wrong. Since they do not have an impact study showing it's wrong, it's just pure speculation. Therefore, I will not be supporting it.

What we can be sure of is that it will protect Alberta families, it will protect farms, and it will protect businesses because they will know exactly what their rate will be, 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour, so they will have certainty and stability. That's the impact, that they will know for sure for the next four years, and that is the impact that they are looking for. That protection is exactly what this government is offering to families, small businesses, and farms.

Again, I will not be supporting that amendment. Thank you.

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

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Madam Chair, and good evening, everyone. As always, I'm happy to stand to speak to this bill and bills on energy. To speak to a couple of the comments from the government side here, I just wanted to make sure I understood this correctly, that the economic assessment is not necessary because we don't have an economic assessment to show that it wouldn't work. I just wanted to make sure that I was clear about that. I'm going to give lots of opportunity to actually speak about that in just a minute. Just to be clear, when we're talking about protecting people, that's one thing, but if you're killing the business and the job creators in this province, you are in no way protecting people. Just to be clear.

Let's talk about the RRO for a minute. I just wanted to throw out some numbers here. The current rate, just to be clear, is right now, I think, 3.5 to 3.8 cents per kilowatt hour. I just don't understand how that cap of 6.8 cents is in any way possibly protecting Albertans right now, especially when we're talking about small business. In fact, at 250,000 kilowatt hours we're actually

disincentivizing business. We're actually disincentivizing. As far as I can tell, the current rate of the RRO is actually beneficial to consumers right now. Any Albertan could have ended their long-term contracts and levelled out their price of electricity from any of the many, many independent companies that we have here, just to be clear. I just wanted to make sure. I mean, if we're looking at independent retailers or Enmax, you can sit down and sign a contract that would eliminate price volatility. We have several different versions to actually eliminate volatility. It's actually choice, which is huge for Albertans. Just in case you haven't had a chance to talk to people in your constituencies, that's a big deal for people.

I also wanted to say that an RRO is actually a temporary window design. It's smoke and mirrors to stop them from showing what the market is actually going to be doing. Let me tell you that in four years, when that cap is gone, whammo. There you go. The truth will be clear as day, and all of a sudden what we're going to be seeing is a doubling of that cost. So I'm not quite sure how it is that you intend to protect people with this, especially if you're killing job creators.

If the Department of Energy believes that a significant increase in electricity is going to happen within the next four years, which, it's my understanding, is the reason for this cap, if I understand correctly, it is because the government saw that there would be a large increase over the next four years, during the duration of this bill. That is why we need an economic assessment, because that is actually for the job creators that don't qualify. So is the next step, then, to cap industry? Yikes. I really hope that that's not next on the list because that's certainly not what we're asking for.

In fact, not having a cap is allowing the market to send signals to investors, and those signals actually tell those investors when it's a good time to invest and when it's not. It's actually imperative to the market, and it's actually part of the advantage that we had here in this province. Understand that those market changes are warning signs. When you are looking at the disincentive, those are warning signs to an industry. You are removing signals that help point industry towards investment.

7:50

To talk about the amendment for a moment, the reason why we're asking for one month on the day – we're asking for a projection. That's actually a very reasonable request because the government would not have come up with a random number on a cap if they hadn't already projected what that outcome was going to be for the people of Alberta, Madam Chair. It's actually a very reasonable request. In fact, I would have assumed that in order to come up with the idea of a cap or any aspect that is going to change the industry, that is ultimately going to change the way job creators can come in, that is going to limit them to a 250,000 kilowatt hours capacity, you would have already as a government had the capacity explained to anybody who is going to be involved, anybody who is going to be impacted, about what that imposition is going to mean.

I don't really think we're asking for anything that's unusual. Any business plan would require some understanding of the projection of an economic impact analysis. What I find really interesting is that this isn't the first, second, third, fourth, or fifth time that we have asked for an economic impact analysis. In fact, I would have to say that with any bills that regularly impact money, business, any aspect that impacts Albertans in their pocketbook, we have asked. I have to point to the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner. He has consistently asked over and over again for an economic impact analysis pretty much on every bill. The reason for that is because we owe it to Albertans. We're using their money. It's not your money. It is not the government's money. You are not bankrolling

this. This is Albertans' hard-earned cash. They need to understand from you, the government, what it is that you're doing with their dollars.

You keep saying that you're going to use the carbon tax, this very overpromised carbon tax, to somehow compensate for the decisions that you're making. I'm a small-business owner. I own three businesses, in fact. And I'm not alone. There are a lot of people on this side. I can honestly tell you as a person who's in business that if I put forward a business plan like this and went to the bank, went to ask for money, they would laugh at me. You have to have some sort of understanding of the imposition of the change that you're making on the businesses that are the fabric of this province. Small business, agriculture, and oil and gas are the fabric of this province. They're what built this province. Please don't forget that when you're making these decisions. Every decision, every policy that has led to this moment right here is an absolutely horrible domino effect of impact to an industry that provides for the entire country.

Let's talk about Ontario for just a moment. We're looking at potentially a mass exodus of businesses from here. [interjection] And from there, too, actually. You're correct, yeah, from there and from here.

I just wanted to bring up something that was posted about the Liberals, and I'll table this, Madam Chair. This is from an article by Allison Jones of the Canadian Press on financial accountability. In here it says:

The Liberals have said after the initial cut to bills this year, rate increases will be held to inflation for the next four years . . .

Sounds very similar to what's going on here.

. . . and in 10 years ratepayers will have to start paying back debt that will be accumulated in order to finance lower rates for the next decade.

Do you know what that means, Madam Chair? That means that from 2017 to 2027 electricity costs will be lower than they would have otherwise been, saving . . .

