



Province of Alberta

The 29th Legislature  
Third Session

# Alberta Hansard

Wednesday morning, November 1, 2017

Day 47

The Honourable Robert E. Wanner, Speaker

**Legislative Assembly of Alberta**  
**The 29th Legislature**

Third Session

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## Legislative Assembly of Alberta

9 a.m.

Wednesday, November 1, 2017

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

### Prayers

**The Acting Speaker:** Let us reflect and pray, each in our own way. May we always do the right thing for and unto others as we journey through this maze of life, for we are but servants chosen by others to bear the burdens, the challenges, and the duties of public life. Amen.

Please be seated.

### Orders of the Day

#### Government Bills and Orders Committee of the Whole

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

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

#### Bill 20

##### Beaver River Basin Water Authorization Act

**The Deputy Chair:** Are there any comments, questions, or amendments to be offered in respect to this bill? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud. The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod. I apologize. You've all moved a little bit on me.

**Mr. Stier:** Well, thank you, Madam Chairman. Good morning, everyone. A pleasure to be here with you all this morning and see all those wonderful, shiny faces first thing.

Today I have a few brief comments with respect to this bill. I'm not going to go over a lot of lengthy stuff about it, but certainly I would like to say that I'm aware of the issue. It seems like the hamlet of Mallaig and the Whitefish Lake First Nation are experiencing problems with their quantity and quality of water from their existing supply and that this bill will authorize the transfer from another river basin to this one, which is the Beaver River basin.

I further understand that Mallaig is a hamlet in the county of St. Paul, and it currently obtains its drinking water from nearby groundwater sources. While there are no immediate concerns with their water source in terms of quality, the drawdown as the supply is taken has seen the levels decrease in recent years, where it's becoming important that they look for a better source.

I also understand that the Whitefish Lake First Nation, on the other hand, is facing a slightly more critical issue and that they currently draw from a nearby lake which has recently seen a measurable and escalating decrease in the level. In my experience in the past it's evident here that there are concerns about possible contaminants, therefore. While it doesn't apparently present a short-term health problem, it's critical that a higher quality source be found as well for that, so the sooner the community switches, the sooner they can get on with getting a good, proper supply of water. I think everybody here would agree that this is so critical in these situations.

As my other colleagues may have mentioned – and I wasn't in the House earlier for this discussion yesterday, but I do understand – we have said that we are supporting this. We think that this is something that needs to be done as soon as possible.

I would like to raise a couple of extra points regarding this procedure in a way that supports this but also gives me a better

understanding for myself as to how these things take place within these departments. I see that I don't perhaps have the correct ministers in place for direct questions here, but perhaps there's someone else that can answer what I'm concerned about.

I'd like to say that in the case of southern Alberta we have an awful lot of situations where we're essentially screaming for water. The town of Pincher Creek in my area is an example. The creek is virtually nonexistent currently. The various streams that are supplying Pincher Creek and the small town of Cowley, which is a hamlet, and the hamlet of Lundbreck are essentially out of water as well. On a temporary basis – and I talked to Environment and Parks in Lethbridge just the other day – they are allowing, on an emergency basis, for those municipalities to dip a pump into the Oldman reservoir, which was more or less created for irrigation purposes primarily to get what water they might get to supply. They've also imposed restrictions in their communities to try to help on the drawdown. They realize that that is only a temporary situation, and thank goodness that Environment and Parks is providing that permission and they're allowing that to take place.

But this leaves me to wonder if we're allowing this – and I believe this should go, and I think this is a great idea. We have a lot of other communities, we have a lot of other situations, including a water co-op that has been planned, engineered, designed, the water sources there in the Pine Coulee reservoir that was created years ago west of Claresholm to supply over 180 residents, farms, et cetera, out in the rural area that have had to truck water for the past five years. They've been applying and applying and applying for funding.

I notice that this particular situation that we're dealing with today is partially funded, 50-50, from the federal and provincial ends. My question, if I could ask at this moment before I conclude, is: does anyone there have the ability to respond on why these other systems have not been provided similar treatment? In the south, by the way, I would like to add that the Environment and Parks ministry also suddenly gave approval for a waterline from the hamlet of Cowley all the way up to the Castle resort.

I'm just trying to figure out here how these things work, just trying to figure out if there's a way that we can look at more projects so that we can help people that are currently having to pay for trucking of water southwest of Claresholm. It seems that this is doing a great job today – we certainly support it – but I'm wondering if anyone over there can answer how this works, please.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Minister of Indigenous Relations.

**Mr. Feehan:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Thank you very much for the questions from the hon. member across. We're very happy that you are supporting the water transfer for the Beaver River basin because it is very essential for the communities that are receiving it. You may know that there have been five water transfers, basin transfers, that have happened in the province of Alberta over the last number of years. All of those have occurred in the south because of the particular conditions in the south. This is the first time one has happened in the northern part of the province. So, indeed, the needs of the people in the south have been attended to fairly regularly over time.

However, with climate change occurring, what we're seeing is an increased exacerbation of the aridness in that area. We are going to have to attend to that in a new way because it's not a matter of transferring water in order to provide a cleaner source; it's an issue of there being a lack of the basic amount of water. So it's a slightly

different question that's at hand with regard to southern Alberta.

In the north water exists, but it's not drinkable. In the south the water doesn't exist, and you can't simply create water. Every time you take water away from another source to move in the south, then you have to worry about whether or not you're about to cause another problem in another area in the south because of the overall lack of water in the south. A basin transfer may be robbing Peter to pay Paul, so it's a bit of a different process.

I'm afraid I'm not the expert you're looking for, but I have taken extensive notes of your questions, and I will endeavour to inquire with the appropriate ministries about procedures moving forward. I encourage you to speak to the Minister of Environment and Parks to talk about the particular concerns you have with regard to Pincher Creek and, of course, the Pine Coulee reservoir, and I will endeavour to do the same.

Thank you.

9:10

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. minister.

The hon. Member for Livingstone-Macleod.

**Mr. Stier:** Thank you, and thank you for your response, Minister. I appreciate all that you've said. I just want to perhaps be clear on a couple of things that you've just said to ensure that we get the right message through. I have no concerns in the south with regard to the transfer nor the transfer here. My questions with relation to this were more focused towards the funding. I understand the funding model here has been 50-50 from the province and the federal government.

The one particular situation I am concerned about is where people have been up to meet with the Minister of Transportation as late as last year, where the engineering, the licensing, and everything out of the Pine Coulee west of Claresholm has already been done, but they've been refused for years on the funding. How does this funding work for both the waterline to the Castle and the waterline to these good people here that deserve this water? How does that differ, and why have they been granted and these others have not after all those years when it's a shovel-ready program just like this is?

