



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature
Third Session

Alberta Hansard

Monday afternoon, June 5, 2017

Day 44

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

Party standings:

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

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Standing Committee on Alberta's Economic Future

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Connolly	Panda
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Hanson	Rosendahl
Kazim	Woollard
Kleinsteuber	

Legislative Assembly of Alberta

1:30 p.m.

Monday, June 5, 2017

[The Speaker in the chair]

Prayers

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

Hon. members, our world has once again been inflicted with violence in various locations. One of those situations included the loss of a Canadian. I'd like each of you to reflect or pray, each in your own way.

Today I'd like to read a prayer from the Ute First Nation entitled Earth, Teach Me.

Earth teach me quiet as the grasses are still with new light.
 Earth teach me suffering as old stones suffer with memory.
 Earth teach me humility as blossoms are humble with beginning.
 Earth teach me caring as mothers nurture their young.
 Earth teach me courage as the tree that stands alone . . .
 Earth teach me freedom as the eagle that soars in the sky.
 Earth teach me acceptance as the leaves that die each fall.
 Earth teach me renewal as the seed that rises in the spring.
 Earth teach me to forget myself as melted snow forgets its life.
 Earth teach me to remember kindness as dry fields weep with rain.

Hon. members and ladies and gentlemen, we will now be led in the singing of our national anthem by a special guest, Akesh Aheer. I would invite all to participate in the language of their choice.

Hon. Members:

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

The Speaker: Thank you. Please be seated.

Introduction of Visitors

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

Dr. Swann: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great joy and honour today to introduce to you and through you to the Legislature two special people in my life for the last number of years. First of all, David Khan, the newly elected leader of the Alberta Liberal Party: born and raised in Calgary, a background in sciences and chemistry at the University of British Columbia, a law degree from the University of Toronto, fully bilingual, which exceeds my capacity, an indigenous rights lawyer and activist operating on the well-known Liberal values of opportunity, freedom of the individual, and fairness for future generations. Welcome him as the next Premier of Alberta.

With him is Gwyneth Midgley, our executive director of the party for the last two years. She has been in Calgary for 25 years, working for the last two years as the executive director of the Alberta Liberal Party, past president of Calgary-Buffalo and Calgary-Elbow, was the Calgary-Buffalo president for Kent Hehr for five years. Please stand, Gwyneth, and we'll give you the warm welcome of the Legislature.

Introduction of Guests

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

Mr. Feehan: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you today and through you to the whole Assembly Westbrook elementary school, which is nestled away in the north-west part of my riding. The school strives to celebrate diversity in learning, encourage students to think critically, and develop life-long thinkers. They are accompanied today by Mrs. Arlene Walker and Mrs. Elizabeth Branco, their teachers. I would like to ask them all to rise and receive the warm traditional welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

Mr. Stier: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to introduce to you and through you to all members of this Assembly a group of grade 11 and 12 students visiting from Livingstone school in the bustling hamlet of Lundbreck, right down near the Crowsnest Pass, in my constituency: their teacher Kathy Rast; chaperones Diana Bramer and Dale Bueckert; and students Skylar Bueckert, Jonathan Erickson, Ty Ancil, Justyn Connelly-Engel, Quinlan Connelly-Engel, Contessa Penner, and Logan Desjardins. I would ask that they please rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Hon. members, are there any other school groups today? Seeing and hearing none, the Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to introduce to you and through you Vera Saunders and her family, who are seated in the Speaker's gallery. I ask that they please rise as I read this introduction. Vera is an honoured constituent of Edmonton-Glenora, where she raised her family and had a long teaching career. She was born in Swift Current, Saskatchewan, and this summer she will be turning 105. Vera still lives quite independently. She's at McQueen Place Lodge in Edmonton-Glenora, where she enjoys the distinction of being the eldest resident. She is joined by her daughter Lorraine, her son-in-law Andy, and another Edmonton-Glenora constituent, my good friend, her granddaughter Lyndsey. Please, colleagues, join me in extending the warm welcome to Vera and her family.

The Speaker: Welcome.

Ms Hoffman: Mr. Speaker, I do have a second if it would be permissible.

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. This second introduction is to introduce to you and through you Dr. Gerry Falk, who's seated in the members' gallery. Again, I ask that she rise as I introduce her and her guests. Gerry is retiring this June from Edmonton public schools after a very rewarding career, where she has been employed for more than 50 years as a principal and a practising psychologist. Gerry is joined by her husband, also a doctor, Michael Falk, and another doctor, her friend Larry Payne. I ask that they all rise and receive our appreciation and welcome to this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have four if that's okay. I'll do them in little chunks here.

It is with great pleasure that I introduce to you and through you some amazing women. First is Gerda Krebs. Gerda started teaching yoga in the early 1970s to junior high students in a school cafeteria that used towels as yoga mats on a cement floor. She also taught adults in her basement for 25 years and had her own television show, called *Yoga Fits In*. Gerda has empowered and strengthened many people for almost 50 years with her very simple message: in order to be healthy in mind, spirit, and body, you have to act as though you are healthy, and you need to live a well-rounded, balanced life. Gerda is turning 86 this month and is still teaching yoga three times a week. You can still find her TV show, which is very inspiring, on TV.

Along with Gerda is Chris Erdmann. Under Gerda's skilled, passionate mentorship a long-time student has also become a yoga instructor. It was this community of committed and dedicated instructors and practising students that became the backbone of the support for Chris to open Yoga for Today in 2001.

Following that is Tina Chavda, who is also with Gerda. Tina is one of those long-time members of the yoga community in Sherwood Park. Her strength shines through her quiet joy in sharing health and strength with her students.

Also, I'd like to say that with this group is our very own Maureen Gough. Many of you already know her, and what you probably don't know is that she has practised yoga since she was a young teenager and started with Gerda in 1974.

If I could have this lovely group of women stand and please receive the warm welcome of the House.

1:40

The Speaker: Welcome.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is also with pleasure that I am going to introduce to you Theresa and Daniel Ng. Theresa is the parent who brought our attention to the inappropriate links on the provincial GSA co-ordinator website. Her vigilance and advocacy resulted in the links being removed from the website. I would like to congratulate Theresa for her efforts on behalf of all Albertans. We owe her a debt of gratitude for her careful attention. Later today I will be tabling the names of 2,700 of those Albertans who stand for the protection of all children. With Theresa today is her son Daniel. I thank Theresa for bringing Daniel to remind us all in this Assembly that it is the children like him who are impacted by many of our decisions and the actions of our government. I would hope that, potentially, the minister will have a chance to meet with Theresa regarding her concerns. I would ask Daniel and Theresa to please stand and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

Mrs. Aheer: Oh, no. I have two more, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Two more.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you. I would also like to introduce to you and through you a very good friend of mine, Cassandra Montour. We have a mutual passion for public service. Cassandra has a keen interest in community advocacy and in the areas of education, arts, culture, and affordable housing. Cassandra, if you could please stand so you can get the warm welcome of the House.

Finally, Mr. Speaker – thank you so much – it would be completely horrible of me to not also mention my beautiful husband, who is sitting in your gallery along with my son, who had the privilege of

singing *O Canada* in this House today. I would like them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to introduce to you and through you all 20 government staff members who are here from Service Alberta, Economic Development and Trade, and Treasury Board and Finance. This group includes management, technical, and administrative staff as well as summer students, who have recently joined us. I would like to welcome them to the Legislature and the Chamber and ask that they rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo.

Mr. Yao: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to rise today and introduce to you and through you to all members some folks in the gallery whose roots are up in Fort McMurray. I ask, as I say your name, that you please rise and stay standing. Iris Kirschner is from Fort McMurray. Iris is the wife of Dave, who I mentioned last week, and her father, Peter Chaba, was a Social Credit MLA for Redwater. She is accompanied by her son David Jr., his wife, Tina, and their children Eliana, Nadya, David, Jonathan, and Benjamin. I would ask that the Assembly give them the traditional warm welcome.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

Ms Luff: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly my mom, Pam Bush, who is visiting from Vancouver. She has been a lifelong NDP supporter, is a proud feminist, a union worker, and one of the strongest women I know. If everyone could please give her the warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

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

Mr. Nixon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm happy to rise to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly two guests today, that I have here. The first is Brianna Morris. Brianna works with me on the child intervention file and has been working hard on the panel as well. In addition to that, she works with the hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock on the labour file, two big pieces of legislation that this Legislature is dealing with right now. Her work has been invaluable, and I want to be able to recognize her for that. In fact, some people would say that she is a factotum of the Federal Building, getting everything done for us, and it's much appreciated. I'd ask if she would stand. Along with her today is her sister Carla Heinrichs, who is Brianna's older sister. She teaches English as a second language and is getting ready for a trip to China. She is a big supporter of the Wildrose and is looking forward to a sane government in the next election. Before she left, she wanted to be able to see the Legislature this way because it won't be that way when she comes back. I'd ask them to rise and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

Thanks, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Hays.

Mr. McIver: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly

Brodie Parker from my constituency office in Calgary. Brodie is a student in political science at the University of Calgary. He is seated in the public gallery. I would now ask Brodie to stand to receive the traditional warm welcome of this Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The Minister of Agriculture and Forestry.

Mr. Carlier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is my pleasure to introduce to you and through you to all members of the Assembly 16 of our 2017 government interns. I ask Miss Megan Perram, Andre Tinio, Blaire Christensen, Juan Vargas, Max Harrington, Genna DiPinto, Shae Doyle, Pariyanka Chandan, Lauren Hanon, Margaux Robertson, Ayesha Herian, Bruce Cinnamon, Frank Finley, Aldrick Dugarte, Sumaira Islam, and Rowan Ley to please rise and receive the warm welcome of this House.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gottfried: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to introduce to you and through you two of my esteemed constituents from Lake Bonavista in Calgary, Amy and Brian Salisbury. I would ask them to rise and remain standing as I introduce them as my honoured guests. Amy, a recent addition to my Calgary-Fish Creek PC Association board, is a lifelong resident of Calgary and graduated with a bachelor's degree in history from St. Mary's University, located on the bluffs above beautiful Fish Creek provincial park. Amy's current career is in financial services, but she has previous experience in the hospitality and creative industries. Brian, originally from Wisconsin, has called Alberta home for the past six years and has a successful career in the oil and gas services sector. Amy and Brian are proud to be raising three bright young Albertans, and, with our congratulations in advance, they have a fourth on the way this August. I would ask all members to extend the traditional warm welcome of this House to Amy and Brian in recognition of their first visit to the Alberta Legislature.

The Speaker: Welcome.

The hon. Minister of Labour and 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 several proud and hard-working Albertans who represent electricians, paramedics, front-line health care professionals, and employees from all lines of work in Alberta. Today with us from the HSAA Trudy Thomson, Mike Parker, Donna Farquharson, Kris Moskal, Amanda Freistadt; from the IBEW 424 Scott Crichton, Delaine Coleman, Kyle Hamilton; and from the AFL Gil McGowan. They're here today because they're very keen to watch the debate unfold in the House. I'd now like all members to give them the traditional warm welcome of the Assembly.

The Speaker: Welcome.

A further introduction, Chestermere-Rocky View.

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm so sorry; I missed a very important person in my original introduction. Chris's daughter Kerra Boyko is also here. She is a high school student who wants to study veterinary medicine. Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to add her in. Would she please rise.

Members' Statements

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

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder Awareness Day

Ms Goehring: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise today to speak about Post-traumatic Stress Disorder Awareness Day on June 27. Last year I was honoured to bring forward a private member's bill that would acknowledge PTSD Awareness Day annually. This passed with unanimous consent in this Legislature. To all of you, thank you for recognizing the importance of this day. I feel truly honoured to have heard and continue to hear the personal experiences of so many Albertans who in some way have been impacted by this devastating anxiety disorder.

1:50

PTSD is a strong and lasting emotional reaction to a very disturbing event such as war, violent crime, or natural disaster. It can make it very hard for those affected to deal with the stressors of life or work and can even affect their ability to interact with family and friends. This year on June 27 I'm hosting a panel and resource fair at the Federal Building from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. and a second resource fair in my own constituency at the Castle Downs Family YMCA from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Both events will have resources available for those who have experienced trauma. Each case is different, and there are a variety of treatment options available to fit the needs of the individual. Raising awareness is key because an early and accurate diagnosis is vital. We are also co-ordinating with municipalities and organizations to encourage Albertans to light up Alberta for PTSD. Many of you may see notable buildings lit in teal. This will be to acknowledge PTSD Awareness Day.

I invite my colleagues in the House to join me along with Albertans from all across this province to help those suffering in silence. Let's all help them find the support that they need, help them to build strong, happy memories to replace the ones that still cause them pain, and help to raise awareness of this destructive disorder.

Thank you.

Oral Question Period

The Speaker: The Leader of the Official Opposition.

Victims of Sexual Assault

Mr. Jean: Angela Cardinal was a survivor of kidnapping and aggravated sexual assault, yet when it came time to testify against her attacker in court here in Alberta, Angela was sent to jail shackled and then transported to court in the same van as the person who was ultimately convicted of kidnapping and sexually assaulting her. Angela was the victim of a horrific crime, and the system treated her like a criminal. Can the Premier please explain why it took a media report to inform the public of how badly our justice system failed Angela Cardinal?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The member opposite is correct. It was a tragedy and, actually, quite an appalling set of circumstances that Angela was faced with. Let me begin by joining with our Minister of Justice to personally offer my apologies to Angela's family for what she was compelled to face. It's not acceptable, absolutely not acceptable. No victim should ever be treated that way. All victims should be treated with respect and with support and, ultimately, justice. That's why I'm very pleased that our Minister of Justice is working as quickly as she can to ensure that this does not happen again.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Mr. Jean: The request to place Angela into custody came from the Crown prosecutor and was agreed to by the judge presiding over the preliminary inquiry. That judge was previously a Deputy Minister of Justice. I practised criminal law for 10 years, and I've never heard of a victim of sexual assault being shackled and jailed by the system meant to protect them when she was willing to testify and had committed no crime. An independent review is a good first step, but Albertans want to know, Premier: who will ultimately be held accountable for this shocking failure of the system?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Well, as the member rightly points out, there was a decision taken by the Crown to request that form of relief from the judge, and as a result of that, the Minister of Justice has put in place a new policy to ensure that should that kind of request ever be made again, it is reviewed by much more senior officials within the Justice ministry, because it is not, quite frankly, a provision of the Criminal Code that should, I think, almost ever be used. That being said, the minister has also appointed an independent investigator, and that investigator will prepare a report that will in large part answer the member's questions.

Mr. Jean: Our justice system is supposed to protect all Albertans, not just those who have the resources to protect themselves. Angela was an aboriginal woman who was homeless. Her pleas to be released from jail after committing no crime were ignored. This is an absolute failing that shatters the credibility of our justice system, and it happened under this government's watch, and it took two years for the story to finally come to light. Albertans want to know: how many other victims of crime have been shackled and jailed alongside the perpetrators of the very crimes?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Again, I'm very pleased that upon the Minister of Justice being advised of this outrageous situation, one of the things that she immediately did was to task a special committee to recommend aggressive policies and policy review with respect to victims' services. That committee will in fact include indigenous representation as well as representation from people involved with supporting victims of sexual and domestic assault because, as the member opposite rightly points out, no victim should ever be treated the way Angela was.

The Speaker: Second main question.

Support for Junior Oil and Gas Companies

Mr. Jean: The majority of Canada's junior oil and gas companies have disappeared. It's just another day and another headline under the NDP government. There's no doubt about it: while our junior oil and gas companies have been suffering, the NDP government has just been making things much worse with carbon taxes, oil sands caps, and damaging new regulations. Seventeen publicly traded junior companies have disappeared over the last 30 months. That's under your watch, Premier. When will the Premier and her government finally give our juniors in oil and gas here in Alberta a break?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As the member opposite knows, the province of Alberta and all economic

players within the province of Alberta have been struggling as a result of the drop in the price of oil. One of the things that our government did soon after being elected was that we implemented a royalty review. Having done that, we brought in place a modernized royalty regime that was designed to support efficiencies within the oil and gas sector and, in fact, to give them opportunities to improve their performance and, ultimately, to improve their success. We are pleased that rig numbers are now on their way back up.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Jean: If we want our oil and gas sector to thrive, our junior oil and gas companies have a critical role to play, but now industry experts don't see a recovery for them any time soon. The NDP is making recovery nearly impossible. Their new oil sands cap will only drown these companies out of the market as control consolidates behind a few major players. This cap is hurting investment in our economy and Alberta businesses. When will the Premier finally realize that it is a mistake and remove it?

Ms Notley: Well, Mr. Speaker, I would suggest that the member is absolutely wrong with respect to his characterization of the importance of that oil sands cap not only to the environment but ultimately to the long-term sustainability of our oil and gas industry. Fundamentally, that cap was a cap that was put in place as a result of the joint request of environmentalists and senior oil and gas leaders. That is how you develop a long-term, sustainable industry, that is the way we make sure that our economy recovers, and that, of course, is the way we make sure we get that pipeline built.

Mr. Jean: Now, we know, Mr. Speaker, that government can't fix everything, but it can stop getting in the way. The Premier can scrap a carbon tax that is punishing Alberta with absolutely zero benefit. They could for instance get rid of their arbitrary cap on oil sands, they can reverse many of their damaging regulations or just the number of them, and they can stop apologizing for an industry that puts bread on the table for hundreds of thousands of Canadians. Will the Premier implement just one of these ideas to get our junior oil and gas companies back on their feet?

The Speaker: The hon. Premier.

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. What our government has done, actually, is that we have worked closely with the oil and gas industry to promote their interests and to advocate for their rights in the international markets, because we actually do understand that good jobs are absolutely what Albertans need and that that is tied to a healthy, sustainable oil and gas industry. We are very proud of our record. We also know that, going forward, it is important to pair economic growth with environmental responsibility. That is the path to a long-term, sustainable industry, something that the folks over there have long since forgotten.