Initially it sounds good.

. . . \$33 billion, but after that, electricity costs will be higher than under the status quo, with ratepayers spending \$9 billion more through to 2045.

So you spend \$45 billion to save the ratepayer, taxpayer, consumer – they're all the same person – \$24 billion. I don't understand it. We are on the same path here. Within four years to pay back all of the decisions that are going to be made: \$10 million a month is what's going to happen. If we look at that, I mean, this is a possibility with this legislation because the problem is that at 6.8 cents somebody has to pay the difference. Somebody has to pay that difference. Who's going to do that? That's all going to come from the carbon tax? I don't think so. It will not come from the carbon tax.

Then the cost of paying back that debt with interest – this is in Ontario again – which the government has said will be up to \$28 billion, will go back onto ratepayers' bills for the next 20 years as a clean-energy adjustment. I'm just curious if that's going to be one of the bills up in the next session here. Just keep that in mind, guys, a clean-energy adjustment. That's what we might be looking at here in the future.

The rates are going to double, and I just can't understand how that's competitive. Let's use the greatest claim to fame of this government as an example. I mean, we've got the credit downgrade – right? – from a double-A to an A-plus rating. That is because this government actively attacks its citizens and its industry and its job creators, and they do not table economic plans. The downgrade happened because there was no economic plan tabled. That's why we were downgraded. The government isn't going to raise taxes except for the ones that it decided to raise: personal taxes, business

taxes, beer taxes, carbon taxes. It's a lot of taxes for a government that said that they weren't going to raise taxes, isn't it? Then the overpromised slush fund is going to supposedly and magically pay for all of this increase, right? The government needs to go back in time and undo policies that have led us here. There are some simple, simple facts here. Right now, Madam Chair, the government is in serious damage control. The rates are going to double, and then we'll all have to pay that rate.

The RRO doesn't even apply to the industry. Does this government not understand that oversupply in the energy industry actually benefits industry? Yes, we are intense users of energy because we produce energy that is used by every single Canadian, used all over the world, in fact.

We are in direct competition with our neighbours, and our industry is being welcomed with open arms in Houston. I talked to five men, actually, just a few days ago, all of whom have transferred their industry to Houston. All of them. They're actually travelling every other week. They're 10 days out, two days back, 10 days out. It's absolutely amazing the amount of work that they're actually getting in the United States. It's not just them. These are oil and gas guys. I'm not talking about the geophysicists, the geotechnicians, any of the geologists, all of these people that are underutilized right now, some of the best minds in the industry. We are chasing them away.

Our grid is used by the industry. I don't know if you have any idea, Madam Chair, how unique it is that we're actually able to supply all of the energy necessary in order to do such energy-intensive work in this province. It's very unusual. That creates jobs. In fact, the industry learns to be – I think this is in response, actually, to the member across the way talking about learning about efficiencies. That's actually how it happens, right? The industry learns to be more efficient because they want to help the environment. They want to do better. They care about the earth, air, and water, all of them do, so they want to be more efficient. It's actually good for business because if they save money with their energy – in fact, so many of them are able to create their own energy onsite. It's absolutely incredible the number of changes that have happened in the industry in order for them to be able to support themselves, to be able to move forward, to find ways to cut down on all sorts of NOx and SOx going into the air. Incredible. In fact, if the government actually supported industry, the possibilities of actually increasing the ability to reduce harmful toxins going into our air would be massively increased.

Jobs in Alberta are power intensive. Just to talk about out east again, 7 million light vehicles and over 70,000 medium trucks can be used in Ontario, 33 million vehicles in all of Canada. I would sure like it to be that we are the ones who are supplying energy to these folks. We do it better than anywhere else in the world. On one hand, the government says that they love pipelines and that they're supporting the industry, yet everywhere else we see caps, we see restrictions, and we see stops in everything that's important to the energy industry. Consistently we're seeing these job creators, especially the small-industry people that have actually created a lot of the big changes in terms of efficiencies – because they're smaller, they have to save money. We're attacking these people. We're attacking these industries. Thirty-three million vehicles, cars and trucks, on the roads in all of Canada: I'm sure that all of us would like to be the ones that get to participate in providing them energy, and we are energy intensive.

If you want to talk about how that's working, we can talk about carbon leakage again. We talked about this a great deal in Bill 25 and the cap on the oil sands. If we're talking about carbon leakage, the biggest piece of that is that every single time we put a cap on

industry here, Madam Chair, somebody else is going to do it. It's not going to stop.

8:00

Wouldn't you rather have the rules and regulations here in our province, the way that we do things, and do more here and have control over how we produce in this province? We are the best. We are the greenest. We are the cleanest. We are third in Canada – actually, third in the world for renewables in terms of renewables online for the size of country that we have. We have so much to be proud of. Yet this government keeps capping and putting behind smoke and mirrors that somehow that's going to help out the people of this province. There's a huge differential in there that is going to be paid. It doesn't make any sense.

I wanted to also bring this up, that the second piece of the impact study says that "the Minister shall lay a copy of the projection prepared under subsection (1) as soon as practicable before the Assembly if it is then sitting or, if it is not sitting, within 15 days." I don't understand why there's a problem in laying out a plan of what this is going to look like. If you are correct about this, if you truly feel that this cap on industry is the way to go for the RRO, wouldn't you like to be able to show how your numbers are working? Show us the metrics, that this is actually going to work.

It's not possible because right now people are paying less for energy. You're going to be actually charging more. Right now there is a competitive market. Right now we are competitive with everywhere else, and it's a jurisdiction that people would like to invest in. But you removed the markers, you removed the signals, and you removed accountability from the electricity. That happened in Bill 34, where you removed accountability from electricity by removing the ability for anybody to see how renewables were being brought online. It is a blank cheque to the industry, without any accountability to Albertans about how renewables will be brought online.