Thank you for your response. As I said earlier, I have talked to the minister before. I will continue to do that, but I wanted to bring this up and be on record at this time with respect to this situation because there are a lot of communities that need water. If there's already a source available and a transfer is not required, if it's already been engineered, I find a lot of difference in how things are working here, and that's a bit of an anomaly I'd like to pursue.

With that, Madam Chair, I'd just like to conclude that we are in support of this bill, as was said earlier, and we look forward to moving on. Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 20? The hon. Member for Stony Plain.

**Ms Babcock:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to stand today and speak to Bill 20, the Beaver River Basin Water Authorization Act. You know, this bill is going to allow for the approval of the two interbasin transfers, from the North Saskatchewan River basin to the Beaver River basin, and these interbasin transfers will allow the Whitefish Lake First Nation and the hamlet of Mallaig in St. Paul county to connect to regional waterlines in order to address long-running issues with drinking water in their communities. This is something we see in a lot of our rural areas. I know in my area the WILD project is a huge part of what we deal with. It took 12

years to get phase 1 finished, never mind the other three phases that we'd like to see go forward.

There's nothing more fundamental to life than access to a safe and secure drinking supply. Many of us don't even realize what a privilege it is to have safe, clean water. We don't give much thought to the source of the water coming out of our taps. We only know that it's there every time we need it, which is not always the case in some of our rural communities and some of our reserve communities.

While water quality and quantity are not top-of-mind issues for many of us who live in Alberta's cities and towns, the same cannot be said for those people living in rural and First Nation communities. The communities of Mallaig and Whitefish Lake First Nation have both dealt with drinking water quality and quantity challenges in recent years. Clean drinking water should be seen as a basic human right, and the Beaver River Basin Water Authorization Act is an important step towards resolving drinking water issues in these two communities.

Interbasin transfers are not to be taken lightly. The Water Act requires any licence which transfers water between major river basins in Alberta to be authorized by a special act of the Legislature, which is what we're debating today. All western provinces have legislation that prohibits transfers between major river basins with some exceptions allowed, and since 2003 five interbasin transfers have been authorized by Alberta by a special act of the Legislature. All five were for potable water extensions to rural communities.

Madam Chair, I will discuss those five just a little bit more. There was the North Red Deer Water Authorization Act, which was to supplement existing sources of reliable potable water for several communities in central Alberta, which happened in 2003, and it came from the South Saskatchewan River basin to the North Saskatchewan River basin.

There was the Stettler Regional Water Authorization Act, which was to address the problems with the quantity and quality of potable water. This happened in 2005, and it was repealed in 2007 by the East Central Regional Water Authorization Act. This came from the South Saskatchewan River to the North Saskatchewan River basin.

The Town of Bashaw and Village of Ferintosh Water Authorization Act, which was to address problems with the shortage of groundwater supply for the village of Ferintosh, happened in 2007. Again, it was repealed in 2007 by the East Central Regional Water Authorization Act. This was again taking water out of the South Saskatchewan River basin to the North Saskatchewan River basin.

There was the East Central Regional Water Authorization Act to address problems with the quantity and quality of potable water. This happened in 2007, and it replaced the previous two acts that I just spoke of. It permitted a larger volume of water to service communities in the area, and it came from the South Saskatchewan River basin to the North Saskatchewan River basin.

There was the County of Westlock Water Authorization Act. This was to address the problems with quality and quantity of potable water for the residents of Westlock. This happened in 2007 as well, and it was from the North Saskatchewan River basin to the Athabasca River basin. This is why our government has introduced Bill 20.

Both St. Paul county and Whitefish Lake First Nation explored multiple options, and connecting to the regional waterline was determined to be the best possible solution to address their drinking water challenges. To ensure a safe, reliable supply of drinking water for their residents, both communities have requested that the province approve an interbasin transfer, allowing them to extend existing regional waterlines.

Whitefish Lake First Nation looked at five options prior to pursuing an extension of an existing potable waterline from the highway 28/63 regional water commission in the North Saskatchewan River basin. The county of St. Paul looked at seven different options and came to the same conclusion. Both proposed waterline expansions crossed river basin boundaries, with water being transferred from the North Saskatchewan River basin to the Beaver River basin.

It's important to note that funding has already been in place for both projects, as has been noted earlier this morning. The county has already received \$9.5 million in funding from the province and the federal government, and they must spend the federal funding by March 2018, or it will expire, so we are under a bit of a time crunch with this bill going forward. The highway 28/63 regional water commission received \$20.66 million from our government's United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples/First Nations regional tie-in project fund. An additional \$1.98 million was committed by the federal government to complete the waterline connection to the reservoir on the reserve.

Of course, environmental impacts were considered prior to introducing this bill. Mallaig and Whitefish Lake First Nation are small communities, and the North Saskatchewan River is a reliable source of water, with an average annual volume of approximately 7.5 billion cubic metres flowing through Edmonton. The existing municipal allocation held by EPCOR to provide drinking water throughout the capital region totals close to 200 million cubic metres. The proposed transfers for St. Paul county and Whitefish Lake First Nation would total 600,000 cubic metres. Environment and Parks confirms that the additional transfer of drinking water will have no measurable effects on the North Saskatchewan River nor our river basin.

Consultation has been conducted, and both proposed interbasin transfers are widely supported among all stakeholders in the area. St. Paul county has also specifically engaged on water rate policy and the upcoming water rate increase for Mallaig residents prior to engaging on the regional waterline connection project. Water rates in Mallaig are set by the county of St. Paul and reflect the full cost of providing water to residents. Upon completion, the water rates in Mallaig will be the same as the other two hamlets in St. Paul county that already receive EPCOR-treated water via the regional waterline.

Mallaig residents will receive three months' notice that water rates will be increased to match the other two hamlets in St. Paul county that already receive EPCOR-treated water via the regional waterline. This is in addition to the written notice from the county in January 2017 regarding the county's move to full cost recovery water rates that came into effect as of March 2017. Provincial and federal grant funding for the project will help ensure that St. Paul county's water rate is the same as other users on the highway 28/63 regional waterline, and there is no water rate increase anticipated for the residents of the Whitefish Lake First Nation.

Alberta's water for life strategy sets the stage for a new way of working with Albertans to ensure safe, reliable, and quality water supplies for a sustainable environment and growing economy. Water for life is centred on the achievement of three goals: safe, secure drinking water; healthy aquatic ecosystems; and reliable, quality water for sustainable economies throughout our province. Approving the interbasin transfers would support the water for life strategy and be a key priority to help provide safe and reliable drinking water on-reserve as part of the implementation of the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples.

I hope the House will support Bill 20, thereby providing the necessary approval for the interbasin transfers for both communities, and it's important to note that both river basins are

open for allocations, so there is no impact to other licence holders, unlike some in the south end of our province like the Bow River basin, which is considered a closed basin.