The Speaker: Thank you.

The third main question.

Government Policies

Mr. Jean: Mr. Speaker, the NDP plan is simply not working. It's time to change course. Just look at the numbers. Since May 2015 60,000 full-time jobs have vanished in Alberta under this NDP government's watch. At a time when our economy is supposed to be stabilizing, Alberta has lost nearly 7,000 jobs just since December. Our budget sheet is melting down, and all that Albertans can

expect is more of the same – more debt, more deficit, and higher taxes – from this NDP government. What other damaging policies can Albertans expect the Premier to announce this summer?

2:00

Ms Notley: Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, what we won't do is continuously talk down the economic prospects of this province and Albertans just so we can make political gains. It is absolutely ridiculous, making political hay at the expense of Albertans. Employment is up. Housing sales are up. Rig numbers are up. Exports are up. Capital investment is up, and once again we will lead the country in economic growth. I know that the members opposite hate to hear good news, but thank goodness Albertans don't.

Mr. Jean: Of course, unemployment is up. Debt is up, record debt. The deficit is up. Seven thousand more jobs lost in 2017. There's no recovery for real people outside the halls of this Legislature. For anyone who pays taxes in Alberta, these past few months of the NDP have been nothing but bad news. Taxpayers are being forced to cough up billions and billions of dollars because of the NDP mistakes and tinkering in our electricity grid. The carbon tax is set to go up another 50 per cent in January. And for what, Mr. Speaker? More light bulbs. How many more taxes, fees, and nickel and diming will Albertans have to pay for this Premier's mistakes and incompetence?

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

Ms Notley: Well, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate that facts are an inconvenient concept for the members opposite and that, you know, it must be a struggle for them. In fact, we have had several straight months of employment growth. We had 20,000 jobs created just in March. Our plan is working. Their plan was to take \$3.5 billion out of our economy in one year. Their plan was to not build schools. Their plan was to not build a hospital. Their plan was to make Albertans pay for their failure to plan for the need for a diversified economy. Our plan is working.

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. Premier.

Mr. Jean: The NDP plan is a fairy tale, and it's not working. We've seen a growing sense of arrogance from a government that just doesn't understand the plight of struggling everyday Albertans. Albertans concerned about this government were called rodents. They insulted job creators and workers by trying to drive through omnibus legislation after holding embarrassingly short consultations. They are under investigation by the Privacy Commissioner for deleting e-mails and have been condemned for hiding information from Albertans. How can any Albertan trust this Premier or her government with this type of record of secrecy and incompetence?

Ms Notley: Mr. Speaker, what our government has done is that we've fought hard for pipelines, we've secured intervenor status, and we've moved forward to get a pipeline approved. What those folks have done is cheered for pipeline opponents and promised to scrap the very plan that got us here. What we did was that we built the Calgary cancer centre. Those folks would never have moved forward on it. What we did was decide that we would feed hungry kids at school. Those people are still waiting to figure out if that's a good idea. What we did was announce that we'd build new schools. Those guys would never have moved forward with that, and they would never have created the jobs. I will put our record up against theirs any day.

Victims of Sexual Assault

(continued)

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, like all Albertans, I was shocked to hear of the horrific treatment that Angela Cardinal received from our justice system after she was brutally assaulted. Forcing a victim to ride in a transport vehicle with her attacker can never be justified. While I appreciate the Justice minister's call to action on an independent investigation, I'm concerned that the case has exposed larger issues of how our justice system treats victims of sexual assault. To the Minister of Justice: will you issue a ministerial order today prohibiting putting victims in close proximity to their accused attackers?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Justice and Solicitor General.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think, like all Albertans, all members of this House have been shocked by the details of this case. The treatment of the victim in this case was absolutely appalling. We have absolutely indicated and the sheriffs branch is absolutely aware that transport of accused people and victims should never occur in the same transport. In fact, the member opposite is absolutely right. This has unveiled some systemic problems, which is why we're having an internal review as well as an external review.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mr. McIver: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I hope the minister will do that order today.

As I struggle to comprehend how something like this could possibly happen to a victim of violent crime, I can't help but wonder if racial prejudices and stereotyping might have played a role in the Crown's request to have Ms Cardinal remanded under section 545(1) of the Criminal Code and the judge's decision to grant that application. Again to the Justice minister: does Alberta's justice system have a systemic problem with racism, particularly towards indigenous people?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's, of course, very difficult for me to speak to the motivations of the individual people involved in this particular case, but I do struggle with and I am kept up at night by the question: had this victim been Caucasian and had she been housed, would this have happened to her in this particular case? I think this has unveiled a number of systemic problems with the justice system, and we will absolutely be moving forward to address them.

Mr. McIver: Mr. Speaker, we thank the minister for her actions so far to conduct an investigation and for striking a special committee to make policy changes to ensure that there are no more victims that get treated this way. Thank you. To the minister: when did you know, what are the anticipated timelines for both the independent investigation and the committee to complete its work, and if you don't mind, will you make both of those fully public when they're finished?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Ganley: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I think this case has unveiled a number of systemic problems, and one of those systemic problems was certainly the fact that this was brought to my attention in late April by the reporter at CBC. Certainly, that is

one of the challenges we absolutely look to address. The review in terms of policies from the internal committee should be reporting back within three months with those policy changes. In terms of the other review, we're still finalizing the terms of reference, and I should have more to say about that shortly.

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

Health Care System

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. For years Alberta Liberals have been pointing to the Alberta Health Services quarterly performance reports as an excellent way for Albertans to assess how the system is working. Unfortunately, those reports are rarely up to date. When I asked the Health minister last week – two weeks ago, actually – she said that she hadn't seen the report yet, which is troubling.

An Hon. Member: Point of order.

The Speaker: Point of order noted.

Dr. Swann: She did promise to follow up immediately with Alberta Health Services and inform the House. Two weeks have passed. The minister needs to respond. When will the reports be released so that Albertans can finally decide what's going on?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to congratulate the member on his second attempt at retirement as leader of his party. Certainly, your service to your party and to Albertans is appreciated, hon. member.

I have followed up with Alberta Health Services, and the report is making its way to their board. Once it is finished going through the board process, it will come to my office, and then I will release it as quickly as possible. This is a process that happens typically. As it's part of the annual report, it goes to the full board. When it is available, I will certainly reach out to the member and ensure that he's aware of it.

Thank you.

Dr. Swann: Well, Mr. Speaker, what the data have consistently shown is that we're failing to deliver humane, comprehensive seniors' care in this province. The Health Quality Council reports hundreds of seniors not receiving the right level of care in the right place at the right time: 787 people most recently reported being warehoused in hospitals and 973 waiting for placement in the community. With numbers like these how can the minister say that she is providing seniors with dignity at the time when they need it most?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member. Absolutely, there has been a long need for additional seniors' care, including long-term care, dementia spaces, and increased investment in home care. Certainly, that was the case under the previous government for many years. I'm glad that we're making important investments in those areas. We're on track to be able to open 2,000 new long-term care and dementia care spaces within two years, and we've increased home-care supports significantly. For those who are living in hospital, we certainly think that the staff there are doing a better job than warehousing, but living in a hospital is not ideal.

2:10

Dr. Swann: Mr. Speaker, the Auditor General's report on better health care for Albertans highlighted the opportunity for better integration of clinical information systems. Unfortunately, the government has not yet required physicians to provide their clinical data to other caregivers. Clinicians are looking for leadership. When will the minister require reporting standards for physicians to share important information with other caregivers?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. We're working with the Alberta Medical Association to implement the amendments that were done to the agreement that we have with the physicians. These amendments will see improvements in primary care such as information sharing and data sharing as well. I'm pleased that the physicians came back to the table two years before what was required under the previous agreement under the former government and that we were able to make these important changes as well as committing investment to a clinical information system to ensure that patients can have integrated, seamless access to their data and that the health professionals who are making decisions have the best up-to-date information for those patients as well.

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

Rural Health Care Service Interruptions

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just this morning Alberta Health Services informed my constituents in Tofield that the emergency department at the Tofield Health Centre would be closed until Wednesday. As anyone in a rural community can imagine, this is incredibly alarming. Can the Minister of Health please update residents of Tofield and area on why this was necessary and what is being done to ensure that their safety is kept this week?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question and for her ongoing advocacy with her office and with AHS to ensure that we have the very best information and ability to serve her constituents. A full-time physician chose to leave Tofield earlier this year. AHS has been covering with locums, including physicians from other parts of the member's own riding, including Fort Saskatchewan. Sometimes there are gaps, however, in coverage. To ensure safety, acute-care beds have been prioritized. That will require a short-term closure of the emergency department, but EMS is on standby to transport anyone in need of urgent care.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you to the minister for the answer. Given the impact that this may have on the surrounding area, to the same minister: what's being done currently to address this staffing issue at the Tofield Health Centre?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you again for the question. AHS is working very closely with the community, with the local health advisory council, the local foundation, as well as with the Alberta Medical Association. They're actively seeking to recruit new physicians and also are offering flexible options to provide coverage with locums. As several members will recall, we've been through this process a number of times in rural communities. We will make every effort

to avoid any service interruptions, but patient safety will always be the number one priority, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Given that the minister mentioned that many rural communities have experienced temporary closures or service interruptions due to staffing problems, what is the government's plan going forward to address what could become a worsening inequity in health care in rural Alberta?

Ms Hoffman: Thank you again to the member for the question. This is very important, something that previous Conservative governments failed to address for decades. I grew up in a rural community in the north, and I'm very proud of the work that we are doing with the AMA to help match our physician workforce with the communities that need them the most. This is part of our commitment to work with communities and with health care professionals instead of against them, Mr. Speaker, as the members opposite continue to call for time after time.

Minister of Finance

Mr. Fildebrandt: The Minister of Finance has taken the annual deficit from \$5.3 billion to \$10.3 billion in a matter of 24 months. We have gone from \$11.9 billion of debt when the minister came to office to a projected debt of \$94 billion. We have gone from the best credit rating in the country to five downgrades and counting, putting us on par with basket cases like Ontario. No more excuses. This minister is incompetent and incapable of doing his job. Will he step aside and resign?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to stand on my record any day. While the member opposite performed his little stunt to launch his bid for the UCP leadership, I and my government colleagues are working hard as we emerge from this recession. We have Albertans' backs. We're feeding hungry kids at school; they call that irresponsible. We're freezing tuition so that the cost of an education doesn't stand in the way of an Albertan's dreams; they call that a mess. I'm standing up for everyday Albertans, and I'm not apologizing.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Given, Mr. Speaker, the minister has demonstrated gross negligence and irresponsibility in carrying out his duties – he blames everybody but himself when something goes wrong – and the minister blamed the first four credit downgrades on mysterious forces beyond his control and given that when our credit rating was downgraded a fifth time, he blamed S&P for having a conservative agenda and that the minister has demonstrated beyond a doubt that he is incapable of competently doing his job, will he step aside and resign?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Finance.

Mr. Ceci: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let me read to the House what the TD Bank said about our budget. They said that "the recently tabled . . . 2017-18 Budget was stimulative in nature, with the government continuing its commitment to investing in health care, education and social services." We're putting Albertans back to work, building badly needed infrastructure like the new Edmonton hospital and the Calgary cancer centre, that the opposition dragged their feet on for decades. I think it's time the hon. member came clean with his plan. You know, what would he cut? How much in taxes . . .

The Speaker: Thank you, hon. minister.

Mr. Fildebrandt: Given, Mr. Speaker, the Premier knew that her Finance minister had no qualifications whatsoever for the job when she appointed him and she has refused to listen to expert advice that could help him compensate for this and given that he has shown time and time again that he can't competently do his job and he doesn't care that the fiscal house is burning down around him – he needs to go – Premier, will you fire your Finance minister?

Ms Notley: Well, you know what, Mr. Speaker? Because of this Finance minister, our kids aren't stuffed into overcrowded classes. Because of this Finance minister, Calgary is getting a new cancer centre. Because of this Finance minister, tens of thousands of Albertans have jobs building new schools. Because of this Finance minister, this province will lead the country in economic growth. I wish I could give him a promotion.

The Speaker: Hon. members, let's stay focused on policy rather than on personalities.

The Member for Calgary-West.

Child Safety Reporting and Investigations

Mr. Ellis: All right. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Another session, another missed opportunity to pass Serenity's law. Near the end of the fall session, when everyone agreed more action was needed to protect children, I suggested a minor legislative change that would require adults to contact police if they know a child is in need of intervention. In December, just before the session ended, this NDP government said: that's a great idea, but we've run out of time. Minister, what is your excuse this time? And don't say that you're waiting for the panel to bring it forward because you have already ignored most of their recommendations.

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

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm actually very thankful for the work that the panel did prioritizing vulnerable children and working together to come up with consensus recommendations. I'm very proud to have accepted them, and I'm moving forward with implementing every single one of them because this issue is so important that we all need to come together and rise above politics and figure out what is in the best interests of our children. From that perspective, I'm very excited to hear what the panel comes forward with after the second phase, and I look forward to working with them on implementing those recommendations as well.

2:20

Mr. Ellis: Given that this bill was called Serenity's law because there were adults who knew that little Serenity was in danger and did not call the, quote, director, unquote, and given that it could easily be called Ezekiel's law, Ryan's law, Alex's law because each of these children suffered long, neglectful deaths and adults other than those found responsible for their deaths knew about their suffering, Minister, you have not introduced legislation that will take immediate action to save children's lives as you promised that you would do, but there is still time. Will you bring forward Serenity's law before this session ends?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Once again, for the first time ever all parties in the Assembly are considering real, meaningful changes to the way that we protect children. Again, this is one idea that the panel can consider. As previously stated, we do need to

engage with police and others who would be involved in this. In the meantime I would absolutely encourage every single Albertan to just know that you're legally required to report child abuse, and if you do know of an imminent threat to a child, please call 911.

Mr. Ellis: Given that I have consulted with experts in health and safety law, police, legal counsel, people who work with the intervention system, parents who've lost their children and given that Serenity's family came to the Legislature to provide powerful personal support for the immediate passing of this law and given that if I could, I would introduce Serenity's law today, Minister, unfortunately I'm not in a position to take this action, but you are. Why are you choosing not to do this?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Larivee: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Absolutely, we are all committed to moving forward in terms of supporting vulnerable children in this province. Absolutely, I'm looking forward, you know, with tremendous excitement to hearing the outcome of the work of the panel as they move through phase 2 to talk about how we can improve the child intervention system in this province. Again I would state: Albertans, it is your obligation to call and report child abuse should you know of it. If you know of a child who's at risk of abuse or is being abused, please report that. If there's an imminent threat, please call 911.

Air Ambulance Service Contract

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, the handling of the fixed-wing air ambulance RFP has become a scandal in rural Alberta. First, we learned CanWest, a company with no aircraft bases in major rural stations like Medicine Hat and Peace River, won the RFP. Now we know this government hired Toronto lawyers to handle the tendering of this RFP. To the Minister of Health. Air ambulance is critical to patients in rural Alberta. Why are you making crony deals with Ontario companies who don't understand our province?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to address the irresponsibility that has come from the opposite side both on Thursday and today. They are continuing to inflame things where none exist. First, let's dispense with the rumours and irresponsible statements offered by the members opposite. We have an excellent air ambulance system in Alberta. We are improving on that system, and we have a competitive procurement process under way, but we will not change services, and there will be no change in base locations.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, given the NDP has developed a bad habit of awarding government contracts to companies with NDP connections from Ontario, including a contract to screw in taxpayer-funded light bulbs, and given that this contract would have been welcomed by our out-of-work local contractors in these tough times, can the minister explain to Alberta contractors who were passed over for the taxpayer-funded light bulb contract and now the Alberta law firms who were passed over for the air ambulance: why does the NDP hate Alberta businesses?

Ms Hoffman: Unsuccessful proponents have the right to challenge the RFP, Mr. Speaker. That's a process that's laid out in the New West Partnership. There was a time when the members opposite believed in competitive procurement and believed in the New West Partnership. I have to say that I wish it was surprising to see them

abandon their principles, but they do it day after day. Enough is enough. Things are moving forward fairly, respectfully, and we will ensure the very best outcomes for Albertans and that their safety continues to be the top priority.

Mr. Barnes: Mr. Speaker, this isn't just about cronyism or waste; it's a lack of oversight. Given that AHS is now the fourth-largest employer in Canada, boasting a small army of lawyers and bureaucrats, which this minister refuses to trim, and given the minister thought it was a good idea to spend even more taxpayer dollars by handing this RFP issue to a bunch of lawyers from Toronto, Albertans are wondering: does this minister or anyone on that side understand the value of a dollar?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's nice to see the member have an opportunity to ask a question. I think he's been here more than one day, but let me explain the way it works. Alberta Health Services are the ones that are in the contract negotiations. Alberta Health Services are the ones who are determining what supports they will need. Alberta Health Services are negotiating in a fair and open and transparent process to make sure that the policies of this government, which are that health will be the number one priority and public safety – that we will find the very best way to have service and protect the current base plans and that we will make sure that we do that while respecting taxpayers. I wish the members opposite would do the same.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Centralized Ambulance Dispatch Wainwright Health Centre

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Too often the Wainwright hospital has been left without ambulance service because they are too busy transporting patients two and a half hours away to Edmonton. This requires a full five-hour trip. In Edmonton this situation is called a code red, which can become a critical situation when there is no help to send. Why does this minister insist on centralizing services to Edmonton and endangering the lives of rural Albertans?

Ms Hoffman: Again, the irresponsible and inflammatory language from the members opposite needs to be addressed, Mr. Speaker. Nothing could be further from the truth. Our government is committed to making life better for every Albertan by protecting and strengthening patient care. The members opposite are calling for deep ideological cuts. We're not doing that. We're standing with Albertans. There's a new ambulance bay under construction, an expanded ER project, in the very community as one of the examples. Construction for this important project will begin early in 2018. We are very proud to be investing in Wainwright instead of making cuts like the members opposite are calling for.