Guess what? That's going to be hidden in that 6.8 cents. That's where it's hidden. Honestly, if you were able to make it viable and economical, you don't think people would choose these things? Let them choose. Give them the opportunity. Let's make it economically viable. Let's let these companies come in and have the market decide. Let's get a competition going for solar panels and competition for wind and competition for all of the construction industry that would be involved in building the massive concrete windmills that are located in southern Alberta. Let's get that going. I mean, I thought they were already doing that. Am I wrong? It seems to me there were an awful lot of windmills before the NDP was in government, right?

I certainly did not need government to tell me to put solar panels on my house. I love my solar panels, but I'll also tell you that in 25 years I'm going to have 40 solar panels, that are as wide and as tall as the length of me, that I'm going to have to replace or recycle or put somewhere. I don't know where those are going to go, not to mention that it's like a hundred thousand dollars of infrastructure that had to be built in order to support those. There are a lot of things that are involved here that would require and, I think, demand the ability to make sure that there's accountability from the government for what this cap is actually trying to accomplish.

I mean, I've got so many notes here that I don't even know where to go. Like, let's look at how we got to this point. The reason we're asking for accountability is because the puzzle pieces that are lining up to show what this government is trying to do with respect to our energy industry are scary. I mean, we began with the order in council just after you came to power, and then without any guidance from experts and no consultation with industry we all of a sudden have the carbon tax under the specified emitters. It went from \$15

and then rose to \$20 and then \$30, and the percentage of emissions applied rose from 12 per cent of emissions to 15 per cent of emissions and now to 20 per cent. Basically, you're taxing our generators 70 per cent in one year. I'm sorry. How is that good for Albertans? How is that making life better for Albertans? I really don't understand that. I would love for somebody to explain that to me.

In hindsight, that initial increase under the SGERs, that was going to bring revenue for this government, was only a couple of hundred million dollars. Like, it doesn't make any sense. And now the PPA debacle is going to cost Albertans 4 billion plus dollars. Four billion plus dollars. How is it that the government is going to justify that? Oh, right. The green slush fund. I forgot. That's that oversell on the slush fund, that's actually going to pay for all of the difficulties that one single act created. Four billion dollars. So your return-on-investment calculation doesn't really add up.

Then if we look at the power purchase agreements, again, it triggered a mass cancellation – a mass cancellation – of purchase arrangements and flooded the Balancing Pool. Honestly, that was the one thing that kept everybody accountable. You buy in at the lowest value. That is the best thing for Albertans. You purchase at the lowest purchase price possible. That is why we have such good prices for electricity right now, because it's a competitive market, and the competition starts every single day, and you buy in. On top of that, we have a baseline of power that keeps our lights on at all times and, on top of that, makes us able to run industries that are energy intensive off our own grid. That is spectacular. It's spectacular that we can do that. I wish the government could see how spectacular that is.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other speakers to amendment A1? Grande Prairie-Smoky.

Mr. Loewen: Thank you, Madam Chair. We're here tonight talking about an economic impact assessment. We're sitting here, and presently the rate is about 3.8 cents a kilowatt hour. The government is proposing to put a cap at 6.8 cents a kilowatt hour, which is almost double. Now, I would presume it only makes sense that if you want to put a cap that's almost double the existing rate, you must be expecting the rate to go up more than double or else you wouldn't be interested in putting a cap on that. The suggestion of an economic impact assessment, I would suggest, only makes sense.

Now, we did hear from the Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose, who suggested that because we would like an economic impact assessment, we should do it in order to prove that we need an economic impact assessment. I think that's how I understood that. The silliness continues. It's bizarre.

But I would have to suggest, Madam Chair, that the government came up with a number, 6.8 cents. Now, where did that number come from? That's not a random number, I would guess. I mean, I guess there are two choices. Either it's a random number that somebody just picked out of the air – that's scary – or maybe, what's scarier, they actually worked this all out somehow and won't provide that information to Albertans. I don't know which is worse, actually. They're probably equally scary, to think that either the number was picked out of the air or that they'd done some work and some calculations to figure it out and won't show it to anybody. Honestly, I don't know which is worse. There has to be some sort of way to get these numbers, I'm guessing. I don't know. Maybe they've got a little wheel with numbers, and they spin it around, and whatever it ends up at, that's what it's going to be. I don't know.

Madam Chair, we're sitting here at a time when this government has just had its fifth credit downgrade, something that this side of the House warned them about every single time. Every single budget we warned them, they laughed it off, and now they're laughing off an economic impact assessment, an assessment that would show Albertans what the effects of this could be. I don't understand. I think Albertans deserve to understand the economic impact of this policy. If they're not worried about electricity rates doubling in the next four years, then why not do the economic impact study? Why not?

8:10

When you put a cap at almost double the present rate, then obviously there's some sort of expectation it's going to get there and beyond, because a cap is no good unless it goes beyond. That's the only time the cap will actually be implemented, if the price goes beyond that cap. That's the only time it'll actually make a difference.

Now, why would the electricity go up that high? I would suggest that it would probably have to do with all the other bills that this government has passed dealing with electricity. Again, we warned them about the effects they were going to cause. This government needs to turn back the clock. They need to stop this ideological transition to renewables, this thought process that they can manipulate the market, that they can influence the market with taxpayer money and not get bad results.

Again, we seem to be in this House all the time debating bills that are damage control for the previous bills that they've passed. Over and over again we're in here doing this, and had they listened the first time, with the carbon tax, for instance, then we wouldn't be in this situation. Their early phase-out of coal and the billions of dollars that cost, the PPA issues and the billions that cost: that's all taxpayer money.