9:20

Following the approval of the Beaver River Basin Water Authorization Act two water licences will be issued under the Water Act, one licence to the county of St. Paul and the other to the highway 28/63 regional water commission to provide water to Whitefish Lake First Nation. The Beaver River Basin Water Authorization Act includes the maximum amount of water allocated to each community on an annual basis. I hope all members of the House will see the value of allowing these interbasin transfers to secure a reliable source of safe drinking water for residents of Mallaig and Whitefish Lake First Nation.

The solution does have, again, wide stakeholder support, and the environmental impact study identified no concerns regarding the long-term health of the North Saskatchewan River, which is something that we are obviously very concerned about in our province, the long-term sustainability.

Both projects leverage federal funding to be effective, and if approved, the county of St. Paul and the highway 28/63 regional water commission will be responsible for construction, operations, and maintenance following completion of the pipelines.

Madam Chair, I think that, you know, it's a great bill, and I think that it's something that's absolutely necessary for this part of our province. I don't think there's a single one of us in this House that can say that safe and reliable drinking water is not something that every community in Alberta deserves, and this bill helps us move forward on that.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

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

**Mrs. Littlewood:** Thank you very much, Madam Chair. Thanks for giving me a chance to speak to this bill, Bill 20, the Beaver River Basin Water Authorization Act. This is a bill that is about something very central to our province and to our communities, the issue of having safe and secure drinking water, something that should be a fundamental need and right for all Albertans. It makes sure that safe drinking water is a top priority and will allow the extension of existing regional waterlines to carry water from the North Saskatchewan River into Mallaig and Whitefish Lake First Nation, which are in the Beaver River basin, necessitating an interbasin transfer, which will be only the sixth in the history of doing this legislation.

I know how important the water for life programs are in this province. In our constituency we were very thankful to the Minister of Transportation for approving water for life funding in the community of St. Michael. It is a community where the licence for their – I'm trying to think of the word – shallow water aquifer is something that has been threatened over time with human development, and it is something that people out in rural communities are quite dependent on. When we know that in rural communities it is more difficult to have easily accessible drinking water, we need to as a province support the measures that allow for that to happen.

There are, of course, many factors that can affect water: agriculture use, oil and gas development, and, really, just growing populations of people drawing on the same amount of water. It's a good thing that we can see that there was a large amount of stakeholder feedback. There was a lot of consultation done. It's also

good to see that this is fully funded and that the residents of St. Paul county have been consulted to ensure that life remains affordable for them to be able to access clean drinking water.

Of course, this is especially important to First Nations, and I want to actually thank the Minister of Indigenous Relations for allowing me to wear this Métis scarf today while I deliver my remarks. Of course, it is an obligation to address treaty rights and to be very honest about the economic impacts that clean drinking water has. I've heard from other members of this House, unfortunately, that they would not support a budget that provides \$100 million to provide drinking water for First Nations. I was proud to stand in this House and support a budget that allows that fundamental need to be extended to communities that have been under drinking water bans time and again. That is just not acceptable in a province where we have so much.

That is why I'm very proud to be part of a government that is caring and inclusive and keeps these things top of mind. I know that, growing up in Edmonton, it was very rare to think about the availability of clean drinking water, but in getting to know some communities like Bruderheim, where they have a water co-op, people have gotten together without the consistent support of government to ensure that they do have water for their livestock, water for their communities.

Also, you know, even in urban areas we take for granted that firefighting is something where we have access to more water than we often do in rural areas. I know that when I was visiting families in the Skaro area in Lamont county, there was concern over water being returned to cow-calf operations where water had been drawn off people's farms to help fight the blazes that were in the area.

This, of course, is a fundamental need and something that should be a human right, but because it is not a right, we have to do what we can to incrementally make sure that communities that are most affected are supported by our government. Of course, there has been news that there are companies that would like to privatize all water, and that is troubling when we know how necessary water is for human life. I think it's something that is the role of government, to ensure that people have access to clean drinking water.

There has been respectful and thorough consultation with indigenous communities, and I want to thank the Minister of Indigenous Relations for taking a leadership role that is partnering with communities to make sure that people are not just having solutions forced upon them but are actually engaged in thoughtful dialogue to ensure that everybody that comes to the table is well aware of all of the issues and that when solutions are brought forward, there has been actual, real consultation with nations and indigenous peoples, that deserve to have their voice at an equal level at the table.

This does involve \$9.5 million coming from the province as part of that \$100 million that was in the budget for 2017-18. It helps leverage federal dollars. I know that in rural communities it is incredibly important that when there is money on the table from the federal government, we do everything we can to ensure that those funds are not left. There are sparse resources often in rural communities – I know this is something that came up with Internet connectivity in rural areas – and when there is money that is being offered, we must do everything that we can to make sure that none of it is left on the table. That does expire in 2018, so I'm glad that we are moving forward with this.

The government is ensuring that we move forward with strategies that allow us to have a clean and sustainable environment for all Albertans. This is something that follows in line with the climate leadership plan. I know that this was a huge election issue back in 2015, that people were concerned that there would not be the future for their children and for their grandchildren that they themselves

enjoyed growing up. I know that this is something that my constituents absolutely support.

**9:30**

You know, this is something that I hear from the opposition that we can't afford, and I think that that flies in the face of economic development, that we know can happen more readily when people are healthy, when people have just the basic needs of having clean water. So I'm glad to see that EPCOR is allocating 200 million cubic metres of drinking water to bring to bear on this project and also that there has been extensive consultation with NGOs and the area to ensure that water rates are still comparable with other communities and that no one is being unfairly put upon to be able to afford their own water.

This will affect St. Paul and Mallaig and the Whitefish Lake First Nation, and people out there will quite clearly benefit. This achieves the goals of safe and secure drinking water, healthy aquatic ecosystems, and reliable, quality water for a sustainable economy. It also implements the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples. It is absolutely a vital necessity to have clean drinking water to small rural communities and to First Nations.

I understand that this bill will have no impact on other licence holders, and I think it's a really important thing to make sure that we go ahead and leverage federal funding to make sure that we make the most out of the dollars that we have in such a constrained economy.

So I am proud to support this bill. I know that the residents of Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville also support this bill because they know how important it is to have availability of water.

Thank you, Madam Chair, and I'll close my remarks there.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 20? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Madam Chair, and thank you to all the speakers this morning who have indicated support for this very important bill. I'm really proud to stand in support of the passage of this bill, and I think that the debate this morning has brought forward interesting aspects that I hadn't really realized.

I was particularly pleased to hear how well the town of Bruderheim is doing with important allocations as well as dealing with the bigger picture, I think, than just the Whitefish Lake First Nation's and the hamlet of Mallaig's need for a safe water supply. We need to be thinking about how we can translate this water for life project, which is actually, if my math is correct, 15 years old and, obviously, still in development, and how we can make that project work even better.