Mr. Taylor: They take one ambulance bay out to put another one in but one doctor for these rooms.

Given that rural Alberta at such great distance has not the affordability to provide the big-city services and given that AHS could reverse the flow of ambulance traffic to rural Alberta with specialized services, that would also attract doctors to rural Alberta, why does the minister insist on everything being done in Edmonton and Calgary?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Health.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm very proud of the investment that we're making in communities, including Wainwright. That's by this NDP government. I'm very proud of the fact that we have the very best technology, and we're bringing it out to communities as well, whether that's through electronic health records, whether that's through a patient portal that enables them to interface with the data, or whether it's a stroke ambulance that actually brings the very best in stroke treatment to the patient rather than waiting for them to get to the health facility. These are the kinds of investments that this NDP government is making in health care in communities, including Wainwright. The members opposite continue to call for cuts. We're not going to do that.

Mr. Taylor: Given that rural Alberta does not have a major tier 1 or even a tier 2 facility in east central Alberta, causing patients and ambulances to travel hours on end, and given that opening operating rooms without staffing additional doctors doesn't improve the quality of health care, when Alberta Health Services builds a new Wainwright hospital, will they be building a higher tiered facility to attract doctors and nurses to east central?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker. I am very proud of our government's investments, including the \$5 million important for upgrades in the health centre in Wainwright. I am so proud of that. The members opposite have one plan – cut, cut, cut – and on this side of the House we're standing with Albertans. We're working to make their lives better. We're working with physicians to ensure that we have the right attraction and recruitment strategies, instead of laying off nurses and doctors throughout Alberta, which certainly would be the inevitable outcome of their deep \$3.5 billion worth of cuts.

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

2:30 School Transportation Fees

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Since last week when I asked in this House about the changes in school transportation brought about by Bill 1, my constituency has been flooded with e-mails and letters confirming the same story. School boards are facing budget shortfalls because they can't collect fees for transportation, and those shortfalls are resulting in changes to bell times and more students being pushed onto public transportation and congregated stops, often at increased cost to parents, both financially and emotionally. To the Minister of Education: are you willing to admit that Bill 1 has led to increased costs for certain families, or are you going to hide behind the name of this bill and pretend that those families don't exist?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you for the question. Certainly, Bill 1 is to reduce school fees. It will put money into the pockets of more than 600,000 families across the province. We know very well that we are covering those bus fees, so if a school board is not paying for that thing – in fact, the government is paying for it. We need to make sure that we are working with clean communication on this, but the bottom line is this: parents and families will pay fewer school fees in the fall as a result of Bill 1.

Mr. Fraser: Mr. Speaker, given that the minister still won't meet with school board trustees and given that this sort of meeting should have occurred prior to the introduction of Bill 1 – this needs to

happen now more than ever – and given that the minister has so far refused to admit the negative consequences of Bill 1, to the same minister: will you meet with the school board trustees who are having to face the tough questions over Bill 1, and will you actually listen to those trustees and make decisions based on the feedback that they give you?

The Speaker: The Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. Certainly, we have been working with school boards very closely. In fact, I will be meeting with every single school board this evening, so we will be talking about this very subject. You know, it's important to remember that Bill 1 is to reduce school fees. The other part of it is to regulate the out-of-control school fees that this previous government let go hog-wild over the last 10 years. That's part of what we're doing here now, and I'm very proud of how far we've made it so far.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Second supplemental.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Giving a speech at a dinner is not a meeting, and it's not consultation.

Given that alternative and second-language programs have been disproportionately affected by the changes in bell times and transportation and given that these changes have resulted in families looking at possibly a \$1,000 cost increase and given that the increased costs and difficulty in co-ordinating pickups for different bell times are pushing families away from alternative and second-language programs, to the same minister: can these families expect any support from you in choosing the education that best suits their children, or have you given up on diversity in our education system?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you. You know, Mr. Speaker, that sort of inflammatory language and misleading paths of describing things only serve to make things worse. We're putting in billions of dollars to meet enrolment here for education in the province of Alberta, and we are making sure that the students get the education that they need. We've made significant investment in education. You know what? This is a regulation to regulate school fees. We're not going to let school fees go up in an Act to Reduce School Fees; we're going to make sure that they are affordable, and we will communicate that information very, very soon.

The Speaker: The hon. Member for St. Albert.

Advocate for Persons with Disabilities

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. People with disabilities and their allies have been asking for a disability advocate to assist them in navigating very complex systems like AISH and PDD. To the minister: how specifically will your ministry consult with that same community to ensure that the advocate's role accurately reflects the intent of the bill?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would like to begin by thanking the Member for St. Albert for her advocacy on this file and also thanking the Member for Calgary-North West for bringing forward this important piece of legislation. What we have learned over the period of the last two years is: Nothing about Us without Us. As we move forward to create this position, we will work with

the community to make sure that the legislation is followed in letter and spirit.

The Speaker: First supplemental.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. How will the Ministry of CSS, Community and Social Services, ensure that the advocate's role remains focused on the principles identified in the bill, which is focused on the needs of the community?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, again. The bill brought forward by the Member for Calgary-North West is an extremely strong bill. She had consulted – I personally know that – extensively on this bill with the community. As we move forward with implementation of the bill, we will make sure that the advocate's role is focused on what the legislation says, and we will do so in consultation with the community.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Second supplementary.

Ms Renaud: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. How will the ministry work with the community to identify desired outcomes in order to ensure meaningful oversight?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Sabir: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you, Member, for the question. I think our record is pretty clear. We have worked with the community over the period of the last two years. In terms of the safety standard regulation brought by the previous government, we worked with the community and repealed it. Instead of the supports intensity scale brought by the previous government, we worked with the community, and we repealed it. Going forward, we'll work with the community on all issues that matter to them, and I think that when we work with them, we have a good relationship and their lives are better off.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

School Transportation Fees

(continued)

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. A parent from Robert Warren school said that she felt like she'd been kicked in the gut when she heard what the Calgary board of education is forced to do to implement Bill 1. The CBE alternative program will not be provided with school buses because it is not the designated school for people in many communities around Calgary. This government promised to maintain educational choice for parents, and access is a critical part of that. What regulations will the minister consider around Bill 1 to ensure that parents can transport their children to their school of choice?

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Education.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. Certainly, we've been working very closely with the Calgary board of education to ensure that we have adequate transportation needs for all students in Calgary, and, you know, we are working to reduce school fees as well. But let's remember that it's not an act to eliminate school fees; it's an act to reduce school fees. We are going to work very hard to make sure that we have an equitable way by which to do so across

the city and across the province, and certainly you'll see, when we are building and finishing the regulation, that we will moderate the fees to ensure that they are affordable.

Mrs. Aheer: Well, there's an extreme deficiency in clarity here. Given that we warned the government about the potential negative impacts of this bill and given that parents across the province are asking for clarity about how this bill is going to be implemented and given that the regulations are still being developed and that no one seems to be able to address the transportation issues and given that school authorities are doing the best they can to accommodate transportation needs – you said that you'd be meeting with the school boards. How many, Minister? How many school authorities has the minister met with to figure out this mess called Bill 1?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I would hardly categorize a bill that would put money into the pockets of more than 600,000 families across the province to be anything but a success and a way by which we can make life better for Alberta families. Quite frankly, we have been working very closely with school boards. I have been meeting with them for many, many, many months. We will be with them again this evening. We're working out a way by which to make sure that school is affordable here in the province of Alberta, which would certainly never happen if you made billions of dollars of cuts, as the opposition would like.

Mrs. Aheer: You know what would never happen, Mr. Speaker? We would not be doubling school bus transportation fees.

Given that the Calgary board of education's alternative programs are based on student needs and offer critical choice for parents and given that they need at least 25 students to make these programs viable and given that the fallout from Bill 1 will force families to move from their designated schools, undermining their choice, Mr. Speaker, and given that school boards are not allowed to make changes in transportation fees without permission from the minister, when is the minister going to start supporting school boards to ensure that the unintended consequences of this bill do not remove authentic choice in education?

The Speaker: The hon. minister.

Mr. Eggen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for the question. It's very important that we recognize the hard work of school boards, of parents, of school councils, and so forth to ensure that we build a system that is not just educating kids but is strengthening it for the future as well. So that's exactly what we're doing. You know that the regulation is forthcoming, and you must . . . [interjection]

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

Mr. Eggen: You've got to make sure you listen to the answer because otherwise you don't get any of the information. I'm sorry. [interjection] No, keep going. Keep going. That's fine. Finished?

We're working to build a better education system for Alberta families, Mr. Speaker, and I welcome everybody to help in that enterprise.

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

2:40 Opioid Use Prevention and Mitigation

Mr. Rodney: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The opioid emergency response commission is an important weapon in the war against

opioids in Alberta, and I have no doubt that the excellent panel members will work tirelessly in tackling the ongoing fentanyl crisis; however, Albertans may never be able to appreciate the contributions of this committee because the recommendations are to go directly to the minister and cabinet, where they can select suggestions with no public accountability. To the minister: for the sake of transparency and to save more lives faster, will you direct the commission to report on a quarterly basis to the Standing Committee on Families and Communities?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure to address a question raised with regard to the devastating opioid crisis, which is impacting Albertan families, communities, and, of course, those who have been victims themselves. That's why we must move rapidly and why we announced the opioid emergency response commission, which includes, again, harm reduction program experts, parent advocates, law enforcement, and others. We're keen to implement their recommendations, we're very proud of the stakeholders that have been coming together to do this work, and we'll be proud to update the House in a timely fashion on the very important outcomes.

Mr. Rodney: Given that the Kainai, out of grave necessity, became a leader in Canada in addressing the fentanyl crisis at a local level and given that this model included distributing naloxone, proactive on-reserve enforcement to prevent trafficking, and establishing a successful opioid replacement to treat addiction and given that the fentanyl crisis is a life-and-death issue in a number of First Nations communities across Alberta, to the Minister of Indigenous Relations: what are you doing to monitor the crisis on other reserves, and what specific actions have you taken to implement the Kainai's successful framework on other reserves clear across Alberta?

The Speaker: The Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and to the member for the question. We're proud to be able to move forward in partnership with a number of indigenous leaders, including Dr. Esther Tailfeathers, who's actually part of the specific opioid crisis response commission. It's important that we work with leaders throughout our communities and acknowledge the very important role they play in standing up for their communities and their members as well. On Monday we opened a clinic in Grande Prairie, which, of course, has many First Nations in close proximity, and it has a capacity to treat up to 200 people. That was last Monday. We're very proud of that work.

Mr. Rodney: Given that in their efforts to address the fentanyl crisis within their community, the Kainai have also taken a very proactive and preventative approach to addiction and given that this includes recognizing the underlying issues which lead to addiction, including poverty, poor educational opportunities, unemployment, and a lack of housing supports, amongst others, to the Minister of Health this time: what specific initiatives have you undertaken with the Minister of Indigenous Relations to expand this approach to other reserves, and what are you doing to implement this approach in all affected communities right across Alberta?

The Speaker: The hon. Deputy Premier.

Ms Hoffman: Thank you very much. As the Deputy Premier and as the minister responsible for this file it's my pleasure to address this answer, Mr. Speaker. On Monday, again, we addressed a number

of those communities in Grande Prairie. We're also opening additional space in Wetaskiwin, Rocky Mountain House, Stettler, Ponoka, and surrounding areas, and I am very proud of the work we've done with Treaty 8. For example, we have working groups that sit down face to face and talk about the challenges they're facing with regard to a number of different ministries. I think this is bringing about great outcomes for a community. It will take time. We have a significant deficit that we're making up for, that was created over many years, but we certainly have the right people at the table to make significant improvements as we move forward, including the Minister of Indigenous Relations.

The Speaker: In 30 seconds we'll continue with Members' Statements.

Members' Statements

(continued)

Farmer's Day

Mr. Schneider: Mr. Speaker, for over 50 years the second Friday in June was a provincial holiday in Alberta. This day was recognized as Farmer's Day. Schools were closed, and communities big and small all over Alberta would celebrate the importance and impact that agriculture has had.

Although no longer formally recognized as a holiday, some rural boards do recognize the importance of the day and celebrate the spirit of the occasion. As such, the United Farmers of Alberta co-operative has chosen to continue to celebrate this day by acknowledging the hard work and contribution of Alberta's farmers. On June 9 UFA locations will thank their local farmers and communities by hosting several farm store events.

As we know, this past season has been difficult for some Alberta farmers. The weather can be both a blessing and a curse, and as we've seen, some Alberta farmers can't catch a break. Late-season rains last fall, an early winter, and a damp spring left almost a million acres unharvested in central Alberta. It's still a toss-up if these farmers will get a decent crop seeded this year.

While Mother Nature is as unpredictable as ever, what hasn't been is how this government has been treating rural landowners and farmers. The vague, ill-conceived patchwork of legislation that is Bill 6 has done nothing but create animosity and distrust as this government stumbled through botched consultation and ignored the very people it purported to be helping. To compound matters, a carbon tax was dropped upon farm and ranch operations, and the government seemed genuinely shocked that anyone would question its impact. The fact is that the brunt of calls I get are from agribusiness operations that cannot be competitive on the world stage because of this punitive tax.

Just as a reminder, earlier this month this government voted against private member's Bill 204, which proposed to give property rights back to landowners and end the squatters' rights issue. Maybe on the 9th of June government members should visit a UFA farm outlet and actually listen to the people who are being harmed by their policies.

Rural communities and those of us involved in agriculture understand its importance to Alberta. My sincerest wishes for a happy Farmer's Day for all.

Government Policies

Mr. Rodney: It's time to review the spring 2017 legislative session, and I'm not even going to start with the NDP's record-setting deficit, debt, and downgrades. The government opened with Bill 1,

which will increase transportation and other costs by over \$1,000 per student for many families in my riding, the opposite of making lives better for Albertans.

Next, while Ontario took two years to review their labour legislation, the Alberta NDP spent a mere month on a 252-page document to learn that business and employer groups are gravely concerned that they are not being heard. It sounds like the NDP are on the backs of Albertans. The NDP claimed that they needed to get it done right now, yet they had two years and two ministers to get this process rolling but chose not to. Apparently, stories about *Star Trek*, pink eye, the WWE, and expanding a window frame are more important to the NDP.

The NDP also had two ministers in two years to introduce a viable bill which could have ensured real change to the child intervention system, but Paula Simons' scathing assessment of Bill 18 demonstrates just how much is missing from this legislation.

Then the NDP missed yet another opportunity to declare Serenity's law. Her family even came to the capital to encourage the government to take action and call a public inquiry. Our caucus asked questions on their behalf yet again, and still the NDP refused to budge.

And there's more. Hundreds of Albertans have died as a result of the fentanyl crisis, yet despite constant calls from this side, the NDP refused to ever call a public health emergency.

Finally, the NDP have been telling Albertans that the burden and harm caused by the carbon tax would all be worth it in the end because it would give Alberta the social licence required to build pipelines to tidewater, except that the NDP's comrades from the other side of the mountains unequivocally reject the notion of social licence.

The NDP try to talk a good game, but Albertans can't wait for 2019. There's so much more, but I've only got two minutes. We can only revive the Alberta advantage for future generations once we unite Albertans once again.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Glenbrook Community in Calgary

Mr. Malkinson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It is with great pleasure that I rise today to speak about a community in my riding of Calgary-Currie that not only is doing fantastic work but also inspiring other communities across Calgary. I'm speaking, of course, of the Glenbrook Community Association and specifically to the work they've done to upgrade their community spaces.

Glenbrook has been a vibrant and growing community since the 1950s. The community association board is made up of dedicated, long-time residents whose own kids have grown up and who recognize that young families are now moving into the community. They wanted to be ahead of the curve, Mr. Speaker, by developing their community space into a lively recreational hub.

Murray Ost, a city of Calgary firefighter, has been president of the Glenbrook Community Association for over 20 years. He is the sort of person who gives out his personal cellphone number to all residents who live in the community so that they can call him first if there's a problem. He is just one example of the many great volunteers who make Glenbrook a fantastic community.

2:50

Just last spring Glenbrook received a CFEP grant of \$109,000. They used it to renovate their outdoor multisportsplex rink and to create the only rink in Calgary to have a summer surface that gets

covered with ice in the winter. Their new rink is an inspiration to other community associations across the city.

On Canada Day the community plans to have a grand opening barbecue. They're going to have plenty of things for everybody to participate in – paddle sports, basketball, ball hockey, and more – and a number of sports organizations are going to be there holding their camps as well. You really have to come see it for yourself, Mr. Speaker.

The Glenbrook Community Association is truly thankful for grants like CFEP from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. I am proud of the Glenbrook Community Association for their spirit of helping and for being a leader in the city.

I am also honoured to be hosting my Stampede breakfast at the Glenbrook Community Association this year. I look forward to running my wiener dog races on that new rink, and I look forward to the entire community coming out. I invite all members of the Legislature to see this wonderful event as well.

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

Camrose and District Support Services

Mr. Hinkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2017 the Camrose and District Support Services will have provided wanted and needed social programs for 50 years. I congratulate them. Also, congratulations to Margaret Holliston, the current executive director, and all her staff. They have worked hard to achieve the goals of family and community support services and enhance individual, family, and community assets by enhancing the strengths, skills, and abilities of clients to be more resilient and better able to deal with the challenges of life; building individual and environmental safeguards that enhance the ability to deal with stressful life events, risks, and hazards; and by addressing protective and risk factors that affect clients.

The Camrose and District Support Services and I would like to thank this government for its continued support. We appreciate this government's understanding that programs to assist vulnerable Albertans should not be lost in attempts to raise a credit rating while sacrificing human value and dignity.