Now, when Albertans lose their jobs due to bad government policy, it doesn't matter what their electricity rates are; they can't pay their bills. All these different things that this government is doing to drive investment out of this province cost jobs, and that hurts Albertans. If we look at Ontario, it's already seen industry leave because of its bad policies, policies that this government just seems to want to follow. I guess this government just can't see past this narrow, ideological trail that they're on. They can't seem to see beyond that in any way to see what could happen when they do this. Every time we show you: what could go wrong with a carbon tax? Lots of things could go wrong. They are going wrong.

The worst part is that the larger industrial consumers are not going to be protected by this, and we don't need this. That's the problem. We don't need this cap if this government would quit messing with every other part of the system. That's the problem. They're trying to protect themselves. What they're trying to do here is that they're trying to hide the true cost of electricity because if the cap is reached and the cap is implemented, then we know that the cost of electricity is actually, realistically, beyond that. We know that either the companies are going to have to declare bankruptcy because they can't make money or the government is going to have to shovel taxpayer money to them. Those are the only two ways it can work. This solves nothing. In fact, what it is is a way to hide their bad policies.

Now, when industry is trying to decide where they want to set up or if they want to expand their existing business, electricity is a factor. It's a big factor for some industries. They look at Alberta and say: "Okay; look at this. They've messed around with the electricity market here. They've messed it around there. Now they're putting a cap at double the price." What is that company going to think? They're going to think: "Wow. Obviously, the price

of electricity is going to double. Can we afford to do business in an area like that, in a jurisdiction like that? Probably not.” They’ll go somewhere else. That’s the problem, Madam Chair. As this government goes through and passes these bills one by one by one, they have a cumulative effect on industry, on business, on the job creators. They have to decide: am I going to set up business here or not?

Some are forced to because the only place they can do business is in Alberta because that’s where their leases are or whatever. But other companies have a choice. They can take their capital. They can go anywhere and invest it, but they want a decent return on it. By looking at this government’s policies and the bills that they’ve passed and the instability that they’ve created in the environment, they’re going to have to make a decision: do we set up business here or not? And they’re not, Madam Chair. We’re losing billions of dollars of investment because of this government’s policies. That’s the truth. Again, this is a warning sign to our industry that prices in Alberta will accelerate rapidly, and that will push them to decide on other jurisdictions to do business in.

Madam Chair, it only makes sense to do an economic impact assessment. I don’t know how many amendments we’ve brought forward to this Legislature asking for an economic impact assessment, and this government has done none. None. Not one have they passed. Not one have they passed. So it’s either one of two things. They’re either scared of the results, or they already know the results and don’t want to make them public. An economic impact assessment: any \$40 billion to \$50 billion a year business would do an economic impact assessment. This province spends \$40 billion to \$50 billion a year, and they don’t want to do an economic impact assessment on something that could affect virtually every Albertan economically? It doesn’t make sense. It just doesn’t make sense.

We’ve seen what’s happened in Ontario. They’ve gone down this road before. What did it get them? Billions and billions of dollars in boondoggles. Who’s paying for those? Well, the people of Ontario are paying for their boondoggles. Who’s going to be paying for ours here? Albertans, whether it’s with higher electricity rates or higher taxes, debt, interest payments. Now, we heard earlier about Ontario spending \$45 billion to save the ratepayers \$24 billion on their electricity bills. That’s the kind of road we’re on here, Madam Chair, spending billions and billions of dollars with nothing to show for it. Nothing.

Again, I just don’t understand what the problem would be with having an economic impact assessment. If this is so great, then it will stand up to an economic impact assessment. Why wouldn’t it? The time frames on this amendment are plenty generous enough to make sure it can be done. Where’s the fear? Why would somebody be scared of doing an economic impact assessment on something like this if it’s so good? It should stand up to the scrutiny of an economic impact assessment. That should be straightforward.

8:20

Now, it seems like this government, when it comes to what fits into their ideology, the NDP world view, bulls ahead, with no economic impact assessments, no looking at any other options. They just bull straight ahead. If it doesn’t fit into it: “Well, we’ll send it to committee. We’ll take a look at it here. We’ll look at this. We’ll look at that. We’ll shuffle it around, kick it around a little bit, watch it die on the Order Paper, like property rights.” Madam Chair, if there’s nothing to be scared of here, do the economic impact assessment. Prove to Albertans that this is a great idea. It’s really simple.

It’s clear that they believe there’s going to be a significant rise in electricity rates. That’s clear. Why would they do it if they didn’t

think it was possible? It would be senseless to even bring it forward. Obviously, they believe that electricity rates are going to double. They believe they are. Why won’t they do an economic impact assessment? Or maybe just show us what you’ve already done. There must be something that produced the 6.8 cents. There are probably some notes around somewhere on that. Why not show it to Albertans? What’s there to hide? If this is going to work out great for Albertans, show us. If not, do an economic impact assessment. Prove it that way. It’s very simple.

Madam Chair, I’ll leave it at that. I’m going to support this amendment. It makes sense. It’s what Albertans expect when we’re dealing with their money. That’s what they expect, and they deserve that. It’s all about accountability. Those are the people that we’re responsible to when we sit here in this Legislature, the people of Alberta. That’s who we’re here representing. Those are the people that will be affected by this, the people of Alberta, so they deserve to have this opportunity to see what this is going to do.

It’s not too much to ask. It’s common sense. Any business that was going to do something like this would have done some sort of assessment. Whether the government did or not, we don’t know. I would like to think that they did, but I would hate to think that they’re hiding it from Albertans.