The water for life strategy is centred on three goals: a safe, secure drinking water supply; a healthy aquatic ecosystem; and reliable, quality water for a sustainable economy. That third goal, I think, is something that really hasn't been talked about much in this debate so far, and I wanted to spend a little bit of time on that today. A sustainable economy means that the people that have access to water are actually able to create jobs, they're able to create a quality of life, and they're able to maintain their communities. I think that this is one of the major accomplishments of the water for life strategy, and I think that this bill that we're talking about today is going to have some real effects on that.

I was sitting here thinking about, if I lived in the hamlet of Mallaig, what I could do if I had access to a sufficient quantity of a safe water supply. Maybe I'd be able to flood the hockey rink. Or in my case, if I had to choose, I would flood the curling rink, actually. If you've ever flooded a curling rink, you know that using

groundwater is a disaster. You need to have the water that comes from EPCOR, actually, as a good source there.

Now, that's not the main use of this water. The main use of this water is going to be for drinking and for other household duties as well as agriculture and maintaining the aquatic ecosystem. But having vibrant recreational opportunities in a community is part of that sustainable economy, and I think that we need to think about these sorts of things when we're discussing this sort of thing.

It isn't just the hockey rinks and the curling sheets that would be helped out with this. There would be a good supply of water in the schools so that they didn't have to pay for bottled water coming in. The churches and the community halls and the other municipal operations presumably are going to be benefiting from this as well. All of this is economy. All of this means jobs. People are going to stay in that community. The people that stay in that community are going to need services. They're going to go to the restaurants, and they're going to buy food. They're going to go to the grocery stores and go to the co-ops to buy supplies.

This is a good source of economic activity in these communities. I think that this may be one of the main reasons that I'm really happy to see this. I think, as the Member for Livingstone-Macleod alluded to, we need to look at this on a province-wide basis, and the Minister of Indigenous Relations in his response talked about this.

I'd like to go back a bit in history. I think all of you know that since I'm one of the older members of this Assembly I love talking about history because I've lived some of it, actually, which some of my colleagues, like the man next to me, have not. I imagine everybody in this Assembly knows about the Palliser expedition. The Palliser expedition was Colonel Palliser from the British army. He was sent out by the government of Upper Canada in, I think, about 1850 to survey the west. This was at a time when Upper Canada was thinking about buying Rupert's Land from the Hudson's Bay Company.

Palliser came to Winnipeg and hired some Métis folks and other local folks who basically took him on a trek throughout what is now Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. He actually described a triangle. The base of the triangle is the Rocky Mountains, and the vertex of it is Winnipeg, and you can actually take the 49th parallel as one of the arms of that triangle. He made a report that is very interesting to read. He actually despaired at whether the government of Canada at the time should actually waste money on buying Rupert's Land because it was so dry. He thought that it would be impossible to raise grains because it was so arid in this area, particularly in the western part of the Palliser Triangle.

Now, as I said yesterday in discussing this, I grew up in southwestern Manitoba, and one of the benefits of growing up in southwestern Manitoba is that we actually have more rainfall in Manitoba than folks here in Alberta do. There's no doubt that there are times in Manitoba when there are actually floods and destruction from too much rain.

But even having said that, it is still a major issue here in Alberta on how we manage our water. The Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act, that was a result of the Dirty Thirties, helps. We've got dugouts, and we've got aquifer management, and we make sure we've got irrigation supplies and dams and weirs that help protect that, but there's still a lot of work to be done.

**9:40**

That's where this water for life strategy comes in. You have to recognize that there is a massive shortage of water, particularly in the southern half of this province, and we have to be very careful how we husband that water. It isn't just for irrigation and for other economic reasons that we need that water.

Basically, I just want to step back for a moment. The other thing that we need to recognize, which I think the opposition is slowly coming to grips with, is climate change. The climate now is a lot different than it was in the Dirty Thirties, and some of that is due to the effects of man-made climate change. When we're talking about water conservation, we have to realize that the glaciers that feed the North Saskatchewan, the Athabasca, the Bow and the Little Bow and the Highwood, all of these major rivers that we depend upon for our water supply in this province, those glaciers are basically melting away, and we don't have the supply of fresh glacial water that we had even 20 years ago.

All one has to do is go up to the Columbia Icefield and, basically, stand on the road and look at the signs. Where was the glacier in 1950, 1960, 1970, all the way up to 2010? The glacier was at the road, by the way, if none of you have been there, and now it's a couple of miles or three kilometres, I guess, from the road. That Columbia Icefield is the source of the North Saskatchewan, which is one of the rivers we're talking about today, and we have to be sure that we're managing that water well.

Anyway, you know, I would advise the folks across the way to take a look at climate change and maybe help us with trying to mitigate the effects of man-made climate change, if you really are interested in water management and really are interested in maintaining a viable economy in this province that we can depend upon for the next three generations, instead of saying: "Oh, well. It doesn't matter. We'll just burn it up, and we'll let somebody else worry about it." I think that's very irresponsible. [interjections] I'm happy that I have some agreement on this side at least for that.

I mean, my advice to the opposition is that they need to be a bit broader in their view of things about: really, how does climate change affect our economy; how does it have an effect; how will it be mitigated, I guess? In my opinion, the way to mitigate it is with some of the things that we've talked about like getting alternate energy going and promoting the installation of solar panels, the solar panels that are going onto the roofs of indigenous communities, community leagues like Leduc and Camrose. A lot of farmers are doing this.

Personally I've put solar panels on my roof, so I'm doing my little bit for that, but there are a whole bunch of things. The auction that's coming up, the auction that the Minister of Energy is supervising for 400 megawatts of alternative energy: I'm really anxious to see the results of that auction because that's going to have a major effect on climate change, and it's going to help water quality directly. You know, from a strictly economic point of view, this is the right thing to do. Strictly on economics, it's the right thing to do.

I want to turn to something else that I probably know more about than the economy, and that is about health care, about what are contributors to health, social determinants of health, things like the quality of water. If you're in a situation where your water supply is not safe, your life expectancy can be 10 to 20, even 30 years lower than otherwise. About 30 years.

Again, it's maybe unfair to say that in the Alberta context. There's no place in Alberta where the quality of water varies so much that you would have that degree of effect on longevity, but all we have to do is look at the Walkerton story. Walkerton was a small rural community, if such exists, in Ontario. They basically didn't do the things that we're talking about doing today. They didn't have a safe water supply. This was largely because of the Conservative government of Ontario basically slashing – slashing – the support for things like water inspections. I know the Member for Banff-Cochrane probably knows this personally. The government of Mike Harris in Ontario fired, just like the Premier of this province fired, folks back in the 1990s out of water inspection, out of

infrastructure, out of the public health systems. The upshot in Walkerton was that several people died a horrible death.