CDSS includes the collaboration of eight municipal partners, both urban and rural. CDSS often launches projects and services with seed money and a lot of in-kind organizational support. Successful projects include Camrose Children's Centre, Open Door, which is a youth shelter doing youth outreach, and Service Options for Seniors, to name only a few. CDSS is particularly proud of the growth of Camrose Pride, which promotes inclusion, respect, and human rights. CDSS has annually updated their community help book with its vast information and referral services, which has been extremely valuable to my constituency staff in aiding the many constituents who seek help through our office.

Our government's continued funding of the Camrose and District Support Services is just one more example of how we are supporting organizations which, in turn, make life better for individuals, families, and Alberta communities.

Thank you.

29th Legislature Spring Sitting and Summer Break

Mr. Taylor: As we go into the summer recess, I'd like to take time to salute the hard-working Albertans that depend on us as legislators to debate bills and bring in laws that help them. Unfortunately, the NDP have used their majority to pass bills that many Albertans don't agree with such as the carbon tax and the

labour bill. Both will have a lasting impact on this province. In particular, though, I'd like to acknowledge the farmers and the oil field workers. These men and women have been hit hard by the recession and oil prices and poor conditions in the fields. They are the backbone of our economy and make up a large part of my riding of Battle River-Wainwright.

Over the coming summer months it will be my honour to meet with them both in their homes and at events like the Wainwright Stampede, to consult with them, and to discuss how we can make their lives better. Discussions and debates will continue throughout the summer around the legalization of marijuana, eliminating Alberta daylight saving time, and the protection of Alberta's youth, especially under the watch and care of the government.

Possible conservative political restructuring in Alberta this summer will indeed lead us to interesting times. The Wildrose and the PC Party will, through their membership, see if we can set aside our differences and work together in unity so that all Alberta can reap the benefits. Our Wildrose grassroots will be making decisions this summer on whether or not we unite. Albertans will have the final say on July 22.

The message that I'm getting from Albertans is that we cannot afford not to. Albertans will not be able to afford a higher budget that sinks us deeper and deeper into debt, an anticipated \$94 billion in debt by the next election. That's 94 billion reasons why we need a strong and united conservative voice to end the financial disaster. So please come out, sign up, and vote to make a difference.

Thank you.

Tabling Returns and Reports

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

Dr. Turner: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to table the requisite five copies of a new report from the Public Health Law Center in St. Paul, Minnesota, titled *Leading from up North: How Canada Is Solving the Menthol Tobacco Problem*. This report documents Canada's and Alberta's global leadership in banning flavoured tobacco products and profiles the efforts of several provinces which have approved and implemented legislation to remove flavours from tobacco products, including Alberta.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mrs. Aheer: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. On behalf of Theresa Ng and with respect to the inappropriate content available for K to 12 kids in schools are 2,700 names on a petition from concerned parents. I have the five requisite copies of that. I would also like to table received correspondence on this subject as well, please, with the five copies.

Cortes-Vargas: I'd just like to briefly stand and table a document from an incredible constituent who is actually in the gallery today. He has been an oil and gas worker for many years. He's been working as a trade worker, I think. It's in response to some of the comments that have been made by the opposition about union thugs, and it talks about the great contribution that the unions played during the Fort McMurray wildfire, Mr. Speaker. I have the requisite number of copies.

Tablings to the Clerk

The Clerk: I wish to advise the Assembly that the following document was deposited with the office of the Clerk: on behalf of the hon. Mr. Feehan, Minister of Indigenous Relations, responses

to questions raised by Mr. Rodney, the hon. Member for Calgary-Lougheed, at the April 13, 2017, Ministry of Indigenous Relations 2016-17 main estimates debate.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I believe we have a point of order that was raised.

The Deputy Government House Leader.

Point of Order Insulting Language

Mr. Bilous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It sickens me to have to rise on a point of order today. I make reference to 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, I have two examples that happened around the same time. At approximately 2:07 today, during the Minister of Justice's response to questions from the Member for Calgary-Hays, the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo said, directed at the Minister of Justice: is it because you're a racist? Around the same time the Member for Drumheller-Stettler, referring to the Minister of Justice, said: you're only a dime-store lawyer.

I want to start off by saying that that kind of language is offensive. It's offensive not only to members of this House; it's offensive to Albertans. In fact, I think we are better than that and need to hold ourselves to a higher account, Mr. Speaker. First of all, the term "racist" is unparliamentary. I can give you a number of examples. I would argue that it is very unbecoming of a member of this House to use that type of language. I want to point out that just because a microphone is not on, it doesn't mean that a member can say anything, you know, or can utter remarks like that, to basically make accusations against another member.

Frankly, the question exchange between the Member for Calgary-Hays and the Minister of Justice is about a very, very serious matter that has been revealed to us and to Albertans. To have an accusation made against the Minister of Justice, a very serious accusation, on a day such as today makes it even harder to stomach, Mr. Speaker.

3:00

Again, comments like one member accusing another of being a racist undermine the dignity and respect of this House. It is beneath this Assembly, Mr. Speaker. I would just like to quote from *Hansard* on April 30, 2003. Speaker Kowalski in a ruling said:

There are few allegations that could be made against a member that could be more damaging than that he or she was promoting or condoning discrimination. As the chair has said over and over again, freedom of speech carries with it great responsibility. The events on Monday bring no honour to this Assembly, which is extremely regrettable not just for the chair but for each and every member of the Assembly.

At that point the former Speaker went on to demand an apology from the member for uttering such comments.

Again, Mr. Speaker, it's quite disappointing, not only for this side of the House, but again, I mean, we have members of the public that are in our galleries, and we have folks at home that watch. We should hold ourselves to the highest standards because of the public office that we hold. I was extremely disappointed to hear both of those comments made, and I would ask that the member withdraw and apologize not only to the Minister of Justice but to this House and to all Albertans.

The Speaker: The Opposition House Leader.

Mr. Cooper: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Let me begin by saying that these are serious allegations that are being made by my colleague the Deputy Government House Leader. At that time it was a very serious question that the Member for Calgary-Hays was raising about whether or not the Department of Justice was treating certain groups or individuals differently and if there was a bias directed towards certain groups or individuals.

While I don't have the benefit of the Blues and I can say with all certainty that I am not a hundred per cent sure of what the member sitting behind me said, he most certainly did not make the allegation that the minister is a racist. Now, he may have asked – in fact, I literally did not hear the words that he did not say. However, I did ask him if he had said those things, and he spoke about if the department was functioning that way, which was the very heart of the question that was being asked. At no point in time did the Member for Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo make an allegation that the minister was prejudiced.

I might go as far as to say that at that very moment the minister was giving a very thoughtful response about how this very issue, that the department is functioning with a bias, keeps her up at night. I know that my colleague from Fort McMurray-Wood Buffalo shares those same concerns and challenges and frustrations about how certain groups of people are affected by the way that the department treats them. I would find it highly unlikely that he, in fact, uttered the words “It's because you're a racist,” as in the allegations that are made. Now, I will agree that he was frustrated at the time that the question was asked because of the absolutely unbelievable conditions to which Miss Cardinal had been treated by the Department of Justice, a question specifically about whether or not she would have been treated that way if she was from a different ethnic group.

While no one in this House has the benefit of knowing exactly what the member said, to make the allegation that he said that about the minister without being a hundred per cent certain is also concerning because this is an issue that one ought not tread lightly into. I'm not suggesting that the minister isn't, but I don't believe that the member made that sort of allegation as it would not be consistent with his character, particularly around this particular issue.

While I think that you may find it very difficult to rule because it's unlikely, if I didn't hear, that you heard, I do take this very seriously. I know that the member does as well, so I will leave it in your capable hands and at your discretion. Now, if – if – the House believes that that is what took place, I'm certain he would be happy to withdraw and apologize, and I would do that on his behalf, but I am also convinced that that was not what happened today because that would have been highly and wildly inappropriate.

The Speaker: Hon. Opposition House Leader, I believe there was a second allegation, about a second comment. Could you speak to that matter?

Mr. Cooper: I can speak to that very briefly, Mr. Speaker. I also did not hear what may or may not have been said in the heckling, the back and forth. Certainly, one of these allegations, if that took place, is well beyond the scope of what is reasonable to say inside the Chamber. The other, I think you'll find, is the ebb and flow of this place.

The Speaker: The Member for Calgary-Elbow.

Mr. Clark: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'll be brief. One of the benefits of sitting in this part of the House is that I don't tend to hear all of the things that go back and forth. That is actually quite a

benefit, I have to say, because a lot of what goes back and forth: “unhelpful” would be, probably, a gentle term.

I think that when we're dealing with issues this serious and emotions are running high, it's incumbent on all members to check ourselves and really ask what purpose it serves. Alleged comments like this are deeply troubling, and it's a pattern. It's a trend that, I think, unfortunately is perhaps not unique to our Assembly, but I think that we in this House, all of us – and I'll include myself in this – can be better. I don't think that it serves democracy. It does not, I think, live up to Albertans' expectations of how we all ought to behave. These sorts of comments, whether you find they did in fact occur or not, are truly unhelpful.

So I think this, as we wrap up session or get close to it, anyway, perhaps serves as an opportunity for us, as we go back to our constituencies and back to our families, to reflect on how we behave in this Assembly, and I would hope that we can all be better, Mr. Speaker.

Thank you.

The Speaker: Hon. members, I too did not hear the two comments that are alleged, nor as I look at the Blues, do I see an account of the statements being made.

It seems to me, though, hon. members, that this is yet another opportunity for this House. Collectively, as we move into this summer break, each of you needs to ask yourselves, when you're raising points in heated discussions or not heated discussions, whether you're actually contributing to the good and healthy democratic debate that takes place in this House. Sometimes it appears to me that comments are made as to how close one can get before being called on a point of order by the Speaker or being called by another member. Let this serve as an example and another opportunity, that when we all return to this place, we will be more cognizant of the comments that we make and of whether they, in fact, contribute to the success of this institution.

I'm going to say, hon. member, that I see no point of order at this time. I just would leave it as a reminder. Unless I hear and see the point, I cannot make a ruling, as per page 618 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*.

The Opposition House Leader seems to want to say something else. I've made a decision. I'm not sure how he will contribute to this matter.

3:10

Mr. Cooper: Not speaking to the point of order, sir, just rising to request unanimous consent to do away with Standing Order 8(1), that allows private members' business on Monday afternoons, that we would move immediately to Government Bills and Orders.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Orders of the Day

Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

The Deputy Chair: Good afternoon, everyone. I'd like to call the committee to order.

Bill 17

Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act

The Deputy Chair: Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered in respect of this bill? The hon. Member for Calgary-South East.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have an amendment.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, please wait till I see the original, and then we can continue.

Hon. member, your amendment will be referred to as A14. Please go ahead.

Mr. Fraser: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that Bill 17, Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act, be amended in section 118(1), in the proposed section 53, as follows: (a) by adding the following after subsection (7):

(7.1) A revocation vote is not required if, on the basis of the evidence submitted in support of the application and the Board's investigation in respect of that evidence, the Board is satisfied that at the time of the application for revocation the applicants had the support, in the form set out in section 51(2), of more than 65% of the employees in the bargaining unit.

(7.2) At any time after the Board begins assessing an application referred to in subsection (7.1), the applicants may elect to waive the right to revocation under subsection (7.1) and to proceed with the revocation based on the results of a revocation vote.

(7.3) If the Board determines under subsection (7.1) that the applicants lack the necessary 65% support of the employees in the bargaining unit, but have the 40% support required by subsection (5), or if there is a waiver under subsection (7.2), the Board shall within 3 working days of that determination or waiver, give notice of a revocation vote.

And (b) in subsection (8) by adding "or (7.3)," after "vote referred to in subsection (6)".

Thank you, Madam Chair. That was definitely a mouthful.

When I speak to this, Madam Chair, I want to put some context around it. You know, certainly, my time in the union – I have to get this set out in the beginning, when I started my career in Calgary paramedics a number of years ago. I have to give credit to my friends in the union at the time that went before me, that made that job incredibly enticing. They did such tremendous work not only to promote labour issues but the profession. In fact, what I can say is that both in Calgary and Edmonton under those respective CUPE bargaining units they did amazing work. I will always lift up the amazing work that they have done, so this is not in any way a reflection that this is anti-union. In fact, this is actually an opportunity to speak about the bill and the title of the bill, Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act.

Madam Chair, when we talk about, you know, certifying a union, the government has spoken about that 65 per cent threshold, where everybody signs a card and then, essentially, it becomes automatic and that for anything below that, between 40 per cent and 65 per cent, it will go to a vote. Well, we all know, at the end of the day, that it is extremely important that we as Albertans get our fair chance to speak about the things we're passionate about and, more importantly, to have the opportunity, the ability to vote. So when we talk about being fair in this legislation, I guess you could say that what is good for the goose is good for the gander. What this does is that it allows employers and it allows those folks – and I'm not going to mention any particular union, but we know there are times when the union doesn't uphold its end of the deal with its members, and I've heard that.

What we want to do is make sure that there is an equal opportunity. Madam Chair, you know, in my time in the union, in fact, I've been on the steps with some of the people in this gallery against the government that I came to serve because I felt that at that time they weren't listening. But it was our opportunity to exercise that. When we talk about this, at the end of the day, to certify, you need that 65 per cent threshold. To decertify or for a revocation vote, you need that 65 per cent. It's fair right across the

board. It creates equality, and I can't imagine that the government and their members and private members would want to take that opportunity away from Albertans. To me, it's a friendly amendment.

Madam Chair, the other part of this that I'd like to speak about is that we as a caucus and I myself, I can tell you, given the opportunity, would support the workplace safety changes to better things for Albertans. I think you've heard that from almost all opposition members: given the opportunity to do that. But when I talk about this specific piece and why I put this amendment forward, I think there is a real opportunity here for us to take a look at the Labour Relations Code and speak about a number of things that I know folks inside the labour movement aren't happy with, that I know folks even perhaps in government may not be fully supportive of. It is an opportunity to open up that entire act and have a fulsome debate about what it means for Albertans, what it means for employers, what it means for the members of unions, and I'm speaking from experience on that.

I think there are opportunities, again, to create that part of this legislation, to have it be more fair, more transparent. In fact, we all know that when we call it evergreening legislation, it is bringing it up to date, to a current standard, not just a portion of it. I would recommend to the government my thought process. In fact, in speaking to the Minister of Labour and, in fact, speaking to anybody in cabinet, it is important that we have the ability to be heard. I hope that there's somebody on the government side that might be able to speak to this, because I think it's important. It talks about equality, it talks about fairness across the board, and it talks about our ability to actually get things done properly, in a more fulsome debate, by separating those two pieces.

I won't speak much longer on this. Again, I think this is fair right across the board for everybody.

Thank you, Madam Chair, for the opportunity.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A14? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Centre.

Mr. Shepherd: Well, thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the member for bringing forward this amendment. I certainly appreciate the thought and consideration that he's put into this, and I'm certainly aware that this member has indeed worked in a union environment, indeed has been part of the folks that have been in leadership in that, and he's certainly been vocal about looking out for those that he worked with and his brothers and sisters in that employment. So we appreciate the thought that he's put into this amendment and the consideration in general that he's put into these aspects of the bill.

3:20

Now, certainly, Madam Chair, the intent of this bill is to ensure that Albertans have a fair and family-friendly workplace, that laws that we put in place in our labour codes, in our labour acts are supporting a strong economy and ensuring that people are able to look after themselves and their families.

Certainly, Madam Chair, I am well aware, having myself worked in a number of union environments, of the importance of ensuring that the rules we have in place that govern the means by which unions are put in place or indeed by which unions are revoked are fair and reasonable. Indeed, a union can be a very powerful force for good for employees. I know that, for myself, in the past at some of the places I've worked, particularly when I worked for the Canada Revenue Agency and had the opportunity to be represented by PSAC there in the call centre that I worked at, I was greatly

appreciative of the work that they had done there, of the ability that I had there to earn a very good wage for the work that I was doing and of having the opportunity to benefit from the work that they were doing there.

At the same time, Madam Chair, I recognize that a union, in the work that it does, needs to be held accountable. There may be times when members find that the union that they have representing them has ceased to represent them to the extent that they feel is important or adequate. We need to have fair means in place which allow that union to be revoked so that members have the opportunity to seek another union to bring into that place or to consider going without representation, because indeed that also is about having a fair and family-friendly workplace.

Those are just my general thoughts. I'm interested in hearing more on this. I know, certainly, I have some colleagues who have even deeper experience in the labour movement, and I look forward to perhaps some of the insight they can bring to this particular amendment.

The Deputy Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A14? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Madam Chair. A pleasure to rise again this week in Committee of the Whole and be able to speak about Bill 17 and this amendment that was just brought forward by the hon. member. I do thank him for bringing it forward, and I understand the intentions of what it is he is trying to accomplish.

Of course, what we have right now in our system is, you know, the protected vote when employees are looking to form a union. What we've suggested is that now, when you're able to sign cards at 65 per cent and once that has been verified through application and petition to the labour board, they will automatically certify. One of the things that we've been trying to do now, of course, is to line up right across the board with other jurisdictions that are doing the same thing. Currently, right now, there are no other jurisdictions that have this type of language within their legislation.

I think that at this time, again, I'll thank the member for bringing the amendment forward, but I'm not willing to support it at this time, making sure that we're staying standard with the rest of the jurisdictions across the country, and I'll ask other members to not support it at this time.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A14? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, and I'd like to thank the hon. member for introducing this amendment. It appears to be an amendment that seems very in line with what this government is proposing with regard to fair treatment moving forward.

From what I've heard from the other side, on the basis to not go in the direction where a revocation vote can be triggered by 65 per cent of the employees in the bargaining unit, they're utilizing the argument that it's not used in any other jurisdiction. If I'm wrong in the way I interpreted what was presented here, then I stand to be corrected, but I do believe that this would completely fall in line with the guidelines that are being proposed by this government, that if it's good for one, it's good for the other.