Mrs. Pitt: It sounds like they are.

Mr. Loewen: It sounds like they are, but I don’t know.

Madam Chair, I’m going to support this amendment. We need to have economic impact assessments on things like this that are going to affect every single Albertan.

Thank you.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein on amendment A1.

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just briefly, because, goodness knows, somebody should be, on just how we got to the 6.8 cents. I’m pretty sure it was in the briefing notes for the bill. I think I’m reading the same ones. Anyhow, the 6.8 cents per kilowatt hour price cap was taken as an average equal to the five-year, fixed-price competitive retail contracts when the price was announced to be capped in November 2016. We also understand that a lot of consumers felt the pinch when the price went above 6.8 cents.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Chair: The hon. Member for Bonnyville-Cold Lake.

Mr. Cyr: Thank you, Madam Chair. Well, another day, another request from the opposition asking to see how exactly it is that we are going to see an impact on our economy with a decision based on ideology from the NDP. At this point here I’ve got a colleague from Calgary-Foothills who has brought forward a sensible amendment that says: “Well, you know what? Before we go down this path too far and before we shut down the businesses that this bill is going to be impacting, maybe we should consider doing an impact study.”

What we’re hearing is that there is a mass exodus out of Ontario right now based on the fact that their energy prices have gotten out of control for them. I know that we’re sitting here again talking about out of control, so I’d like to talk about some of the specifics, about how we were sold a bill of goods by this government that, I would argue, is taking us down a very misleading road. What I’ve got here is an article by the Pembina Institute. This is a group that is normally very government friendly, NDP friendly. Very NDP friendly. If I brought something up from, say, the Fraser Institute,

we would hear groans from the other side. But this one here is actually from the Pembina Institute.

I'm going to, for *Hansard's* sake, make sure that I read this into the record so that they are able to find this article for me. It's <https://www.pembina.org/reports/faq1-clp-effect-on-electricity-costs.pdf>. It is a long one, and I apologize for that. For those who are looking for the article by Google, the name of the article is The Impact of Alberta's Climate Leadership Plan on Electricity Costs. This is dated June 15, 2016, and it was done by Benjamin Thibault. He has an article that says that, clearly, this is the way to go. I'm going to walk through this because this was before we actually saw this bill being brought into place.

What we've got here is a question that it starts off with:

Will electricity bills triple as a result of the Climate Leadership Plan?

The answer to this was:

There is no analysis that backs up any such assertion. These claims have been made without any analytical support. The tripling assertion has been cited widely, including by several media outlets, with absolutely no reference to a particular study or other analysis.

Well, you know what? That is exactly what we've been asking for. We've been asking this NDP government for an analysis to bring forward what the impacts of this climate change bill are going to be. When we look at this amendment, that is asking for another impact study to make sure that we're not shutting down our largest businesses, well, again, it looks like the government isn't going to move in this direction. The government has already been saying: "You know what? This isn't going to impact anything."

Here is where we go:

Will the carbon levy increase electricity rates by 2-3 ¢/kWh?

The answer here is:

No. Erroneous claims like this have been made that much more expensive electricity will result from the carbon levy.

An Hon. Member: Tax.

Mr. Cyr: My colleague is correcting me with "tax." Unfortunately, I do need to read the article's quote here.

But they are based on misunderstandings of how the price of electricity is set and how the carbon levy is applied to power generators. In fact, the carbon levy could eventually lower electricity [prices].

What we're hearing from this report by Pembina is that not only is this going to not increase our electricity rates but potentially decrease – decrease – the energy rates.

8:30

Now, why is this important? Well, according to this article it shows that we are putting forward a cap that we shouldn't need. We're putting a cap on electricity that Albertans shouldn't need. Now, if you look at the graph that I referred to in my last speech, we actually hadn't seen a spike above 6.8 cents for the last two years. So we're already seeing that with this projection that he's got, he's saying that we should see stability because of this climate action plan. What we're looking at here is a government that says: we don't have faith in the plan that we're bringing forward; we're going to see an extensive increase in the price of electricity.

This article goes on, and it says, "How the market works to set the wholesale price." This is important. This is exactly what the Wildrose has been maintaining, that the market that we had was working, and it was working just fine. But what happens here is that when you change something like, say, adding a carbon tax and suddenly all of your generators are handing their PPAs in, then suddenly what ends up happening is that you create a market

imbalance that you need to correct, and then you need to recorrect and then recorrect again and then recorrect again.

Had we done an impact study or a review of the initial decision to put a carbon tax on Albertans, we would have known that the PPAs would have been at risk. But now, because we're too far down that road, we're suing companies in Alberta. We're suing the very companies that have provided us with power for the last – what? – 18 years under this system. They can correct me if I'm wrong on that number of years.

Now to go back to this.

The wholesale [electricity] price is set by only one generation bid in any hour. The energy price that consumers pay depends on the type of retail contract or regulated rate they have chosen – but one way or another, these are ultimately determined as something of an average of the hourly prices or expected future prices, with retail markup.

Supply and demand sets the wholesale energy price.

This is the important part here, supply and demand.

Now, this climate action plan that the government is bringing forward is going to be taking off our coal plants, which make up more than 50 per cent of our energy being provided to Alberta right now. Again, we've got imbalance happening. So what happens is that we are needing to replace this energy very quickly, and the question is: how are we going to be able to bring this energy online by the time we take off this coal?