**Mr. Westhead:** Common-sense revolution.

**Dr. Turner:** Common sense? It was nonsense. That was nonsense.

Several people died. If you don't remember your history, folks, the Walkerton tragedy resulted in several tens of people dying of a very preventable form of disease that I've actually had to treat myself. It's a form of thrombocytopenia. Hemolytic-uremic syndrome is the name of this. It's due to a form of E coli O157:H7 that produces a toxin that actually damages the kidneys, damages the blood vessels. People that get this die of kidney failure or of a horrible type of bleeding. They bleed from all of their orifices. It's like a zombie death if it could happen.

Now, fortunately, we doctors actually, if we get to it soon enough, often can help people through it. Sometimes it takes dialysis, renal dialysis, which is not pleasant to go through. Sometimes it takes a procedure called plasmapheresis, which means inserting a needle in one arm and a needle in the other arm and actually taking the blood out and in a sense washing that blood and replacing what you take out with other forms of blood plasma. I'm happy to say that we now have a voluntary blood plasma donation system that's going to make sure that it's safe.

I could get into a lot of gory details here about this, and I see that I'm not fascinating the folks across the way.

**An Hon. Member:** Remind us how it happened in the first place.

**Dr. Turner:** It is a good thing to remind us of what did happen.

Because of that Conservative so-called common-sense revolution – these were PCs, by the way. They're different than these guys, I know, but they were PCs in Ontario that did this. Because of that the Walkerton water supply was not safe. Actually, what happened was that they were getting water supply from wells. Those wells actually were out in farmers' fields. The excrement from some cattle actually found its way into those wells. Pretty simple thing. That happens a lot, I think, on farmers' fields.

This happened because there was, I think, a big rainstorm or something like this, and the contaminated water from the cattle was basically flushed into the wells, and then the Walkerton water system didn't have the systems to test it and make sure that it was going to happen. They didn't have it because that common-sense revolution had resulted in a whole bunch of people being laid off, and the people that remained actually were unqualified. They didn't know what they were doing, unfortunately. I don't think it was their fault personally, but these people were given responsibilities that they weren't up to. Anyway, it's a good example of why we need to have a safe, reliable water supply for all of Alberta but in particular the hamlet of Mallaig and the First Nations.

**9:50**

Now, I'm going to finish off my comments talking about how important it is that we take this federal money and basically leverage it for the help of this First Nation but actually all the First Nations in this province that don't have a safe – I've heard it's something like 15 communities that are on a boil water supply. Somebody may correct me on that.

**An Hon. Member:** What are you going to do about it?

**Dr. Turner:** What am I going to do about it? What we are going to do about it is that with that \$100 million dollars that you guys didn't want to support, we are going to build pipelines carrying safe water to the reserve, and we are going to make sure that every Albertan,

whether they're on a First Nations reserve or not, has access to a good, safe water supply.

**An Hon. Member:** What's Harper's record on the water on First Nations reserves?

**Dr. Turner:** Well, I've been asked what the previous Prime Minister Harper's result on – and possibly his minister of immigration. Was he minister of environment, too, or something? Well, anyway, he doesn't know anything about either. He doesn't know anything about either, but the Conservative Party of Canada government headed by . . .

**Mr. Gill:** Madam Chair, can you please ask the hon. member to speak to the bill, please?

**The Deputy Chair:** He's on the bill. It's okay.

**Dr. Turner:** I am speaking to the bill. I'm talking about how important it is that we get a safe water supply to our First Nations people, and we are doing what the previous government of . . .

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. member, your time is up. Thank you.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater.

**Mr. Piquette:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm proud to rise in the House today to support Bill 20, Beaver River Basin Water Authorization Act. You know, I concur heartily with my colleagues that no matter where you live in Alberta, we have an obligation to make sure that you have clean and safe drinking water. This is, you know, particularly relevant for rural areas, where that's something that we can't necessarily always take for granted.

An observation is that I notice my new desk here was previously used by Doug Griffiths. Now, I'm sure many members in the House will be familiar with Doug Griffiths. He's a former minister in a previous administration, and he has been touring the province talking to rural communities about how they can develop sustainably. One of the most critical factors in his travels that he's identified for the health, well-being, and, in fact, continued existence of a rural community is the quality of its water and the assuredness of its supply.

Coming from that part of the province, you know, this is something that we can't take for granted. I know that the Member for Edmonton-McClung was talking about his experience, his growing up in the countryside on well water and that the water ran yellow out of his taps. I'm assuming that they were his taps that the water was running out of. Where I grew up, near Plamondon, it was a little bit more orange – I guess a good colour for where we are today – just because of the high iron concentration. The challenges for having to sustain a community on groundwater sources are, first, putting an undue stress on the resource but, secondly, even if the water exists, it might take so much processing and so much in the form of additional treatment that the end product is not something that's desirable, which is my understanding of some of the concerns that these communities were facing.

I also happen to be from Boyle, where we had a very similar situation some years back to the one that's facing Whitefish Lake today. Boyle was getting its water from Skeleton Lake, which actually happens to be just on the very edge of the Beaver River water basin, and with the climatic changes in that part of the province a lot of these lakes, especially ones that have smaller watersheds to draw on, you know, are facing serious stress. I know that in Boyle's situation it brought us into a dispute with the landowners along the lake blaming us for drawing the water levels

down to the point where the lake was no longer the beautiful resource that it once was.

Now, what Boyle had to do was actually bring in water from the Athabasca, and there were fairly similar concerns over the risk of interbasin contamination just because, you know, it's a similar situation. In fact, work that's being done by the Skeleton Lake Stewardship Association – it could well be that all along the Beaver River basin and the Athabasca River basin have been in communication. The land is actually pretty flat in some parts, and there's very significant evidence that suggests that these water basins are already in communication. If that is indeed the case, I guess that could also meet at least partway some of the objections that some of our honourable colleagues have raised – or maybe concerns would be a better word – on the possibility of interbasin contamination.

Now, turning particularly to Whitefish Lake First Nation, I have to say that I'm extremely proud of our government. I think it's a very welcome and overdue change from the past. We're taking the needs of First Nations seriously. We're taking their water needs seriously and making positive steps to address them rather than simply passing the buck, which unfortunately has been something that this province has done far too much in the past. I know that Whitefish Lake is not in the same situation as some other aboriginal communities. In fact, they did at least have a water system. I've been to communities where there is no water system. You have the situation where elders, you know, sick people, children had to go outside and do what people had to do maybe a century ago to be able to deal with their sanitation and their washing and their drinking needs without any running water at all.

When these communities would come and talk to the province, the province would say: "Oh, that's a federal matter. That's none of our concern." I have to say that our new indigenous affairs minister has strong insistence that, no, that's not correct. We can't turn our backs on other citizens of Alberta based on their jurisdiction, number one, because it's totally unethical and, number two, because it has a harmful effect not only on the community being impacted but on the communities around them. I think it's a long overdue recognition that these First Nation communities are not islands. They are indeed integrating with the surrounding communities, and the damage or the neglect that's inflicted on those communities doesn't just impact them; it impacts all of us as well.