I do believe that I would support this amendment, and I look forward to all other members supporting a very reasonable amendment.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A14? The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gottfried: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to rise in support of the hon. Member for Calgary-South East's amendment. We speak a lot about fairness and transparency, and I think that all members of this House would say that the will of the employee should be the strongest voice in any decisions around unionization or revocation of that unionization. We all want what's best for the employees. We want to ensure that their decisions are made in a transparent manner, without undue influence from either employers or unions.

This amendment allows that process to take place in a fair manner, the same fair manner in terms of – and I'm not a big fan of the straight card check on the way in, but if that's going to be the rule, then we need to make sure that those same principles are employed on the way out of a union. I think that that's only fair to the employees, that we're trying to protect here with legislation. I think it's an opportunity for this House to actually do what's right on this occasion, to again look at fair, equitable, transparent behaviour. You can't speak out of this side of your mouth about fairness and transparency and equitable behaviour and the will of the employees and not have it spoken out of the other side. I think there's an opportunity here for this House to do the right thing, to pass this amendment, and to ensure that this legislation, with all of its flaws, at least has some balance in some of these opportunities for some amendment on some of the minutiae of the bill.

I'd like to encourage everybody in this House to support this amendment. It's well thought out. I think that it's very clear what the intentions are here and that it's something where, if somebody looks, certainly, into their own principles on this, they'll understand that this is a balanced and fair approach to the legislation.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the member for the proposed amendment. Now, this is not apples and apples. When you're signing up, why the 65 per cent for card check is a good thing is simply this. You have to think about who is actually in charge of making the decisions about who is employed and who isn't. Now, can you imagine the potential for intimidation in going around and asking people: do you want to get out of the union? It's absurd. This is not a fair comparison. Just think. I just want the members opposite to think about what that would look like in their own situation at any workplace. A union representative does not make the decision on who is employed there and who is not; management does.

That's all I have to say, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Mr. Fraser: Madam Chair, I respect the comments, and I can totally understand that, but I think the problem is that we're making the assumption that every employer is nefarious.

Mr. Coolahan: Absolutely not.

Mr. Fraser: Well, that's the assumption when we say that we can't balance it by staying the other way.

Now, certainly, depending on how a labour organization is organized, it can be done with force, it can be done with care, it can be done with good intent, or it can be done with bad intent. I think we all recognize that. And the same for the employer. That's why we have the Labour Relations Board, Madam Chair. The Labour Relations Board is there to hammer all these things out and penalize

those people who don't follow the law. All this does is enshrine this in law, that whatever the process is to organize a union, to move out of a union the same way would be done in a fair way.

I will tell you that I will be the first one to champion any organization and any employee who's bullied by their employer. I guarantee you that. But what I'm saying is that every time we take a look and it tips the scales one way or the other – all I'm saying is about trying to balance the scales here. This is a fair amendment to take a look at that.

This is why, again, I go back to the idea of why these two pieces of the legislation need to be separated. The member brings up a fair point. The labour board itself and the labour code can be bolstered by this. It can be brought out in committee so that everybody has a fair understanding of how it works, including employers. Not every employer is afraid of being unionized, and not everybody who works for an employer wants to be unionized. When we talk about it just being fair and being equal across the board, that's what this amendment provides. I think we should be careful about making assumptions one way or the other. I just think it's important. We could balance the scales with this.

Again, I would support it if the government would separate these pieces of legislation so that we can actually get down to the nuts and bolts of what's going on with the Labour Relations Code versus what's happening to employment standards.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

3:30

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A14?

Mr. Nielsen: Just a couple of things to clarify. You know, I was speaking to this last week during the discussion about separating out the language. Again, drawing on my experience from my time in the labour movement, I'm not aware of any contract anywhere between any union and any employee where they separate out their language – okay? – so that you might have a book that holds compassionate care language over here, and over here you'd have the book that deals with every other language. It's all in one, one contract, and all the language is called labour language. So when we talk about splitting it up, we're talking about trying to tear apart labour language and making two different discussions here. I just thought I'd remind the House of that.

With regard to the amendment, Madam Chair, right now the system that is working here in Alberta and the process around decertification really has never had any problems. We've been looking at trying to standardize our labour language with what other employees across the rest of the country already enjoy, and they haven't attempted to change this in any way.

Again I'll ask members to not support this amendment at this time, and I'll probably have more to say about some of the other comments later.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to A14? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Chair. Not to belabour the point, but it's interesting that the argument used to speak against this very reasonable amendment is that the system has not had any problems. Now we're moving into a system that's being introduced by this government into the certification of unions, which, I would argue, has not had any problems previously. So if we're going to move to a system of this type of democracy, so-called democracy – I would suggest that it's not necessarily what I would believe to be

fully democratic – and opening the door to abuse from employers or employees or from unions, then we have to do it on equal scales, whether we're certifying a new union or whether we're revoking that.

I do believe that this is a critical understanding, that if it's good going in, it should be good going out so that we are comparing apples to apples. On the argument that it wasn't broken and it didn't have any problems, I would suggest that we also didn't have any problems previously with the secret ballot process of certifying a union to begin with. So I don't understand why it can be used to argue one way and then to argue the other way when we're talking about a very reasonable amendment here.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Mr. Gotfried: Madam Chair, you know, this is, I think, a very fair amendment, but in some respects it doesn't go far enough. Maybe we should be asking for unions to have to recertify every year or two years or three years, which would mean that they would have to hit that 65 per cent threshold once again. All we're asking for is that to reverse that decision, to actually be able to back out of it, the onus is then back on the employees to prove that they want to decertify as a union. We're not asking for something that is actually skewed in favour of decertifying a union. We're actually asking for the same fairness to decertify as to certify in the first place, which, quite frankly, I don't think is fair. I think that the card check system is flawed. I think that it should be held to a secret vote. I mean, there's huge precedent and huge outcry that we're hearing not just from employers but employees around the fact that they want a secret ballot, that a secret ballot is the only way to ensure absolute transparency for themselves from fear of any kind of reprisal or undue influence or retribution or anything of that sort from a decision that they can make with their own clear conscience with the best interests of themselves and their families and their future at stake. This, I think, is a very watered-down way. Again, with all respect to the Member for Calgary-South East, he's actually being extremely fair and equitable and transparent in proposing this amendment, which is actually just asking for the same treatment as the government is asking for in this bill to certify.

Really, I think we should say that maybe you have to hit that 65 per cent mark again and again and again to prove that you actually hold that same power among your employees, that same decision-making power, that they continue to want that certification of that union. We're not asking for that at this juncture here today. What we're saying is that there needs to be balance on the fairness of certification or decertification of a union. I think that that's a simple principle to grasp, that we're asking for that.

Again, I don't think it goes far enough. I think that the card check system is flawed, and I think, talking about apples, that there are bad apples out there. There could be bad apples on the employer side and bad apples on the union side. I think that every employee deserves the opportunity to make that decision through their own conscience alone without having to open their kimono on that and say: "You know what? Here, I'm going to tell everybody what I'm going to do so that you can possibly harass me, intimidate me, or continually advocate or use peer pressure on me to make that decision." We're only asking here for this amendment, to be flawed in its own right, to allow people to say: we want out.

For that reason, if this is the farthest we can go – and I don't believe, again, that it's far enough – it's better than what we are sitting with today in this legislation. We should be supporting this. All members of this House should be supporting this amendment

because it is fair and equitable and transparent to both sides, using the same rules, which, again, I do not believe are fair, but it's better than what we have today.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A14? The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Mrs. Littlewood: Thank you, Madam Chair. I just wanted to say a few things about this. First of all, I'll start by saying that I'm incredibly proud that we have a section in the amendments titled Inquiry into Certification Application because we have one of the most outdated and regressive labour codes in the country, which is why we have the lowest number of Albertans that belong to a union.

I just wanted to say that I want to thank the groups that have come and had input into it to make sure that it was coming closer into line with the rest of the country. I know that employers have said that they want time to be able to synthesize a lot of this into their practices at work with employment. I wanted to speak just a little bit to our members in the gallery that are here to join us. I'm not going to list off their names because I'll forget most of them, but I'm thankful to know their faces and count them as friends.

I know that they are disparagingly referred to as union thugs and union bosses, but I want to say that people like Scott Crichton, who was able to mobilize . . .

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, if you could just speak through me, through the chair, please, and not to the gallery, I would appreciate it.

Mrs. Littlewood: I'm speaking about the gallery, not speaking to the gallery.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, they've already been introduced, and you can't speak to the gallery. You have to speak through me, please.

Mrs. Littlewood: Madam Chair, it is my pleasure to know that there are members in the gallery that I count as friends that have been incredibly helpful with putting together this legislation and, I should say, people from groups like IBEW, that were able to mobilize 150 letters to come from Mundare and Andrew and St. Michael and Tofield and Lamont and Fort Saskatchewan and Strathcona county to say that they want to see change that makes their lives better, their work lives better, that they know that the people that fight on their behalf do so with research, they do so with commitment, and they do so with incredible heart.

I want to just make it very clear that I support our legislation in Alberta, with the labour code coming into the 21st century, and that is why I'm going to vote down this amendment.

3:40

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Vermilion-Lloydminster first, followed by the Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Dr. Starke: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the opportunity to speak to the amendment proposed by my colleague the Member for Calgary-South East. It is clear to me and it should come as no surprise to any members here – I spoke to this when I spoke to this bill on second reading – that there are certain biases within the Assembly. I don't think it should come as any surprise to anyone that most of the members of the government caucus have a pro-union bias. That's not a surprise. In fact, most of them are

quite readily willing to accept and wear that as a badge of honour, and they're allowed to do that. That's fine.

It could also be said that many members on this side of the House have – I'm not sure what you'd call it. I wouldn't call it an anti-union bias. As I said, I was once a member of a labour union myself, and I recognize the role that organized labour has within society. It is important that there be a balance between organized labour and management in all situations.

But here's the problem. It's a little bit like pulling for two different sports teams. Because we're in Alberta, I'll use Edmonton and Calgary as an example. The members over on the government side, a lot of them, may well be fans of the Edmonton sports teams, while the folks on this side may well be fans of the Calgary sports teams. Now, this is hypothetical, of course, because I would never cheer for Calgary sports teams. Let's just say for the purposes of this particular illustration, Madam Chair, that that's the situation, that we have one side that is pulling for Edmonton and one side that's pulling for Calgary. But here's the thing. We're setting the rules in this match. We're setting up how the rules will govern how this interaction is to play out.

What we have here is a situation where the folks that are pulling for one team are in the majority, and the folks that are pulling for the other team are in a minority. The folks that are pulling for the one team and that are in the majority are specifically setting the rules in favour of the team that they're pulling for. That's exactly what is going on here with this particular section of Bill 17, and my hon. colleague is simply trying to set the rules evenly.

You know, like I say, it's a little bit like a situation whereby if the route into a certain situation is relatively simple whereas the route out is relatively complex, it stands to reason that over time more and more situations will happen where organizations move into that situation but then have a hard time moving out simply because the rules to move back out again are not the same.

That's the situation that we find ourselves in here. We find ourselves in a situation where the government side, which is specifically more pro-union, is setting up the rules in such a way that certification of unions is done under one set of rules, is done by one procedure. But the exact mirror image of that, to allow for a group of employees, should they desire, to revoke their certification: all of a sudden those rules are more difficult. All of a sudden those rules are more complex. Very clearly, even if you don't have, you know, a specific bias one way or the other, if you look objectively at that situation, that is very clearly an unfair and unbalanced set of rules.

Now, our role here as legislators is to set our biases aside and to actually consider what makes for the best legislation. The best legislation is legislation that is balanced. It is legislation that would allow for, if you will, a two-way street; in other words, a situation where for those who wish to become certified, if there's a certain set of rules – and it's been mentioned before, and I'm not enamoured with the rules that are being proposed in Bill 17, but if those are the rules that are going to be set up for certification of labour unions, then in order to be fair and in order to be balanced, it would seem to me that revocation of certification should follow the exact same rules. That is what this amendment proposes. That's what my friend the hon. Member for Calgary-South East has proposed.

An Hon. Member: For 40 years you've been talking about it.

Dr. Starke: You can talk all you like about past history and all that other stuff. We are in the here and now. We are setting rules for

going forward. You don't start talking about, you know: we're going to even the playing field by flipping the scale over to the other side. That's not our role here. Our role here is to provide even and balanced legislation.

What we have here again, Madam Chair, like I say, is a team that has been on a 44-year losing streak over there. So now in order to try to get on their own little winning streak, they're going to try to set the rules in their favour so that they can go on a 44-year winning streak. That's not right. That's simply not right, and it's not what should be done by the legislators in this Chamber. Our job is to set good legislation, not prebiased legislation but good legislation. This member has proposed an amendment that would put that forward, that would correct a bias in this legislation as it exists currently.

Now, the members on the other side don't want to correct that bias. That's fine. That's fine, but you will have to answer to the people of Alberta when they look at the legislation and they say: "This legislation is biased in favour of labour unions. This is unfair legislation. This legislation has been poorly crafted." If you're comfortable with answering to Albertans and those charges on that legislation, then defeat this amendment.

Personally, being part of an Assembly wherein we should be passing legislation that is even and balanced and is fair to all parties, it seems to me very clear that the rules going in and the rules going out should basically be mirror images of each other. If they are not, then there's a basic unfairness. For that reason, I'm in favour and will vote in favour of my colleague's amendment.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to A14? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Madam Chair. Hey, I must admit that I was rather interested in some of the comments that were made across the way here a little bit. You know, last week I had encouraged members from the other side to maybe reach out to maybe even some of the fine members that we have sitting in our gallery here today to learn a little bit about how a union actually works, okay?

There were comments about how, well, every four years a union should try to see if they could get their certification back. Maybe if you were a little bit more familiar with the rules, you'd understand that the end of every contract, 90 days before, is when people have the time to go and decertify if they so choose, and it happens at the end of every single contract. Sometimes those contracts are one year long, two years long, three years long, four years long. Again I would certainly encourage the members across the way to maybe go seek some of the help of our fine folks in the gallery here.

You know, another bit of biased positioning here. I heard a lot of table-banging last week when there was talk about possibly removing the Rand formula – yeah, that's not tipping the scales in the other direction – talk about poorly crafted legislation, repealing the ability for employers to pay less than minimum wage to a person with disabilities. I didn't realize that removing that would be considered crafting poor legislation. [interjections]

Again, getting back to the amendment, Madam Chair – and I know folks across the way are chattering away, but we're going to keep plowing along here – this is about standardizing our language across the board where it's already been working in other jurisdictions in Canada. What they're suggesting in the amendment has not been suggested in other jurisdictions. I guess they don't feel that that has tipped it in one way or the other. Again, all the members of the House I would encourage to not support this.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Just a reminder. I know we just came out of question period, but if we could please try to refrain the rhetoric going back and forth across the floor and be respectful to the speakers, I would appreciate it.

Anybody else wishing to speak to amendment A14?

Some Hon. Members: Question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A14 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 3:50 p.m.]

[Fifteen minutes having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Barnes	Hanson	Stier
Cooper	Loewen	Swann
Drysdale	Orr	Taylor
Fraser	Rodney	van Dijken
Gotfried	Starke	

Against the motion:

Babcock	Hinkley	Miller
Bilous	Horne	Miranda
Carlier	Jansen	Nielsen
Carson	Kazim	Payne
Ceci	Kleinsteuber	Phillips
Connolly	Larivee	Piquette
Coolahan	Littlewood	Renaud
Cortes-Vargas	Luff	Rosendahl
Dach	Malkinson	Schreiner
Dang	Mason	Shepherd
Drever	McKitrick	Sigurdson
Feehan	McLean	Turner
Ganley	McPherson	Woollard
Gray		

Totals: For – 14 Against – 40

[Motion on amendment A14 lost]

The Deputy Chair: We are now back on the original bill, Bill 17. Are there any amendments, questions, comments? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I have an amendment to submit.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member. If you could please just wait until I have the original.

Your amendment will be referred to as A15. Please go ahead.

Dr. Swann: Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I'm very pleased to stand and speak to Bill 17, Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act, with an amendment I think that everyone here will find reasonable. It has to do with break times. I mean, to expect workers to work unlimited hours without a break – and I'm speaking here of paid farm workers – seems eminently unfair, non family friendly, and it flies in the face of all of the values that this government has said that they believe in. We're suggesting here that we amend section 4 in the proposed section 2.1(1) by striking out clause (a) and substituting

(a) section 16 of Part 2, Division 3, Hours of Work;

Madam Chair, under the workplace standards everywhere else in Alberta after five hours of work it's expected that a worker would get 30 minutes of rest, but unfortunately paid farm workers are exempt from any kind of provision for rest. I'm particularly concerned with young people, foreign workers, people who are vulnerable, people who may not want to ask for a rest because it's not written into their contract. I don't see how we could avoid at least putting in some concrete terms the recognition of the need for a rest break.

Under the current rest period for every other worker an employer must provide each employee who works five hours or more with at least 30 minutes of rest, whether paid or unpaid, unless there's an accident or different rest provisions are provided or it's not reasonable for the employee to take a rest period during that time. Well, that to me says that we have a double standard again.

4:10

I raised this issue about overtime pay, and now I'm raising the issue in relation to fair and safe work practices where people can have a break. We're putting this provision in not only for an unfair expectation of, especially, naive workers and foreign workers; we're also putting them at risk of injury if they push on and push on. In some farm operations it's true that you just have to work overtime. But if we're not putting into legislation some legislated protection for some kind of rest period, we are setting people up for injuries, accidents, and problems.

Further to that, I don't think I need to add that this is a government that wants to be fair. They want to be family friendly. There is just absolutely no reason why you wouldn't include in these important changes for employee standards and labour standards, some provision for rest. I rest my case, Madam Chair. I can't imagine any refutation of that.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A15? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the member bringing forward this amendment. Certainly, the spirit of the intention of this amendment is definitely a good one. One of the things that we heard within the working groups that have been working very, very diligently with our farm and ranch owners and the workers that they pointed out is that this type of amendment might kind of push things a little bit too far, that they're unable to adapt to this. You know, that was one of the recommendations that was brought forward to us. The government looked very, very seriously at this. You know, as the title says, the fair part – what we have so far is a very big gain. As the system begins to grow and we see where things are maybe not working as well, we can certainly start to adjust for those.