Now, we hear the government saying that they've got everything under control, but if that was the case, we wouldn't need a 6.8-cent cap put on this. That is the very important point here, the fact that if we were going towards your plan and we were taking this report that was written clearly to justify the government's move to bring in the carbon tax – how is it that it's clear that now we've lost faith in the direction that we're going and we're putting caps on? And then not only are we putting caps on; we're changing directions and putting it on the taxpayer. As my colleague the shadow minister for renewable energy continues to point out, the ratepayer is the same person as the taxpayer. This is important because what happens is that you might not be paying this in the utility bill for your home, but you are paying it in additional taxes the NDP bring forward.

Now, when we're looking at this, we're seeing that we have a government that is expecting big spikes in the cost of power. If they weren't expecting a big spike in this cost, they would never have excluded our biggest businesses. They are anticipating that the decisions that they've made are going to lead to spikes. This is tragic when you look at the fact that this was supposed to make all our lives better by actually bringing on this carbon tax. I still can't get from point A to point Z on that one, where taking money out of the economy and putting it into a green slush fund will eventually somehow make jobs, because, in the end, we're attacking our biggest businesses.

When we start looking at this, we need to be asking ourselves: what is the impact to our big businesses? My colleague from Calgary-Foothills has done a very good job of explaining that this needs to happen. We can wait until it's too late, but then what ends up happening is that we end up with businesses going out of Alberta, and by that time it's too late. I would argue that Ontario is already starting to see a lot of their big businesses saying: we just can't afford to be here anymore. Had they done an impact study, they would have been able to forecast the fact that this is a result of raising the cost and creating those spikes. This is, in the end, a decision and a policy direction that this government has made to go to renewables.

Now, let's talk about renewables here because it's important. When the sun doesn't shine, we don't get power. When the wind doesn't blow, we don't get power. What's important here is that we are going

to have a lot of spikes. We're hearing that a lot of countries that went with a very large percentage of their energy production in renewable energy are now moving back to coal. How is it that we are moving away from coal? How is it that we're looking at moving away from the one thing that brings constant power?

For those that are wondering, I will say that when we look at the fact that we're seeing a cap here, we are already under the understanding that what we're looking for is more instability within the markets. You know what that leads to? The fact is that what we're going to see is a move towards more blackouts or brownouts, if you will, and this is distressing because what we need is consistent power. We need cheap power. We also need environmentally responsible power, which, I would argue, our clean coal can do. Our clean coal is cheap, it makes everybody's life better, and it brings business to Alberta. What it does is make sure that we have the jobs.

Going back to this economic impact study, I am going to say that if we did the study, we would probably see that coal is a necessity to be able to maintain the businesses that we've got in our area in Alberta. When we start looking at the fact that we're phasing out of this so quickly, without any justification of exactly how we got here – we have repeatedly asked for impact studies when it comes to our climate action plan. How is it that we haven't seen one yet?

This government has had two years – two years – to be able to bring forward an impact study that we can follow, but I don't believe that they want to release one. We do know that one was leaked. We ended up with it. It didn't have the answers they wanted, so they said: we changed our minds on how to do it; that one there is irrelevant. Well, now we're looking at it, and we're still seeing that the government is trying to fix the problems it's created.

Now, next I want to go to the Speech from the Throne. This is interesting. What we've got, I believe, is a government that really, genuinely wants to make jobs. I don't believe you're out to destroy jobs. I truly don't believe that. I think that the radical decisions you're making are doing that.

8:40

I believe that the Bill 1 that the minister of economic development put out was a clear indication – when I stood up in the House and told him, “This isn't going to work,” he should have listened. He could have listened. He had the opportunity to listen. You know what? Even though it had his job description there, in the end, consultations were important here, and if he had requested an impact study, it would have been a better solution. But, no. Again, what we end up with is a government that just chooses to say: we're going in that direction, and – guess what? – we'll fix it as we go along. Well, that's a very poor way of going.

Let's go to the throne speech. This is where I was saying that we were going to go. Creating and Supporting Jobs: this is the heading. It's on page 5.

Mr. Panda: How many jobs will be created in Bonnyville-Cold Lake?

Mr. Cyr: Well, thank you. I'll get to that.

What we've got here is that “Alberta's energy industry creates good jobs, and good jobs are the bedrock of a strong province.” I believe that everybody in this room would agree with that. I truly believe that. I think that some of the decisions you make end up setting us back, but in the end I believe that all of our goals are moving in that direction.

Since the beginning of its mandate, your government has zeroed in on the task of supporting Alberta's energy industry. Now, I think that this is a little misleading because when we end up with a

government where we couldn't get them to answer whether or not they believed in pipelines – they would not answer the question. It was only after they were pressured into it that we actually saw them starting to answer these questions, and now they're bragging about not one but two pipelines. [interjections] Yes, two pipelines. Two pipelines that our opposition has been pressing for from the very beginning. That was our mandate. I will tell you that when it came to Wildrose, we were looking at, for sure, the economy, jobs, and – guess what? – pipelines. We've been consistent with our messaging: consistent, consistent, consistent. What we've heard from this government has been that profits are not good for Alberta. And that is always distressing.

To wrap up – I will get to some more of this later, and I know that depresses everybody – what we're looking at here is an impact study that we are hoping to move forward with. We are asking for a reasonable expectation. What impact is it to jobs? You've got it in your throne speech, so please do an impact study. Vote for this amendment.

Thank you.

The Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to amendment A1? Seeing none, are you ready for the question?

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A1 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 8:43 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Jabbour in the chair]

For the motion:

Aheer	Loewen	Smith
Cyr	Panda	Strankman
Fildebrandt	Pitt	Yao
Gill	Schneider	

9:00

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hoffman	Nielsen
Bilous	Horne	Notley
Carlier	Jansen	Piquette
Carson	Kleinsteuber	Rosendahl
Ceci	Larivee	Sabir
Connolly	Littlewood	Schmidt
Coolahan	Loyola	Schreiner
Dach	Luff	Shepherd
Dang	Malkinson	Sucha
Eggen	Mason	Turner
Feehan	McPherson	Westhead
Fitzpatrick	Miranda	Woollard
Hinkley		

Totals: For – 11 Against – 37

[Motion on amendment A1 lost]

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

The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

Mr. Westhead: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that the committee rise and report progress.