You know, that is particularly true with the quality of water. As my hon. colleague just mentioned, when you have poor water, you have poor health, and if you have poor health, not only are you causing problems for the people themselves, which is wrong, but you also are causing significant impact on the rest of us because we have to pay for the increased health costs, deal with the loss of employment and loss of opportunities and the loss of all the wonderful things we could get from these individuals who have been impacted by water that's not fit to drink.

I'm very, very happy to see us moving forward with this. I'm also very happy that we have a federal partner that's a bit more forthcoming on these types of issues as well, and that's also a really welcome change. That's an important thing.

**10:00**

I'm also very glad about the quality of consultation that went on. Now, I represent a lot of the communities that are actually part of the highway 28/63 water commission, and I did do some informal asking of some of the partners who are in my riding about whether they had any concerns over this line extension, over this transfer. It's quite the contrary. They were very positive and very appreciative of the work that the government has done in making sure that, you know, everybody was included as much as possible

in discussions and that any concerns that they might have had were answered in a fulsome and appropriate way. So we've got, I think, a very good project.

Now, my understanding is that this is not the first time this has been done, so I guess that's another reason why we don't have to, I think, be overly concerned over the risk of interbasin contamination. This is, in fact, the fifth interbasin transfer that's been authorized since 2003. Okay. I'm seeing six here. This would be the sixth. As far as I'm aware, I think the only other transfer would have been previous to 2003, and it would have been actually to increase the level of a former Premier's lake. I think that was the other one, but many know the cause, you know, in this situation.

Now, this is, of course, not just a credit to our government. There have been people that have been working for a long time, you know, very diligently to make this happen. Of course, that would include Whitefish Lake First Nation itself but also the county of St. Paul. I know that they've been looking at different options for years. They've been trying to find the money to make this a reality. It's wonderful that they've been able to help put this together. St. Paul now has – what? – \$9.5 million in funding from us and the federal government. I guess they have to spend it fairly quickly because my understanding is that by March of next year this funding will actually expire. It's a good testament to them and a good testament to the very welcome change in attitude and, I'd say, the evolution of values that we've seen in this province.

Now, I know that our government thinks about not just this particular area when making these types of decisions, but they do consider the concerns of all of us Albertans. When we make mistakes in these types of decisions, we might not be actually around personally to experience the negative outcomes, so I think it is really important that this gets examined very carefully.

I think that, fortunately for the people of Alberta, we have a government that does take the environment and environmental sustainability very seriously, in fact more seriously than other administrations that have come before us, which is really fortunate because, of course, we are reaching a very critical time, well, in our planet's existence. I mean, these are issues that aren't going to become less as we go forward. You know, there have been a lot of years where a lot of us have either debated the fact of climate change or debated just what type of impact it would have on us. I think that we've gone beyond those types of considerations. I see it in talking to people back in my riding, where not many years ago they were very much in the camp that this was a conspiracy by – I don't know – big solar, big wind, Al Gore, or other elements as just a way to grab money and resources, that: yes, this might be happening, but it could be positive for us, and it's probably natural in origin anyway.

Even for these people it's been getting harder and harder as we see climate models being proven with time. I mean, I think that, actually, just recently the first big climate model that was done up by the UN 50 years ago, looking back now in retrospect, is almost frighteningly accurate. But we don't even need to look to those types of climate studies. We can even look to the change in agricultural practices that we've seen in the northeast of the province, where with the change in the growing season there are crops that we can grow now that weren't really imaginable some years ago. We also see it, of course, in the challenges that our forests are facing with this pine beetle infestation, that we used to be able to depend on our harsh winters to take care of, and that just isn't any longer the case. It's the adding up of all these factors that makes doubting the seriousness of climate change and what impact it has something a lot more difficult to argue.

Now, as far as that section of the province, this is something that we've seen in the challenges we've had with many lakes and with

them dropping rather precipitously. I know that's the concern that Whitefish Lake itself in particular has. They're not unique in facing that type of situation, so I think that addressing this now by bringing water out from one of the more reliable sources that we have, where I know that the signs show that extending the water out to that community is going to have a negligible impact on the flow for the North Saskatchewan, is something that makes a lot of sense. By having the line out there, I think it's not just going to help these communities right now, but it's setting the stage for future uses, so I'm very happy to see this happen.

Now, the other thing I should say about this is just how well it sits with other government objectives. One of them, of course, is Alberta's water for life strategy, which, just as a reminder to the House, is centred around achieving safe, secure drinking water, preserving healthy aquatic ecosystems, and providing reliable, quality water for a sustainable economy. This project definitely fits within those parameters. It also puts some flesh on the bone of our commitment to the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples, and that's something as well that was long overdue for our province to accede to and another reason to be proud of the work that this government has been doing.

It's for all these reasons that I'm going to support this bill, and I urge other members of the House to do so as well. This bill provides the absolutely necessary clean and safe drinking water for Mallaig and for Whitefish Lake First Nation. It has no impact on other licence holders. The consultation process was done appropriately, and it has widespread support without any significant objections. It shouldn't cause any concerns regarding the health of the North Saskatchewan River and its flow rate. Also, of course, it's always nice when we get help in paying for projects, and the fact that this leverages federal funding is definitely an asset and something that in these fiscally challenged times is really welcome. So I do hope that all members of the House see the value in allowing this interbasin transfer to go forward and that we indeed get unanimous support for this bill.

Thank you very much, Chair.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 20? The hon. Member for Spruce Grove-St. Albert.

10:10

**Mr. Horne:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'll be a bit briefer than many of my colleagues. I am certainly very happy to see this bill come forward. You know, for far too long we have had not just First Nations but communities across, really, the country, let alone Alberta, that have had poor access to clean water, and that's for a variety of reasons.

As many of my colleagues have, I do want to focus on our First Nation community in question here. You know, going back further, really, than Confederation, the Crown made a promise that our First Nations will have access to clean water, and that is not a promise that has been followed up on consistently throughout geography, let alone throughout time. That is one of the very many reasons that I am proud of this government. We recognized that this is an issue, we made a promise to follow through on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommendations, and with the last budget we saw money set aside specifically to get clean drinking water to our First Nations. So I see this as a very positive step forward. Really, seeing these two communities working together on the same bill to get clean water to both of these communities is something very positive.

As the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud was saying, there are a lot of economic benefits as well as health benefits of access to clean

water. In my community it's not a population, but there's the Villeneuve Airport, that is currently having a hard time expanding because they don't have running water at the moment. This has been an ongoing discussion between the county and the airport for quite a while. Hopefully, we see some movement in the future, and then we can see some growth there. But I see that there are a lot of economic opportunities and a lot of health care opportunities and, ultimately, cost savings for the government because of savings on health care from access to clean drinking water.

I see this as a very positive move. I am very happy to see this bill come forward, and thank you to the minister for it.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 20?