It's very, very reluctantly that I would not be able to support this amendment at this time. Again, I do want to thank the member for bringing this forward. I certainly understand the intentions of it. I would have to ask members of the House to not support it at this time.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak?

Dr. Swann: Well, that's very unfortunate, Madam Chair. It strikes me that this government has been cowed by industrial agriculture. They got such push-back on Bill 6 that they're now backing away from the most fundamental worker right of all, a chance to rest when folks are tired. On one hand, they seem to have said that it's

time for a change in Alberta, but somehow it's a step too far to ensure that young people and new Canadians especially are treated fairly in the workplace. Folks could work 28 days straight under the current legislation with only one day off and no rest periods. They could work 18 hours and have no break under the current legislation.

It's really disappointing to me that they would take the big step, certainly, to bring in Bill 6 and ensure some kind of safety, some kind of standards, and then exempt farm workers just because of the aggressive ag coalition and their throwing their weight around in the rural areas and, presumably, intimidating this government in terms of its election and political future in the rural areas.

Again, I think that any reasonable person looking at it would say that rather than err on the side of putting no constraints on employers, especially industrial agriculture, we should at least put something in there that suggests that there is a recourse for an employee who feels vulnerable to losing their job and at the same time feels vulnerable if they carry on under the conditions that they're being asked to continue under. It flies in the face of what this government says is fair and family friendly and all because they're afraid of push-back from big ag, which has continued to dominate the scene since these working groups were established.

Again, it's not only disingenuous to say that we have reluctance to address these needs; some of the accidents, injuries, and even deaths will be on your watch if you are unwilling to even look at a modicum of required rest for, especially, young people. We're now allowing 14- to 16-year-olds to do certain duties on farms. Quite frankly, even an 18-year-old who is new to industrial agriculture will be very reluctant to push against the employer and say: "This is unreasonable, to expect me and others to work in hour 18 when I haven't had a break and when I feel like I'm numbed out. I can't even think straight, and I'm not going to expect anything from you." Ninety-five per cent of employers would never do this, obviously, but the reason we make legislation is to cover the 5 per cent of people that are not reasonable, that are not responsible, that are not thinking of their workers. They're thinking of themselves and their own bottom line.

So I encourage the government to rethink this. Even enshrining something for the protection, the rest protection of paid farm workers would send a message: "We recognize that people are human beings, and they have a right to a break, whether they are a paid farm worker or any other worker. We value your health. We value you as a person. We recognize that you have the rights of every other worker in this province to be safe and take the rest breaks as you need them." I would encourage the government to rethink this as it smacks of political opportunism, and I don't think it will escape most paid farm workers that this is not a fair or family-friendly decision.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A15? The hon. Member for Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville.

Mrs. Littlewood: Sorry. I cede the floor to my colleague.

The Deputy Chair: The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Madam Chair. Sorry for that small confusion there.

You know, I guess I just wanted to point out for other folks here some of the folks that were part of the working group that brought forward these recommendations. We had members such as Blaine Staples, a Red Deer county producer, U-pick and agritourism operator; Stuart Theissen from Strathmore, a producer, a cow-calf

and grain feedlot operator; Susan Schafers, a Stony Plain egg farmer; Laurie Fries, a Wainwright mixed livestock producer. The list is a lot longer as well. I certainly don't want to belabour the point here, but this was just some of the folks that were part of that working group other than sort of the big agribusiness as well.

They were also onboard with trying to – you know, with the new rules coming in, we didn't want to make things too hard going forward and wanted to ensure that our farm and ranch sector thrives going forward. Certainly, as that happens, we'll be able to probably have more discussions with these groups and businesses in order to go forward and again try to build consensus, like we did this last time, about any changes that they might want to look at in the future.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Mountain View.

Dr. Swann: Madam Chair, thank you. Again, we're talking about a thriving agriculture sector on the backs of exploited people. I don't get that. It flies in the face of your values and your stated goals in Bill 6. Yes, we want it to thrive. In fact, it will thrive better if they don't have lawsuits and accidents and deaths because a few bad apples are forcing people to work significant hours and overstrain themselves and take on things in poor judgment. It doesn't wash. It just doesn't wash. I think these folks will be wearing egg on their faces if they continue to argue that it's not right for 95 per cent of the workers in the province but that it's okay for the 5 per cent or 10 per cent that are described as paid farm workers. It doesn't make sense.

The fact that quite a few owners and operators said, "Yes, this is okay with us": where are the farm workers? What is their voice in this? In fact, it's been barely heard on some of these panels because farm workers are still too intimidated to speak out, demand their rights, and ask for equal consideration in all this. It's disappointing.

There it is, Madam Chair.

4:20

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Seeing none, I'll call the question.

[Motion on amendment A15 lost]

The Deputy Chair: We are now back on the original bill, Bill 17. The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have another amendment here that I'd like to hand out.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member. Your amendment will be referred to as A16. Please go ahead.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to move that Bill 17, Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act, be amended in section 33, in the proposed section 53.9, as follows: (a) in subsection (1) by adding the following after clause (b):

(b.1) "nurse practitioner" means a registered nurse who is entitled to use the title of nurse practitioner in accordance with the Health Professions Act and the regulations under that Act and provides care to a family member.

And (b) in subsection (4) by adding "or a nurse practitioner" after "medical certificate issued by a physician."

Madam Chair, this is a pretty straightforward, common-sense amendment. This amendment would give not just a physician but

also a nurse practitioner the ability to sign off on compassionate care leave, critical illness of a family member, et cetera. You know, this government has always said that they support nurse practitioners, so I'm sure they're going to want to support this amendment by supporting nurse practitioners.

You know, this is a prime example of what happens when you rush a bill and don't consult. This amendment didn't come from me. My office and I got e-mails on Friday and this morning asking me: how can we change this legislation? It was from a nurse practitioner in Grande Prairie, in my constituency. It said, "Is it too late to make any changes?" I said: "Well, we've probably got Monday. That's all." So we're trying to rush this amendment in.

You know, this amendment would make it a lot easier for Albertans in a stressful situation, and it should fit with the family-friendly workplace legislation. It'll make it a lot less stressful for families in a bad situation. Also, Madam Chair, this will save Albertans money and save our health care system money because if you're dealing with a nurse practitioner and she gives permission, now you've got to go try and find a doctor and take his time to sign off on it after a practitioner already has. It costs the government money when you're paying a physician to fill out forms.

I think that's pretty well all I need to say. It's pretty straightforward and simple. It's just the simple change of adding practitioners to give them the ability to sign off.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A16? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the amendment coming forward here. Essentially, they're suggesting that nurse practitioners be allowed to issue doctors' notes. Well, you know, it's not necessarily a bad idea, because it is done in Ontario. However, Ontario nurse practitioners are more widely involved in primary care delivery than in Alberta. This would require us to go out and get a lot more consultation within Health, the UNA, and the college. I certainly appreciate the intent of this amendment, but we would need a little bit more time in order to understand what others within the field are thinking about that. So at this time I won't be able to support this amendment, but again I do want to thank the member for bringing this forward. We will certainly look at maybe further consultation on this in the future.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A16?

Dr. Starke: Well, Madam Chair, my only comment to the last comments made by the Member for Edmonton-Decore is: unbelievable. Unbelievable. This government, that talks a great game about bringing in team-based medicine, about bringing in additional health professionals to share the load, to move things out of constantly having to be only done through physicians' offices, when given a concrete opportunity to do that through this amendment, an amendment that was suggested by nurse practitioners – I know my colleague from Grande Prairie-Wapiti received e-mails this past Thursday and Friday. I received e-mails from nurse practitioners in my constituency. They want to be involved. They want to help their patients.

In some parts of Alberta the nurse practitioners have in fact become the primary source of medical care for many families. Many families don't see a family physician on a regular basis because they simply find that they're not available. In some communities, in fact, the nurse practitioner has had a longer tenure

in the community than any of the family physicians that are practising in those communities. Those nurse practitioners have come to be people of great trust. These are professionals with a great deal of skill, and contrary to the Member for Edmonton-Decore, in many rural communities these professionals have in fact become a critical element of primary care, maybe not in Edmonton-Decore, but I can tell you that in Vermilion that is true. That is true in many, many other communities.

I will also point out that when we conducted the rural health review, I had a nurse practitioner on our committee, and she outlined in many instances all of the different things that she is able to do as a nurse practitioner and that the biggest thing holding back a broader application of nurse practitioners in our province is lack of a proper funding model and funding formula to allow a greater usage of nurse practitioners. What is unfortunate is that most of the nurse practitioners that are currently practising in the province of Alberta are not practising independently but, in fact, are practising in conjunction with some other thing where they are still directly involved with the physician.

In this instance, where we have sections of this bill that specifically require signing off by a physician, nurse practitioners have come to us and have said: this needs to be expanded to allow nurse practitioners to be able to provide this same service for their patients, the same service that is provided by primary care physicians. In some communities it is difficult to get in to see a primary care physician, and when you ask for an additional document that is not covered under the Alberta health care insurance plan, the doctor may in some cases charge an additional fee for drafting that document.

So in a situation where, generally speaking – and I know the case, certainly, in Vermilion is that the ability to see the nurse practitioner on a more rapid basis is in place. In order to make the provisions work – and I think these are good provisions, and we’ve said that repeatedly, that these are provisions that we support – for things like a critical illness of a child or injury leave and those sorts of things in those sections of this bill that require a physician, to have that definition expanded, as my colleague’s amendment would do, to include nurse practitioners absolutely makes sense.

It is absolutely consistent with what this government has told Albertans, that it believes in nurse practitioners, that it acknowledges and recognizes the skills and the abilities of nurse practitioners. I mean, I certainly do, and especially after working on the rural health review, I can tell you that not only myself but many, many communities that we went and spoke to talked to us about their desire to have nurse practitioners form a greater role or play a greater role in the delivery of primary care in their communities because of the skill and the professionalism of these individuals. For the government to now say, “We would need more time,” well, you know, without putting too fine a point on it, that’s kind of what we’ve been urging you to do for weeks. We’ve been urging you to slow down the passage of this bill so that things just like this would have the time to be properly implemented.

4:30

Now, if there is the urgency that you suggest there is, that this has to be passed here in the waning days of this spring session, then fine. If that urgency is there, then that urgency also means that this amendment should pass. This amendment improves this piece of legislation. This amendment makes it easier for Albertans. This amendment makes life better for Albertans. Isn’t that your daily mantra in question period, how your government wants to make life better for Albertans? Well, this amendment would do that. This amendment would allow those Albertans who rely on the services of a nurse practitioner to be able to obtain the documentation

necessary in order to access very desirable and absolutely favourable sections of this bill that we support.

When nurse practitioners come to us and say, “You know what? This bill is good, but this bill should be expanded to allow nurse practitioners to sign off on this because in many cases we are the primary health care provider for many families in Alberta,” it behooves us as legislators to listen to what they have to tell us and to respond and react appropriately, to respond and react in a way that is helpful to Albertans.

If you vote down this amendment, basically, first of all, you’re telling Albertans that rely on a nurse practitioner that the choice they’ve made in terms of their primary health care provider isn’t quite good enough for this government. That’s the first message you’re giving. The second message you’re giving is to nurse practitioners, those folks that you are trying to curry favour with. And not just curry favour with, but you acknowledge their professionalism. You acknowledge their abilities, and I think we all acknowledge their abilities.

If we’re to do the kinds of things that the Auditor General called for in the report that was released a week and a half ago, which includes more team-based, co-ordinated health care, including the involvement of other professionals like nurse practitioners, licensed practical nurses, pharmacists, dietitians, physiotherapists, chiropractors, and a whole long list of other health care providers, then we have to acknowledge, when we’re drafting new legislation, that they have those skills and abilities and not leave them out.

This is a glaring omission in this bill. It can be corrected relatively easily. This is an amendment that would improve this piece of legislation, and I am, frankly, dumbfounded, Madam Chair, that this government would consider voting against this amendment. All I’m saying is: explain that to the nurse practitioners the next time they have a meeting. Explain why you wouldn’t include them or you wouldn’t acknowledge their professionalism when you drafted your flagship labour bill. I think you have some explaining to do, and I think that with the explanation that’s been offered so far, that we just need a little bit more time, well, you know, quite frankly, we’ve been telling you that for weeks. But since you’ve said that, no, we don’t need more time and that this is urgent, well, if it is urgent, then it’s urgent to pass this amendment.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the amendment? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Well, thank you, Madam Chair. I do want to thank the member for his passionate words. You know, we certainly don’t want to sound like we’re not respectful of what nurse practitioners can do and how they’re looking to expand their role. The consultation process in that particular area just was not as robust as in all the other areas.

We’re not calling it a bad amendment. You know, I need to be very, very clear about that, Madam Chair. This is not a bad amendment. We just have to make sure. I mean, we hear all the time from the other side that we don’t go and consult. Here we are. We’re going to try and go and consult, take a look at this, and move forward from that point. But to delay everything else at this moment I think wouldn’t be fair. Again, using an example of somebody getting paid below minimum wage because they have a disability, we need to move forward on those things.

Again, I want to thank the members across the way for bringing this amendment forward. It’s a very fair amendment. We’re just not able to support it at this time.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Chair. I speak in favour of the amendment as proposed by the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti. This is exactly why we do consultation. It was brought to his attention by nurse practitioners about the weakness in the bill and about how we move forward in a way that allows the employment standards to be implemented in a way that is, I would suggest, transparent, fair, and accountable to all. Nurse practitioners are held in high regard in that they carry the professionalism that would be required to meet the guidelines under the compassionate care leave.

You know, we work hard and the government works hard to try and streamline the health care system, and here we have an opportunity where we're not going to tie up the limited amount of resources with the doctors, who are maybe in some cases not even the primary caregiver to the patient involved. Yet we are moving in a direction that would require some more red tape in the system and tying up professionals, doctors in this case, to do a job that I believe would be very well taken care of by nurse practitioners, especially nurse practitioners that are right at the front line, working with the individuals that are needing this extra care from family members or those that are closest to them.

I would really encourage all members to support this amendment and recognize the value that it has in not only improving this bill but in helping us to be sure that we don't burden more of our health care system to a point where red tape starts to slow down even more of the care that we're trying to give to the patients within the province of Alberta. I would really encourage all members to recognize the value and to recognize that we are putting it in the hands of professionals, these nurse practitioners' very capable hands, to make this available to all family members.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

I'll now recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Madam Chair. Twenty-seven working days of consultation; four face-to-face, by-invitation-only meetings, in which the minister could not confirm to us anything more than giving a speech at one and no full involvement with the engagement there; 124 pages of legislation; and we're told that there's not enough time here to consider this amendment. Maybe if the consultation had been done in a more robust way, we wouldn't have to propose the amendment from the Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti to actually not only improve this but to actually just plug one of the holes in this legislation and actually make it practical for Albertans who may have a nurse practitioner in a smaller jurisdiction, a smaller village or town or hamlet, to consult and make it easy for them to access some of the positive aspects of this legislation, some of the compassionate- and illness-related legislation that has been put forward here. On both sides of the House many of us have said that we're in agreement with many of those clauses, but now we're being told that they didn't have adequate time to get it right. Not enough time?

4:40

I guess one of my questions would be: where were the nurse practitioners on the invitation list for those four sessions, those limited four sessions, that were by invitation only and that we know were skewed heavily towards people from unions and not from businesses themselves, not from, obviously, medical practitioners from a broad spectrum as well? They will have to actually administer much of the legislation that's put forth here to make sure

that it's accessible and easy for Albertans to take advantage of some of these improvements in the legislation. It just doesn't make any sense. It just flies in the face of reason and common sense and good judgment with respect to the legislation.

Madam Chair, we're giving this House a chance. You know, maybe the decision-makers aren't here. Maybe the decision-makers need to come back to the table here so that they can hear what these amendments are and that this is reasonable and fair. This is an amendment that, actually, we should probably just quit talking about and vote on and vote in favour of because it's – I hate to use the term here – a bit of a no-brainer. It doesn't affect anything negatively. It doesn't create any burden or barrier. It doesn't even have any touch of any kind of ideology in it, for gosh sake.

This isn't an ideological amendment; this is a practical amendment, a common-sense amendment. Maybe we need a bit more common sense in this House so that we can move ahead with this and get on to some of the other amendments, which, I think, are well reasoned and balanced and speak in many respects to what my colleague for Vermilion-Lloydminster said earlier, which is: let's take some of the ideological bent out of this. Let's do what's best for Albertans. Let's look at fair, open, and transparent and actually adjudicate that from within our own principles and values of what this actually means, to do something better for Albertans, to create better legislation, with all of its flaws. Let's try and at least make it the best we possibly can.

That's what I believe the members on this side of the House are trying to do here, desperately, to improve flawed legislation. Again, granted, some of it is good – we support some of the compassionate leave and some of the illness leave there, no question about that – but there are some concerns even with that part of the legislation, with the employment standards. No question that there are huge flaws in the Labour Relations Code, and we're trying to improve that as well.

But this one is a simple one. This one is – again I'll use the term – a no-brainer. It's a common-sense amendment. I'm looking across the floor here, and I wish somebody could give me a good reason other than that we don't have enough time. Well, we could give you a lot more time if you want to send this bill to committee or delay it so that you and your government can actually do some proper consultation.

I think we've been talking about that for months, forever, since you launched this with a short, short time window of consultation, 27 working days. People have said that it was 36, but it wasn't. It was 27 working days because – don't forget – some of the people that you may have needed to consult there are governed by union rules. It wouldn't have allowed them to work the overtime or the extra hours to get it done, to put in the extra time during those 27 days to actually make it 36. Twenty-seven days for a 124-page piece of legislation that, we heard from the other side of the floor here, needed to be changed because it hadn't been touched since *Beetlejuice*.