[Motion carried]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

Mr. Rosendahl: Madam Speaker, the Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill: Bill 16. I wish to table copies of all amendments considered by the Committee of the Whole on this date for the official records of the Assembly.

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

Hon. Members: Aye.

The Deputy Speaker: Opposed? So ordered.

Government Bills and Orders Second Reading

Bill 17

Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act

Mr. Hanson moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 17, Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act, be amended by deleting all of the words after “that” and substituting the following:

Bill 17, Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act, be not now read a second time but that the subject matter of the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Families and Communities in accordance with Standing Order 74.2.

[Debate adjourned on the amendment May 25]

Mr. Fildebrandt: This bill is an attack on the rights of workers, and that is why it must be sent to a committee. This bill is an attack on the rights of workers. In this piece of legislation the NDP are selling out workers to union bosses who are more focused on maintaining and increasing their own wealth and their own power than the interests of the workers that they claim to represent. This bill strips Alberta workers of the right to a secret ballot.

Canadian voters have had the right to a secret ballot since 1880. We have a secret ballot in our general elections because before this, without it, politicians and governments would regularly bribe, cajole, threaten, or even punish people who didn't toe the party line. The secret ballot is considered an uncompromisable pillar of democracy, something so basic that even most banana republics, pseudodemocracies, have at least the pretense of it. Taking away a worker's right to a secret ballot is taking away their democratic rights. Taking away the secret ballot is taking away a worker's right to a free and fair election without fear of bullying, intimidation, trickery, or manipulation.

Alberta has the lowest rate of unionization in the country while having the lowest threshold yet to trigger a union ratification vote. Alberta has a 40 per cent threshold for card check to start the unionization process. Yet even with this threshold, which is in some instances 25 per cent less than in other provinces for card check, unions are still not as common here. The reason for this: the secret ballot. An attack on the secret ballot is an attack on the rights of workers.

But, in a way, I want to thank the NDP for putting this topic on the agenda, for making Alberta workers think about the proper role of legislated union power in a free society. Workers have a right to act and organize collectively. They have a right to come together and bargain for their working conditions, for their benefits, and for their compensation. But every worker is also an individual, sovereign in his or her individual choices so long as they do not hurt anyone else, a free man or a free woman with a right to self-determination, independent of what anyone else tells them they need to do. If union leaders are representatives and not bosses, then they can only ever provide advice and leadership, never orders. The moment that a union representative can tell any worker what they can or cannot do, they are no longer the leader

of a democratic and free organization of consenting individuals but the boss of a cartel.

Freedom of assembly means the right to form and join voluntary organizations without obstruction from the state, but equally freedom of assembly means the right to not join unions and organizations compelled by the power of the state. Workers have a right to form and join unions, but they also have a God-given right not to be members of a union. They have a God-given right to exercise their own liberty in deciding what organization they will or will not give their money to. Members of any organization, especially one whose membership is compelled by the power of the state, have a right to demand accountability from that organization. They have a right to hold their leaders' feet to the fire, and they have a right to know how their money is being spent.

This bill strips workers of those basic rights. This bill is written by and for undemocratic union bosses, with the acquiescence of the NDP. There is a symbiotic relationship designed for one purpose: to use the power of the state to force workers, against their will, to pay dues into organizations that are hell bent on keeping this party in power.

Instead of a bill stripping workers of the right to a secret ballot to certify a union, we should instead legislate mandatory votes on recertification every four years. If workers are satisfied with the union representing them, then surely they will vote to recertify that union. But if they are dissatisfied with that union, they will have the right that voters have with their government every four years and throw them out.

Right now the overwhelming majority of Albertans are dissatisfied with their representatives in power. They have demanded that the conservative movement in Alberta unite itself, energize itself, and prepare itself to throw this government to the ash heap of history at the first opportunity. I believe that this will be their first and last four years in power. At that time Alberta workers will begin to see their rights restored.

Alberta workers deserve more than just a secret ballot to certify and decertify their union if they choose to do so. If they want a union, they should have the right to hold those unions accountable. That means opening the books to see how unions spend their dues. Unions funnelling dues to partisan propaganda arms of the NDP should be strictly prohibited. When the vast majority of workers pay their dues, they expect that their hard-earned dollars will go exclusively to the purpose of collective bargaining. They expect that every dollar that they pay in union dues will go to improving working conditions and compensation and not towards anti-Israel boycotts, socialist international congresses, Press Progress, Progress Alberta, or re-electing the NDP.

Now, any voluntary and democratic organization should also be responsible for collecting their own membership dues. When the Canadian Federation of Independent Business collects the dues of their small-business members, they have to sing for their supper. They have to go to their members every year and explain to them how they have spent their money wisely and why they should continue their voluntary membership in that organization. By contrast, this government wants to force workers to continue to pay mandatory dues, collected automatically off their paycheques, even if that union is engaged in an illegal strike. An illegal strike. Surely, if there was ever a circumstance under which a worker should be allowed to withhold their dues from a union, it would be when that union is breaking the laws of our country.