**Mr. Rosendahl:** Good morning. It's a pleasure to rise and speak on this important bill. There's nothing more fundamental to life than clean drinking water, and it's important that when we look at the essence of this bill, it's to provide that. When we look at the way in which we're going to move ahead with this, you can look at that we need to do an interbasin transfer. When we look at why we need to do that and why we need an act before the Legislature to allow this, we need to approve the interbasin transfer. It helps protect – and think about that: helps protect – Alberta's valuable water resources. It's important to consider that when you look at these interbasin transfers and how important it is when we deal with these kinds of things.

The proposals are reviewed to ensure the sustainability of water use in each basin. That's what's considered when you look at doing these interbasin transfers. Of course, because of that, interbasin transfers are subject to a thorough review and are only considered under unique circumstances such as this, to provide drinking water to Whitefish Lake First Nation and the small hamlet of Mallaig, which require decent drinking water.

We also look at the issue of: why do St. Paul county and Whitefish Lake First Nation need to draw drinking water? Well, both communities are dealing with water quality and quantity challenges that make it difficult to ensure a reliable, safe supply of drinking water for the area residents. Of course, a lot of members have talked about the effects on the economy and, of course, the effects on the health of the residents when they have a decent quality of drinking water.

After considering other options, it was determined that the best solution was to connect the highway 28/63 regional waterline, that carries drinking water from the North Saskatchewan River treated at the EPCOR facility in Edmonton, the best option in moving forward with the supply of water to these communities. Did they look at other options? Yes, they did. A total of seven options were considered to address the drinking water issue, I mean, when you're looking at water quality, quantity for the hamlet of Mallaig, of course, which is in St. Paul county, and a total of five options were considered to address the issues in Whitefish Lake First Nation. When you look at all these considerations, this is how important it is that we looked at all these options to make sure that this decision is one that is certainly arrived at to be the best solution to solve the drinking water issues for these two communities.

We look at the question of how many residents this will affect, right? Two hundred people in the hamlet of Mallaig and 1,500 people on the Whitefish Lake First Nation will benefit from the delivery of safe, reliable drinking water through this project. It's important, when we look at that, that it's going to affect these people in a big way.

Will the demands on the North Saskatchewan River affect the river? I believe no, because the volume of water that's flowing in

the North Saskatchewan is sufficient to supply the demand that's needed on that. The additional water is a .3 per cent increase in demand from what is flowing in the river. The average volume in the North Saskatchewan is 7.5 billion cubic metres that flow in the river, so, like I said, there would be no measurable effect on diverting that small amount of water for the project.

When you look at the other part of it, the consultations part of it, St. Paul county was consulted. First Nations, watershed planning and advisory councils, and area residents were consulted when they looked at doing this project. A similar process on the highway 28/63 regional water commission will be followed later this summer for the Whitefish Lake First Nation interbasin transfer. It was important that all these consultations were done, and of course through that consultation process all the options were looked at, and it was determined that the interbasin transfer is the best way to go to provide clean, safe drinking water to these two communities.

When we look at the other side of it, the costs, of course, we had already mentioned that the estimated cost of connecting Mallaig to the regional waterline is \$9.5 million. St. Paul county received \$4.75 million from the Canada clean water program and \$4.75 million from the Alberta water for life program to fund this important work, right? The estimated cost of connecting the Whitefish Lake First Nation is \$22.6 million; \$20.66 million will be funded through the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples/First Nations regional tie-in project funding from the government of Alberta. The remaining \$1.98 million has been committed by the federal government to tie the waterline to the reservoir on the reserve. It's important that we work together in providing this important project moving forward.

**10:20**

I could talk a long time about the water for life strategy as I dealt with it many years ago in looking at making sure that the water for life strategy in Alberta was a good one, a made-for-Alberta solution in dealing with water in Alberta. Like many people have said already, safe, secure drinking water, healthy aquatic ecosystems: those are very important when we look at our environmental issues and climate change and all those issues that are affecting our water today. A big piece of that, too, is reliable, quality water for a sustainable economy. Some members have already talked on that today, about how important it is to have clean, safe, reliable drinking water.

The main outcome of the water for life strategy is to ensure, like I said, a safe, secure drinking water supply while indirectly promoting higher standards of socioeconomic status to residents. To address this, a comprehensive review of all the waterworks systems in Alberta, 550 to be exact, was undertaken in 2003 in a study that identified the short- and long-term solutions to source treatment and, of course, operational challenges in the supply of safe, secure drinking water in the province of Alberta. Regional water systems were identified as the best practical solution in addressing these challenges. Regional water systems avoid expensive upgrades for stand-alone water treatment plants, which are aging, to meet current and future treated water standards. All of these issues fall under the water for life strategy.

The other part of it is to alleviate annual operational costs associated with stand-alone water treatment upgrade plans as well as retaining certified operators, which is also an issue in the fact that people operating these plants now have to be certified to make sure that when they're operating these plants, the water is, in fact, safe for everyone to drink.

Based on all those things, it's important that we support Bill 20, and with that, I thank everyone. Thank you very much.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak? The hon. Member for Banff-Cochrane.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you, Madam Chair. I'm pleased to get up and speak to this bill this morning. I kind of wanted to pick up on some of the comments from the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud regarding the history of Alberta and how it was settled and how prosperity and economic diversity came to the province.

I'd like to talk a little bit about the Brooks aqueduct. I know that's not quite the same thing as the interbasin transfer that the bill contemplates. Nonetheless, it involves bringing water to arid parts of the province so that . . .

**Mr. Loewen:** Madam Chair, he just admitted that it was irrelevant.

**The Deputy Chair:** Are you done, hon. member?

**Mr. Westhead:** I think he's raising a point of order.

**The Deputy Chair:** No. He didn't raise a point of order. Please continue.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you.

**Mr. Loewen:** I just pointed out that it was irrelevant. He admitted it.

**Ms Jansen:** Why don't you let him speak?

**Mr. Westhead:** Yes. Thank you very much.

The Brooks aqueduct was made in . . .

**Mr. Loewen:** I'm not stopping him. Let him go ahead.

**Mr. Westhead:** Madam Chair, do I have the floor?

**The Deputy Chair:** Hon. members, I realize that we're in Committee of the Whole, so there can be side conversations, but if we could please be respectful so that the speaker can continue speaking.

**Mr. Westhead:** Thank you, Madam Chair. Like I was saying, the Brooks aqueduct was built in the early 1900s, and it was a project by the CPR to help bring prosperity to agricultural communities in southern Alberta. You know, at the time it was one of the largest construction projects in history and one of the largest man-made structures in the country and, I believe, in the world. The reason that the aqueduct was built was to bring water to parts of the prairies for agricultural purposes.

You know, historical accounts have it that projects like the Brooks aqueduct and the Bassano dam and the Eastern irrigation district are fundamental founding parts of how Alberta came to be such an incredibly prosperous province. When we compare the historical significance of the Brooks aqueduct to the formation of our province, in a parallel way, having this interbasin transfer to the Beaver River water basin is going to be equally important in the history of the communities that the water will be delivered to.