You know, I learned a lot about pop culture during some of the debate. Let's get out of pop culture. Let's talk about Albertans. Let's talk about what's good for Albertans here, and let's talk about the practicalities of this.

My sister-in-law is a nurse practitioner, and I can tell you that she's been a medical professional for over 30 years. She has dealt with the brain injured and people with strokes and so many different things, and people trust her. She is in charge of life-and-death decisions every day – every day – at the Foothills medical centre. Families count on her to make decisions. And we're going to deny them the opportunity to actually sign a document that allows

someone to take advantage of a compassionate leave or an illness-related leave? That makes no sense.

Madam Chair, this is an opportunity for the members on the opposite side to actually look within themselves at principles and values of common sense, of fairness, and of actually doing what's right for Albertans. I would encourage them to go back into their lounge, talk to some of their leaders, and get permission, if you need to, to vote for this amendment.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

I'll now recognize the hon. Member for Calgary-Mackay-Nose Hill.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to seek the unanimous consent of the House to revert to introductions.

[Unanimous consent granted]

Introduction of Guests

(reversion)

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, please go ahead.

Ms McPherson: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm really excited to be able to stand here today and introduce the staff, parents, and students of Huntington Hills elementary school. I believe it's grade 6. It might be grades 5 and 6. I'm going to read out your names, and after that, if you could please stand. I apologize if I don't pronounce them correctly. Derek Dedemus, Christopher Dewsbury, Kenedy Hart, Karen Ehrmantraut, and Heather Kunimoto, if you could all rise, please, and the students, and receive the traditional warm welcome of this House.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Bill 17

Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act

(continued)

The Deputy Chair: Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A16? The hon. Member for Grande Prairie-Wapiti.

Mr. Drysdale: Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't want to drag this out any longer. I thank the member across for responding. Some good points have been made by my colleagues, probably articulated better than I can. But just to answer a couple of questions, you know, he said that they need more time. Well, as soon as we found out and prepared the amendment this morning, we sent it over to the department, or the ministry, to review it, so he should have had some comments from them.

Speaking of more time, we get a phone book here, and in a week you want it passed. I think we could have used a lot more time, but I guess I know how it works in here. It works one way, I guess. I don't know why we couldn't – with just this little notice we found these amendments, you know, not from us, from Albertans, from people that see that we could make this better. Why wouldn't we do like we did with the MGA last year? You introduce it, it's in committee, you let it sit over summer, and then you come back and pass it in the fall with the amendments. That would make more sense. Anyway, I won't belabour the point. I think we've made it.

The other thing is that this is the second amendment that I've made. The other one the minister agreed was a good amendment, but she said that it didn't match up with the federal legislation. And I heard that this morning, that this wasn't in the federal legislation,

so maybe this fancy name, calling it family friendly, you should just change to federal friendly instead of family friendly. But this amendment does make it family friendly.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A16?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A16 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 4:48 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Drysdale	Orr	Stier
Gottfried	Rodney	Taylor
Loewen	Starke	van Dijken

4:50

Against the motion:

Anderson, S.	Hinkley	Miller
Babcock	Hoffman	Miranda
Bilous	Horne	Nielsen
Carlier	Jansen	Payne
Carson	Kazim	Phillips
Ceci	Kleinstauber	Piquette
Connolly	Larivee	Renaud
Coolahan	Littlewood	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Luff	Schmidt
Dach	Malkinson	Schreiner
Dang	Mason	Shepherd
Drever	McKitrick	Sigurdson
Feehan	McLean	Turner
Ganley	McPherson	Woollard
Gray		

Totals: For – 9 Against – 43

[Motion on amendment A16 lost]

The Deputy Chair: We are now back on Bill 17. Are there any comments, questions, or amendments? The hon. Member for Battle River-Wainwright.

Mr. Taylor: Thank you, Madam Chair. I'd like to propose an amendment. I can start whenever you're ready.

The Deputy Chair: Just give me one minute, please. Thank you.

Hon. member, your amendment will be referred to as amendment A17. Please go ahead.

Mr. Taylor: Okay. What I'd like to do is propose an amendment that Bill 17, the Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act, be amended by striking out section 131. Section 131 repeals division 19, measures during illegal strike or illegal lockout. With the amendment that has just been handed out to everyone, I move to strike out that section, where the NDP would remove division 19. I would like the measures during illegal strike or illegal lockout to be in the Labour Relations Code, but I would like to discuss today why this would be just condoning illegal behaviour for either case, be it the employer or employee.

The first section that would be repealed by the government would be the suspension of dues check-off. Currently if an illegal strike is prohibited by divisions 15.1 or 18, this part commences. The labour board may direct the employer to suspend the deduction and remittance of union dues, assessments, and other fees that are otherwise payable to the union. The suspension could continue for one to six months depending on how the labour board directed, and they would then direct the employer to serve the union with a copy of the directive. The union can then apply to the labour board within 72 hours after service of the directive to determine if the strike actually occurred. If the union doesn't apply to the labour board, the employer can then suspend deduction and would not have to submit the union dues to the union as per directive from the labour board. If the union does apply, the employer will not suspend the deduction until the labour board determines that an illegal strike has occurred.

Built into the Labour Relations Code, it states that if they determine an illegal strike occurred, "an employee does not become ineligible for employment" just because union dues were not submitted to the union and that "at the end of the suspension period the employer shall resume the deduction and remittance of union dues, assessments and other fees in accordance with the collective agreement." Under this code no other provision can be made for substitution.

The second section that would be repealed would be payment of union dues during an illegal lockout. Currently under this section if a lockout commences that is prohibited by certain divisions, the labour board may direct the employer who locked out the employee to pay the union dues, assessments, and other fees that would otherwise be payable by the employees through the employer to the union. The payment will continue for a period directed by the labour board of one to six months after the lockout commences. The employer may apply to the board within 72 hours after receiving the directive until it's determined that a lockout indeed occurred. If the employer does not make the application, then the employer will have to make the payments. If it is determined the payment is to be made, the payments will be deemed as debt owing to the union and may be collected from the employer through civil action if required.

The last section that the NDP would like to repeal would be the direction by Lieutenant Governor in Council. This section specifically spells out the Lieutenant Governor in Council's power to either revoke certification of a union that causes members to illegally strike or to prohibit an employer's organization from representing employers for the purposes of collective bargaining if they cause or participate in an illegal lockout. These powers would be stripped away.

Madam Chair, if the strike is illegal, why should the employer be required to continue to collect and remit dues to the union engaged in an illegal activity that is harming the employer? This seems unreasonable, that they would choose to repeal the only recourse that employers would have to any rights themselves, especially when it comes to divisions 15.1, 16, or 18, which deal with essential services, compulsory interest arbitration, and emergencies. Essential services as part of the Labour Relations Code are defined as

- (a) the interruption of which would endanger the life, personal safety or health of the public, or
- (b) that are necessary to the maintenance and administration of the rule of law or public security.

Any work that would be deemed as an essential service or emergency would be deemed as illegal in the case of a strike, so division 19 is still relevant and should be included.

Favouritism seems to be a recipe of the day with this government. Repealing division 19 of the Labour Relations Code is showing this

government's hypocrisy, especially when these changes would not affect the Public Service Employee Relations Act, where the government is the employer. For some reason only private-sector employers are singled out and stripped of these rights according to the new legislation. Even though the Supreme Court of Canada declared the right to strike to be fundamental and protected by the Constitution, there are still certain instances where a strike could be illegal. If a strike isn't illegal, none of this would apply and would therefore be nullified anyway. What is this government's decision for repealing this division? I would like a more fulsome explanation because I'm pretty sure that some services that trade unions are involved in could be deemed as essential.

Nonfamily employees on farms and ranches can choose to organize according to the new legislation, yet what happens if crops and animals are affected due to a strike? The government themselves have stated that this would be deemed essential. All of these unions would fall under the Labour Relations Code, yet there would now be no penalties for these types of illegal strikes due to the section's repeal. Why should the employer have to continue to pay dues, assessments, and fees if the union decides to strike illegally? This seems to be just another avenue for this NDP government to show the private sector that they don't care what happens to them. If I am completely wrong and there is another reason other than that no Canadian jurisdiction provides for dues suspension, then please educate me.

5:00

These are some of the very reasons why some private companies felt safe setting up shop here in Alberta and to have unions come in to do the work. Yes, there has to be protection for the worker, but there also needs to be some sort of protection for the private-sector employer. The rationale seems to be too one-sided. This is just another piece of legislation that will be another reason for private companies in Alberta to relocate. Alberta used to have their backs. Why would they want to financially contribute to a government who shows no need for their business, Madam Chair?

Another question I would have for this government would be: why on earth would you promote or take away any law to empower an organization who is engaging in illegal behaviour? This government has stated that it seems like there are already too many penalties inflicted upon them. Is this correct? When someone is doing something illegal, they should be penalized. Why would you choose to empower an organization when illegal activity is going on?

It seems like this government is condoning illegal activity with a clause and repealing the only safeguards that private employers have for any recourse. Likewise, there is now going to be no penalty for a company to lock out, not be penalized and made responsible to the workers. That doesn't make sense. By repealing division 19 from the Labour Relations Code, you are essentially supporting illegal activity, and that is something that should never be done in this House. It's a complete insult to everything we all stand for.

I ask the minister to please show us today what reason there would be to support any illegal activity. My hope would be that you'll support a simple amendment by striking out section 131 in Bill 17, Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A17?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[Motion on amendment A17 lost]

The Deputy Chair: We are now back on the original bill. [interjections] They didn't get up fast enough. I didn't see three get up fast enough, so we're going to move on to the bill, Bill 17.

Are there any other amendments to the bill? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise with an amendment on behalf of the Member for Calgary-Foothills. I'll just wait until you're ready.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, this is now amendment A18. Please go ahead.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Chair. Like I said, I rise on behalf of the Member for Calgary-Foothills to move that Bill 17, Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act, be amended by striking out section 127.

Madam Chair, I believe that it is hypocritical for unions to argue that the right to strike is a fundamental right but then advocate to remove that right in favour of first contract arbitration.

An Hon. Member: You almost said that with a straight face.

Mr. van Dijken: I did.

Madam Chair, such a move goes against everything the labour movement, in my estimation, has ever stood for. Removing the right to strike in order to arbitrate a first contract goes against everything that I thought the NDP and labour stood for. Requiring arbitration interferes with an employer's right to lockout, which is the flip side of the right to strike and arguably a fundamental right also. If an employer cannot close his doors and close his business because they are being held up by union arbitration, then we are fundamentally going against the grain of everything workers have bargained for in the past.

Arbitration compels one or both parties to enter into an agreement they might not otherwise make. If it is binding arbitration, both sides can almost certainly go away completely unhappy with the arrangement. It breeds resentment and poor morale in the workplace. This affects productivity, so the business will suffer. Then layoffs will occur to save money, and the cycle repeats. Rather than bargaining to get a deal, parties often bargain to best position themselves for arbitration, with no intention of an actual deal skewing the collective bargaining process. As we have seen with public-sector negotiations, compulsory arbitration might protect and prevent labour disruption, but it does come at a cost to the employers.

Madam Chair, we want open and honest negotiations. We want open and honest negotiations if a union comes into a workplace. We don't want bargaining for position, to stake ground, only to have an arbitrator move the goalpost, skewed out of balance, potentially damaging the employer. For an employer arbitration is a risky proposition. An outsider with no knowledge of its business is given a mandate to decide what the employer will pay, what the employer should pay or could pay, and what the terms and conditions of employment will be.

A union focused on eventual [first contract arbitration] has little incentive to compromise before arbitration, thinking that the arbitrator will likely split the difference between its demands and the employer's position. For the employer, arbitration is a risky proposition, as I've said before.

An outsider with no knowledge of its business is given a mandate to decide what the employer will pay and what the terms and conditions of employment will be. That is from lawyer Rick Dunlop.

Some other feedback we received from stakeholders was:

- Requiring arbitration interferes with an employer's right to lockout, which is the flip-side of the right to strike and arguably a fundamental right also.
- First contract arbitration is really an accommodation of the union only, and its interests, not workers. The sole purpose [of first contract arbitration] is to protect the union,

not the workers but the union.

The union is worried that employees may change their minds about representation or lose interest. It wants to have a collective agreement imposed before that happens.

That's feedback we received from the Progressive Contractors Association.

With that, Madam Chair, I urge the members in this House to support amendment A18 and recognize the fact that we want to protect the right to strike for employees. First contract arbitration essentially in this bill allows the unions to request arbitration solely and would not give the right to the employees to strike.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A18? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Madam Chair. I appreciate the member bringing forward this amendment. Right now what we have in terms of language going across Canada is the 90-day period for employers and employees to try to reach an agreement when it comes to first contract language and then, of course, the ability to seek other measures should that become a problem and they can't reach the contract language. I mean, we even have similar language in places like Manitoba and B.C. as well, so we're not doing anything new. We're not reinventing the wheel here.

5:10

Unfortunately, though, what this amendment will end up doing is that it will end up denying workers the right to a first contract. You know, certainly, what we've seen with some strikes over the past is that some employers will just simply try to wait them out, to hopefully either walk away or accept something lower, which is not what they're hoping to do when we're talking about fair bargaining.

So I will not be able to support this amendment at this time. I urge other members of the House to not support this because we certainly don't want to deny people who have decided to unionize and are looking for a first contract the right to try to get that even if it means going through arbitration and having it settled in as fair a fashion as possible.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A18? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Chair. I would like to again refer to the fact that with this type of legislation in place, we get into situations where possibly the union does not negotiate with any intention of coming to a first contract. When we move in that direction, we are essentially, I would suggest, stacking the deck in favour of the union and with little regard for the employees or the employer.

The government decided that they were going to use Mr. Andy Sims to essentially facilitate their movement in the direction of changing the Labour Relations Code. Mr. Andy Sims has one opinion. They held a few by-invite-only consultation periods, with limited input from others within industry and within Alberta to be able to give feedback. It was brought to our attention that this is a

pitfall within some of the other provinces and that we need to focus on: how do we get to a fair contract in first contracts?

By putting forward legislation such as this, in my opinion and also in the opinion of people that we have been consulting with, with first contract arbitration there's little incentive for the union to actually negotiate in good faith and good will. We have concerns with the fact that, again, we are putting in place what I would describe as not a level playing field here and that we are stacking the deck to try and protect the union from disgruntled people, who are possibly being brought into a union for the first time and finding out that maybe it's not all it was cracked up to be, so in order to get past that first contract, this is what unions are going to try and implement.

We're concerned with the right to strike, with the employers' rights to lock out, and the employees' rights in this situation. I would encourage everyone to vote in favour of amendment A18.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to A18? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Madam Chair. I don't think the member across the way is familiar with the fact that in a situation where you might have unfair bargaining going on, unfair labour practices, the labour board is still there. Either party can make application if they think one or the other side is not bargaining in good faith. Of course, the very last fallback position is Court of Queen's Bench as well. Those are still there. They're available for either side to utilize, you know, should one side or the other be accused of unfair bargaining.

Again I will urge others to not support this at this time.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Chair. I am perfectly aware of the fact that the Labour Relations Board can be asked to take a look at possible unfair labour practices. What I am concerned with here is that we are essentially asking a body to make an interpretation on what would be considered unfair negotiations or possibly skewed negotiations with no intention of coming to any kind of agreement. So with that, by forcing arbitration, then, again, we're putting into the hands of the Labour Relations Board a contract with no understanding of the business implications of the employer. To me it's putting that business at risk and all those employees' jobs at risk.

So I would encourage you again to take a look at this as being fair to employers, employees in the ability to come to a first contract.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

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

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just briefly, you know, I think this is a good provision in this bill, and it's something that's been missing in Alberta's labour law for a long time. I think what the hon. member who proposed this amendment needs to understand is that one or both parties of the dispute can apply for first contract arbitration, and I suggest that a lot of employers will apply for this because it will speed up the process, that can go on for several years and can lead to labour slowdowns. Nobody wants that. Then, you know, these first contracts that usually are arbitrated are not – how would we say? – great for anybody a lot of the time. They're very vanilla, and they just establish a working contract that

can be negotiated later, whatever the provisions are, in one or two years.

Anyhow, with that said, I will not be supporting this amendment. Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to A18?

Seeing none, I'll call the question on amendment A18, as proposed by the hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock on behalf of the hon. Member for Calgary-Foothills.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A18 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:17 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Cooper	Gotfried	Rodney
Loewen	van Dijken	Drysdale
Orr	Stier	

5:20

Against the motion:

Bilous	Jansen	Nielsen
Carlier	Kazim	Payne
Connolly	Kleinsteuber	Phillips
Coolahan	Larivee	Piquette
Cortes-Vargas	Littlewood	Renaud
Dach	Luff	Rosendahl
Dang	Malkinson	Schmidt
Drever	McKitrick	Schreiner
Feehan	McLean	Shepherd
Gray	McPherson	Sigurdson
Hinkley	Miller	Turner
Horne	Miranda	Woollard

Totals:	For – 8	Against – 36
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[Motion on amendment A18 lost]

The Deputy Chair: We are back on the original bill. Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Madam Chair. I rise today to move an amendment on behalf of the Member for Calgary-Hays, and I have the requisite number of copies. I'll begin reading once the table gives me permission to do so.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, the amendment will be referred to as A19. Please go ahead.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Madam Chair. Notice of amendment to Bill 17, Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act. Mr. McIver to move that Bill 17, Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act, be amended in section 113 in the proposed section 34 by adding the following after subsection (11):

(11.1) In accordance with any rules made by the Board, the Board shall prohibit the applicant and the employer from causing, incentivizing or preventing any employee to attend or be absent from a place of work or place of voting during the time period for a representation vote.