When the Wildrose Party seeks to renew our members every year, we have to go to them cap in hand and explain to them how we have spent their money and why they should continue to support us. We have to ask them for their voluntary and consensual contribution to the membership of our party. Could we for just one

moment imagine a scenario where, after winning a slim majority in a constituency, the victorious party could use the power of government to compel everyone in that constituency to be a member of that party and collect money off their paycheque without the consent of each and every individual man and woman? Unions, like business organizations, like the world wildlife foundation, like Ducks Unlimited, like every other organization, should be required to collect the dues of their members themselves.

9:10

Alberta deserves a bill not for the rights of union bosses but for the rights of workers. Unions began in the 19th century because workers needed the right to band together to demand safe working conditions, to demand reasonable benefits, to demand time off like a five-day work week, and to demand fair and reasonable wages. My great-great-grandfather used to be the president of a coal miners' union in Scotland. I may not share his politics, but I share his belief in the right of workers to form and join a union. Those are workers' rights. The right of workers to join a union should never be misconstrued with the government-granted right of a union boss to force any individual worker to submit to his will.

The NDP have filibustered their own legislation for two weeks now because they were busy rushing to slap together this bill so that it could be forced down the throats of this Legislature in late-night sittings. We know that even if the legal text of this bill was not written in time, the substantive content of the bill was written years ago by the bosses at the Federation of Labour and the special-interest groups that permeate the NDP and this government.

Instead of getting what they want in return for helping to elect the NDP, they have awoken thousands of Alberta workers to the reality of the NDP, and very soon that reality is going to come crashing down on the NDP and the special-interest groups that they represent. In two years from now Alberta will be rid of the NDP, and we will begin to repeal their socialist programs piece by piece. Taxpayers will not have to pay the carbon tax anymore, farmers will not be subject to Bill 6 anymore, our children will not have to pay today's debts anymore, and workers will not be taken for granted and used as political pawns by this government anymore. We will repeal any attempt to destroy the secret ballot in Alberta and restore real workers' rights in Alberta, not union boss rights.

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

Seeing none, before I recognize the next speaker to the bill, I've had a request to revert to Introduction of Guests.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

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

Mr. Dang: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you – and I believe he's still in the public gallery, but my position and stature make it hard to tell – a good friend of mine, Brendon Legault, who is the constituency manager for the Member of Parliament for Edmonton Centre and the former executive assistant of the Member for Calgary-Mountain View. He joins us here tonight to learn how a progressive government actually passes legislation to make life better for Albertans. If he'd please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

Government Bills and Orders

Second Reading

Bill 17

Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act

(continued)

The Deputy Speaker: Back on Bill 17. Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Madam Speaker. You know, after listening to that, jeez, I'm ready to submit you for the next Razzie award. That was quite a display. I think that for somebody that, you know, claims to know so much about unions, maybe we need to find you a union so you can learn how they operate.

Madam Speaker, it's very, very clear in the bill, assuming that folks actually read it, that the secret ballot is still there. It's not being taken away. You know, this rhetoric that we're hearing about how it's being denied and that we're taking democracy and trying to ship it off to the moon or something like that: I would suggest that maybe the member go back and take a little time to read the bill.

You know, in regard to this referral motion, Madam Speaker, let's be honest. We have not seen any significant updates to our labour legislation since 1988. I don't know about anybody else here, but 1988 was quite a while ago, just about 30 years ago. Not being from Calgary, I'm pretty sure that's when Calgary was hosting the Olympics. It was hosting the Olympics back in 1988, yet we have not been able to find the time in that time to update some of our legislation. As a result, we've very, very clearly fallen behind the rest of Canada because they're enjoying all of these great things that Bill 17 is going to be offering to them in terms of leaves and whatnot.

You know, let's be very clear here. I think the opposition really is not behind trying to make life better for Albertans, but certainly on this side of the House we are. It's our top priority to make sure that that happens, Madam Speaker. On this side of the House we want to make sure – when a mother needs to take time off because they have a sick child, the last thing they need to be worrying about is whether they're going to be keeping their job. That's something that I can relate to very, very personally because I've been in that position where I've had a sick child, but thankfully – maybe the member might have known this – there were rules in place that protected my job. Yet we're talking about repealing those kinds of things. If a worker happens to lose a family member, needs a day or two off to attend a funeral, we're going to repeal that kind of thing? That is absolutely shameful.

But that's not going to happen on this side of the House because on this side of the House we have Albertans' backs. We're going to make sure that their lives are better, and we're going to make sure that their rights are protected because that's what every other Canadian enjoys in this country. We're going to make sure that Albertans get the chance to finally enjoy those same benefits as well. We're talking about making modest changes here: fair, family workplaces. The other side is talking about getting rid of them and taking us back to – what was it? – the 1920s. Unbelievable.

So I will not be supporting this referral motion, Madam Speaker, and I would certainly urge all my other colleagues to not support this motion either.

With that, I would move to adjourn debate, Madam Speaker.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion to adjourn debate carried]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 9:18 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the Assembly divided]

[The Deputy Speaker in the chair]

For the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hoffman	Nielsen
Bilous	Horne	Notley
Carlier	Jansen	Piquette
Carson	Kleinsteuber	Rosendahl
Ceci	Larivee	Sabir
Connolly	Littlewood	Schmidt
Coolahan	Loyola	Schreiner
Dach	Luff	Shepherd
Dang	Malkinson	Sucha
Eggen	Mason	Turner
Feehan	McPherson	Westhead
Fitzpatrick	Miranda	Woollard
Hinkley		

Against the motion:

Cooper	Gill	Strankman
Cyr	McIver	Yao
Fildebrandt	Smith	

Totals:	For – 37	Against – 8
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[Motion to adjourn debate carried]

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. Government House Leader.

Mr. Mason: Thanks very much, Madam Speaker. With that useful 15 minutes of time well spent, I would move that we adjourn until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 9:35 p.m.]

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