Madam Chair, there's been much discussion in the House on this bill, and much of that centred on the concerns of intimidation, peer

pressure influence, and other forms of intervention of employees in their decision-making. There have been fingers pointed at both unions and employers, accusations of intimidation leading up to a union vote, which, of course, is not acceptable to any member of this House. Clearly, the government landed on the side of protecting the union. No surprise there. We've heard a little bit about some of the perceptions and perspectives and biases which may be brought into this legislation.

Since they're allowing unions to avoid the complications of having to actually hold a vote in many circumstances when a 65 per cent card check is achieved, there are some concerns and some problems with the process as we move forward, particularly if a ballot is required. Since they were so concerned that a secret ballot could somehow lead to intimidation of workers, despite that being the entire point of a secret ballot, that there's actually secrecy and nobody knows how anybody voted, which is, of course, our argument around using secret ballots versus card checks for the process – the point being is that it's hard to intimidate someone when you can't actually confirm who they voted for, kind of like what we have in our election period, Madam Chair, that we're actually allowed to vote our conscience and allowed to vote without actually having to tell anybody how we voted but have that in our clear conscience whereas it seems much easier to check if someone has signed a union card or not and then possibly lean on them to put their name down. I use the term "lean on them" in a way which I think really implies what we're worried about here, which is intimidation, peer pressure, any kind of being called out or being disenfranchised or being rejected by their peers.

But that's beside the point, I suppose, since the government has already made their decision that the card check seems to be a preferred method, which, unfortunately, allows for that potential, that peer pressure, or, God forbid, bullying to occur.

The amendment I'm bringing forward today concerns what happens in the small window where the government saw fit to allow democracy to happen, when the card check process ends up between 40 and 65 per cent. Then members actually get a chance to vote, to voice their opinions freely and without fear of repercussion. This amendment aims to make sure that when employees actually get a chance to exercise what had previously been a democratic vote, they don't have to worry about influence from either side, from the employers or from the unions. Sounds reasonable. Sounds fair.

Once they actually get a chance to vote, this amendment ensures that neither the unions nor the employers will cause or persuade employees through any manner or any methods to be present or absent from the vote. No influence about their attendance. No calling up and saying, "You know, I'd rather you not be there," or "You better be there." That should be the employee's choice. That means that when it does come down to a vote, in this narrow circumstance the government still allows, between the 40 and 65 per cent, there won't be any promises or enticements to convince employees to stay home or show up that day. They can actually do it of their free will.

This amendment would make sure that when it comes to a vote, it will be up to the honest and sincere belief and the best interest of the employee whether or not a union would be good not only for the workplace but for them, for their families, for their future, for their career, something that I think we should all take seriously here, Madam Chair. It will protect employees and maintain their ability to choose, not somebody else's, not through undue influence, which is what we should be trying to do as legislators instead of trying to restrict the options for voting or to allow undue influence or to allow peer pressure or to allow those phone calls in the middle of the night or to allow someone to knock on their door and suggest that they

should do one thing or another. I think it's incumbent upon us to make sure that that type of influence is not allowed in this process.

While I wish the government would come to their common senses and restore the ability of employees to vote in a secret ballot at all times, ensuring that transparency and that freedom and that freedom of conscience, which, again, I would hope that we would all defend in this House as part of a democratic right and democratic expectation within our society – I think it was mentioned before by someone else that maybe instead of going to the ballots every year, we should just go out, and whichever party sells the most memberships wins the election in that constituency. Wouldn't that be a unique opportunity to do so? Maybe we can do it through a card check system so that, you know, we know exactly, everybody knows who's done it, so you can knock on doors and twist more arms and tell people that they need to vote for you. Then we don't have to have elections, Madam Chair. I think that that's an expectation in our society that, unfortunately, this bill has taken away, that reasonable expectation of democratic freedom without fear of repercussion.

I think that if the government were actually concerned about protecting employees from that potential for intimidation – and that's all we need, Madam Chair, that potential. As I think, as was mentioned by the Member for Calgary-Klein before – he was talking about apples – there are some bad apples on both sides of the tree sometimes. I think it's our job to ensure that we protect Albertans from those bad apples, from those worms that might get into those and turn that tree and that fruit into something rotten. [interjection] We've heard that about you.

[Mr. Dach in the chair]

I think if we were actually concerned about protecting employees from intimidation, they'd pass this amendment and abandon the 65 per cent short-circuit of democracy, but since they don't seem inclined to do that, I hope that all members of this House will consider ensuring that what is good for the goose, the unions in this case, is also good for the gander, the employees and employers in this case, and that all members of this House, Mr. Chair, will support this amendment.

Thank you.

5:30

The Acting Chair: Any other members wishing to speak to A19? The Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thanks to the member for bringing the amendment forward here. I'm not sure if the member was aware, but right now in the labour regulations the labour board already has these powers. What we're talking about is potential coercion at the voting site during a certification vote, and in section 151(f), which gets into the specifics of that, the labour board already has the powers to deal with any kind of coercion during the voting process. Certainly, this has nothing to do with card certification or how union members will very respectfully come up to a door, knock on it, ask if it's a good time to talk, and if it isn't, when a good time would be, where they could talk, things like that. But, again, that's not really to this amendment.

So I'm going to urge all members in the House not to support this. The labour board already has the ability to do this, and this is basically redundant.

Thanks very much.

The Acting Chair: Thank you, Member.

Any other members wishing to speak on A19? The Member for Olds-Didsbury-Three Hills.

Mr. Cooper: Well, thank you, Chair. It's a pleasure to rise and speak in support of the amendment. I just speak for a couple of reasons. If it's already there, there's no reason to not make sure that these sorts of protections are in place as well so that there can be no doubt.

While I hear the hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore talking about just how respectful unions are, I myself have been subject to not respectful interactions. In this case it was the Teamster union that was efforting to unionize a workplace where I was employed. [interjections] I received a number of what I would consider threatening letters, harassing phone calls, and I know that they efforted to knock on my door, all of which was unwanted.

I hear the members say: well, of course, that's just them. Perhaps I was paraphrasing, but I heard members say: of course. Well, all the more reason for more protections, then. If there are clearly organizations that don't behave in a manner that reflects well upon unions, clearly we need balances, safeguards in place to ensure that this sort of bullying tactic, these sorts of intimidation tactics don't take place in the workplace. I find it interesting that it's acknowledged that these sorts of things happen yet not the same level of desire to put in protections from these bad apples, I guess, if that's all that they are.

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

I can appreciate that, just like there are some employers who aren't perfect, there are definitely also, on the other side of that coin, unions that aren't perfect, so we should be ensuring that we take every reasonable and necessary step to have protections in place, that we treat the unions' ability fairly, the employees' ability fairly, and vote in favour of these sorts of measures so that we can deliver exactly that.

This is about creating a fair, level playing field for both sides of this ledger, and I would encourage all members of the Assembly to support this.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A19? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Decore.

Mr. Nielsen: Thank you, Madam Chair. Just to reiterate the powers that the Labour Relations Board already has, I'll help out the members here a little bit.

Prohibited practices by trade union, etc.

151 No trade union and no person acting on behalf of a trade union shall . . .

- (f) use coercion, intimidation, threats, promises or undue influence of any kind with respect to any employee with a view to encouraging or discouraging membership or activity in or for a trade union.

So there we have it. There it is. It's already there.

We don't need this amendment, Madam Chair, and I will urge everybody to vote against it.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Calgary-Fish Creek.

Mr. Gotfried: Thank you, Madam Chair. With respect to the Member for Edmonton-Decore, this specifically talks about the activity around the vote, and it also includes not just the unions, but it also includes the employers. So this is meant to be a more robust approach to it, to ensure that it's embedded in the legislation. It is very specifically not around all of the activities prior to but about the vote, which can be a very slippery slope, a very difficult period because really, at the end of the day, it's only that vote that counts.

This one will ensure that both sides, the employers and the unions, are held to a very high standard with respect to any influence, intimidation, access to enticement of any sort to attend or not to attend a vote.

Madam Chair, I would say that this is very specific. It clarifies something that sounds a little vague to me and does protect the employees. Again, I would like to think that all members of this House are here to protect Albertans from influence from either side of this equation, so I would encourage everybody in this House to support this amendment.

Thank you.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A19?

Seeing none, I will call the question.

[The voice vote indicated that the motion on amendment A19 lost]

[Several members rose calling for a division. The division bell was rung at 5:37 p.m.]

[One minute having elapsed, the committee divided]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

For the motion:

Cooper	Orr	Stier
Gotfried	Rodney	van Dijken
Loewen		

5:40

Against the motion:

Babcock	Horne	Nielsen
Bilous	Jansen	Payne
Carlier	Kazim	Phillips
Carson	Kleinstauber	Piquette
Connolly	Larivee	Renaud
Coolahan	Littlewood	Rosendahl
Cortes-Vargas	Luff	Schmidt
Dach	Malkinson	Schreiner
Dang	McKittrick	Shepherd
Drever	McLean	Sigurdson
Feehan	McPherson	Turner
Gray	Miller	Woollard
Hinkley	Miranda	

Totals: For – 7 Against – 38

[Motion on amendment A19 lost]

The Deputy Chair: We are now back on the original bill. Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Barrhead-Morinville-Westlock.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Chair. I have an amendment I would like to propose at this time to Bill 17.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, this will be amendment A20. Please go ahead.

Mr. van Dijken: Thank you, Madam Chair. I move that Bill 17, Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act, be amended by adding the following after section 145:

Review by committee of Legislative Assembly

145.1 Within 5 years of the coming into force of Part 2 of the Fair and Family-friendly Workplaces Act, a committee of the

Legislative Assembly must begin a comprehensive review of the amendments made by that Act to the Labour Relations Code and its impact on Alberta's economy, and must submit to the Assembly, within one year after beginning the review, a report that includes any amendments recommended by the committee.

Madam Chair, the intent of this amendment is essentially to provide a mechanism that would recognize the need to continually review the work that is being done here and to recognize that changes that are implemented through legislation have impacts – they have consequences – and as we recognize that, we also have to recognize that we need to measure that as time goes along.

It's been identified by the Minister of Labour many times in the lead-up to the introduction of this bill that there was no review or no significant changes to the Labour Relations Code in the past 30 years, and that was the reason for bringing forward the labour code review and then what led up to Bill 17 as we see it here. I would suggest that the labour code review that was implemented by this minister had a very limited amount of consultation, a very limited amount of engagement with stakeholders within Alberta and that there are likely to be significant implications both economically and also on our labour peace within this province, so we need to have an understanding going forward as to: what are the consequences of Bill 17 on the Labour Relations Code?

We currently have a baseline measure that can be utilized to have an understanding of where we've been, the current Labour Relations Code. As we move forward, based off of the baseline, we can get an understanding of the economic impact and any other consequences that come forward through the passage of Bill 17.

You know, we take a look at full engagement of stakeholders to do proper consultation and to come upon what the minister has identified in her business plan as that we need a fair and balanced labour code, and we on this side of the House believe that also. We need to continually review the Labour Relations Code as we move forward to understand the full impact of any changes that we do.

We have encouraged the government to do a fulsome analysis of the economic impacts that this bill may bring forward, through feedback from industry stakeholders, from employers, employees, unions, the investment community, to try and get a good understanding of what these changes, good or bad, have on the Alberta economy, have on the Alberta labour environment, and to be able to monitor that going forward. This can be put in the hands of the experts to be able to get an understanding. The committee would call on experts to do those measures, to be able to come back to committee and identify any consequences – unintended consequences, intended consequences, good consequences, bad consequences – and how we can actually improve on a continual basis moving forward and how we can serve Albertans in a way that allows them to be reassured that the members in this House are looking out for the best interests of all Albertans.

Knowing that a review is coming in five years will help to give some peace of mind to Albertans that the Legislature, the Members of this Legislative Assembly, are going to proceed in a manner that is fair and equitable, fair and balanced on an ongoing basis, and that employers and employees can have peace of mind that we will be examining these things going forward.

I do believe that every member in this House is looking out for the best interest of Alberta. We have different ideas on how that plays itself out, but I do believe that every member comes here with good intentions to try and serve Albertans in the best way they can. Albertans have sent us here to be accountable to them and transparent to them, and by passing this amendment, we have the opportunity to say to Albertans, you know: "We're passing a bill here. There is a bill that's going to be passed, and we look forward to ensuring that in five years we do an analysis on the full impacts

of this bill." That should give peace of mind to employees, employers, unions, all the stakeholders involved here.

This amendment changes nothing in the bill. It changes nothing in the bill. All it does is it adds a level of accountability that, again, I believe brings some peace of mind to all the stakeholders that we have come here to serve. It brings a level of accountability that we will not go 30 years without a review of how this bill is affecting Albertans and how we can possibly improve it in five, six years' time again. You know, we call on this Assembly. Some of us may still be here, some of us may not be here, but at least then we have the peace of mind going forward that this Assembly is going to continually review these codes in this act as we move forward.

5:50

I believe there's nothing scary here. It's a very reasonable amendment that helps us to do good governance in this place and helps us to ensure that good governance continues on going forward. As members of this Assembly move on and as new members come in, then they have the opportunity through committee work to review these acts and review the Labour Relations Code as we are implementing it at this time, and in five years' time we can have a good understanding as experts identify possibly the good implications of this bill, possibly some bad implications, consequences that we didn't identify at this time and that need to be tweaked down the road.

So nothing scary about this amendment. I believe it adds a level of accountability, and I believe that the governing party should not be scared of this amendment. It provides a level of good governance that we should all be trying to fulfill within Alberta, and it helps us to ensure that good governance continues on even after we are no longer in this place. I would submit that this amendment is just adding a level of accountability to the work that we are doing here, trying to serve Albertans.

With that, I will conclude my comments. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The Deputy Chair: Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to amendment A20? The hon. Member for Calgary-Klein.

Mr. Coolahan: Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to the member for the proposed amendment here. I will not be supporting this amendment.

An Hon. Member: What?

Mr. Coolahan: I know. It's shocking.

I'll tell you why. For many years, you know, myself, members of the caucus, and hundreds of thousands of hard-working Albertans have spent decades trying to convince PC government after PC government to move our labour standards in line with other provinces, okay? And then we're finally getting here so that Albertans can share in the same rights and protections provided to people in other provinces, by their governments.

Madam Chair, you know, should this bill pass, this is something to celebrate. I and hundreds of thousands of Albertans will celebrate, and we will celebrate the fact that Albertans finally have a government that sees the benefits of fair workplace legislation. Let me try and put the joy that me and hundreds of thousands of Albertans will feel upon the passing of Bill 17, should it pass, into context for the opposition, okay? Our joy will be the equivalent of the joy that the opposition would feel if they got to pass a bill that, say, outlawed unions or lowered the minimum wage or dismantled public pension plans. That's how much joy I will feel.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, I'm just wanting to clarify that you're actually speaking to the amendment in regard to an economic study.

Mr. Coolahan: I am. I certainly am, because what I'm getting at, Madam Chair, is to say that this bill is very good and has been a long time coming, and we've known what has been needed in this bill for many years, and we have addressed that. That is what I'm speaking to.

Madam Chair, here's the thing. Governments have choices to make, and different governments have different priorities that direct these choices. This government chooses to see the individual and societal advantages to ensuring that people can earn a living and meet the demands of family life at the same time. This government will not sit by and watch Albertans have fewer protections in the workplace than other Canadians. This government will not stand idle while another parent loses their job because they have to take some time off work to care for a loved one. We will not continue to come up with reasons not to support fair work legislation. This bill, Bill 17, is a testament to this government's position that Alberta's workers deserve equal protection to those in other provinces.

Now, Madam Chair, what I read in this amendment is really what we hear a lot from the opposition, which is restoring the Alberta advantage. That's what they're saying here. They want to be able to review it and pare down the bill. But what does the Alberta advantage really mean when they talk about it? The Alberta advantage to them means a tax system that favours the wealthy and large corporations, lacks labour laws, and the ability to pay a low minimum wage.

Madam Chair, we must have a level of corporate tax that allows Alberta to attract and retain large and small businesses, and this government has ensured this: 12 per cent for corporations, 2 per cent for small businesses. We are well in line with the other western Canadian provinces. But I'll tell you that this government will not view substandard employment and labour laws or having one of the country's lowest minimum wages as a benefit to attracting these businesses. That is certainly not a benefit to Albertans. We think the Alberta advantage is its people. In order to keep this advantage, we have to ensure that Albertans are healthy and educated through sustained, predictable funding for hospitals and schools and that

they're safe at work and able to earn a living and take care of their families at the same time.

Madam Chair, the opposition is again finding excuses to avoid bringing Alberta's labour laws into the 21st century, and it is sad. They treat these protections with disdain. It's evident in the fact that most of them voted no on the first reading – it's absolutely disgraceful – before reading the bill. Well, you know, they talk a lot about – I mean, this is more about consultation that they've talked about for this amendment. Let's face it. They are not concerned about consultation. It's a red herring, disguising the fact that they don't want fair legislation for Alberta's workers. The pendulum has swung too far over the last 30 years, and we're just bringing it back to a place that's fair for everyone. Consultation should not supersede or negate basic rights. Not only has it been 30 years since the labour code has changed or the employment standards, but this government did consult, which is why we don't need this amendment.

The government held four face-to-face round-table meetings to hear directly from those who would be affected by the changes, including a broad cross-section of employers, business associations, labour groups, and advocacy organizations. In addition, there were 5,000 online surveys completed plus 400 written submissions received, covering a broad range of topics. You know, the opposition talks about the leave components for this legislation not coming into effect until January of 2018, but that was done in consultation. We listened. The fact of the matter is, they would never do it.

Madam Chair, I will put this legislation onto my long and growing list of legislation that this government is introducing in which I wonder: why wasn't this done decades ago? It's funny, you know. I have spoken about the past government's legislative paralysis I like to call it, especially when it came to the labour file. They did review the code. They reviewed it in 2007. They reviewed it in 2014 but changed nothing.

The Deputy Chair: Hon. member, I hesitate to interrupt, but pursuant to Standing 4(4) we will now recess until 7:30 this evening.

[The committee adjourned at 6 p.m.]

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