I think it's important. Sometimes we take water for granted, and we forget how central it is to safe, healthy communities and our prosperity. It brings opportunities as well to the communities. You know, the Member for Edmonton-Whitemud was talking about the social determinants of health, and I'd like to expand on that a little bit in terms of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. If we don't have the fundamental elements essential to life, we can't achieve those higher things in the hierarchy, so it's incredibly important that

people have safe, clean drinking water. We can avoid catastrophes like what happened in Walkerton.

The thing is that these projects require money. You know, we have committed \$100 million to bringing clean, safe drinking water to First Nations communities. That's a commitment that's unique, I think, in Alberta in terms of putting our money where our mouth is. In terms of the reconciliation process, helping First Nations achieve the fundamental human right of having clean, safe drinking water is something that's extremely important to this government. I'm really proud that we're finally making these things happen.

In terms of climate change, you know, climate change has been mentioned here this morning. I like to think of water as: in a future climate water is going to be the new currency. If you don't have water, as the climate changes, your economic and growth opportunities are limited by the amount of water a community has. On the other side they don't believe in climate change, so it's a little bit hypocritical for them to talk about how important water is when they don't even believe in climate change. But that's another issue.

Where we're trying to give economic opportunities and diversify our economy, having these interbasin transfers like this to help a community that's in need of water to expand: this is something that's essential and incredibly important to that community.

I'd like to support the comments that have been made this morning and support the bill. I'm really proud of our government for putting this forward, and I encourage all members to support the bill.

Thank you.

**The Deputy Chair:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 20?

Seeing none, are you ready for the question on Bill 20, the Beaver River Basin Water Authorization Act?

**Hon. Members:** Question.

[The clauses of Bill 20 agreed to]

[Title and preamble agreed to]

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

**Hon. Members:** Agreed.

**The Deputy Chair:** Opposed? Carried.

The hon. Deputy Government House Leader.

**Mr. Bilous:** Yes, Madam Chair. I move that we rise and report.

[Motion carried]

[Ms Sweet in the chair]

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Calgary-East.

10:30

**Ms Luff:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. The Committee of the Whole has had under consideration a certain bill. The committee reports the following bill: Bill 20.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Does the Assembly concur with the report? All those in favour, please say aye.

**Hon. Members:** Aye.

**The Acting Speaker:** Opposed? So ordered.

## Government Bills and Orders

### Second Reading

#### Bill 21

### Agencies, Boards and Commissions Review Statutes Amendment Act, 2017

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose on behalf of the hon. President of Treasury Board and Minister of Finance.

**Mr. Hinkley:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am pleased to rise today on behalf of the Minister of Finance to move second reading of Bill 21, Agencies, Boards and Commissions Review Statutes Amendment Act, 2017.

Madam Speaker, provincial government agencies, boards, and commissions, or ABCs, play a vital role in delivering important programs and services to Albertans as well as providing oversight and advice. This is why our government is committed to continuing the long-overdue review of Alberta's agencies, boards, and commissions. The ongoing review of agencies, boards, and commissions ensures that ABCs are transparent, accountable, and using public dollars effectively and efficiently.

Madam Speaker, I want to start out by sharing some key facts and numbers that have come out of the ABC review to date. You'll recall that when we announced this process back in November 2015, there were 301 public agencies that were being reviewed. As part of Budget 2016 we announced a list of 26 agencies, boards, and commissions that were to be consolidated and dissolved, saving Albertans \$33 million over three years.

Phase 1 of the ABC review covered 135 agencies governed by the Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act, or APAGA. This review has resulted in the amalgamation or dissolution, now complete or under way, of 56 of those agencies, boards, and commissions.

Phase 2 of the ABC review looked at another 140 agencies that are not subject to APAGA, which includes a large number of professional and regulatory advisory bodies. While non-APAGA ABCs are more arm's length from government, each agency is accountable to the government for carrying on its mandate, meeting its objectives, and serving Albertans, including ensuring public safety, hearing appeals, and providing expert and public advice on important Alberta programs. As a result of phase 2 of the review, another eight agencies, boards, and commissions are proposed to be dissolved or amalgamated.

With that, let us now turn our attention to Bill 21, the Agencies, Boards and Commissions Review Statutes Amendment Act, 2017. This bill will enable us to implement dissolution where legislative amendments are required for 14 ABCs, 13 under phase 1 and one under phase 2. Some of these are the Access Advisory Council, under the Advanced Education ministry – the Access Advisory Council was established to provide advice to the minister regarding the access to the future fund; however, as payments have been suspended indefinitely, the council is no longer needed – and the Agricultural Operation Practices Act Practice Review Committee, under Agriculture and Forestry. This act is being amended to reflect that committees will be struck on an ad hoc basis rather than through a standing committee.

Another committee, the Alberta Economic Development Authority, under Economic Development and Trade, is no longer active or relevant. Therefore, the recommendation for dissolution was made as part of phase 2 of the ABC review.

For the Alberta Heritage Scholarship Act committees, under Advanced Education, the ministry will simplify programming for

the next scholarship application intake, removing the step of applicant selection by the committees, which will remove complexity and improve processing time for student applicants.

There are nine family and community engagement councils under the Ministry of Community and Social Services. These councils have never been established. Repealing the Building Families and Communities Act in its entirety will remove this act, which is no longer necessary, also the Students Finance Board under Advanced Education. It is important to note, Madam Speaker, that almost all of these public agencies are already inactive or defunct.

However, the Alberta Heritage Scholarship Act committees with Advanced Education were stood up when needed. Currently the Alberta heritage scholarship committees select about 70 of the 49,000 scholarship and award recipients supported by the department each year. Selection committees were initially established where the eligibility criteria were complex enough to justify external expertise to adjudicate applications. Most of the scholarships and awards programs administered by Advanced Education no longer use selection committees. They have rigorous processes to determine eligibility criteria and ensure accountability, transparency, and objectivity. These committees only meet when required to adjudicate particular scholarships. Recommendations were made to the department, and finalists were selected. Dissolving these committees essentially saves a step in the selection process. With reviews of scholarship programming leading to efforts to simplify programming, the eligibility complexity that made the selection committees valuable will no longer exist.

Madam Speaker, as I close today, I'd like to say that I'm proud that the review of agencies, boards, and commissions has resulted in numerous important changes to increase transparency, fiscal accountability, and diversity and to ensure better value for Albertans. We have seen significant progress government-wide in several different areas, including fair and appropriate executive compensation at ABCs; effective use of public dollars; transparency and accountability, including salary disclosure; revitalization of board appointment diversity; a diligent and public appointment process, an appointment process that is focused on what you know and not who you know; a compensation framework for 23 designated ABCs; cutting salaries and eliminating bonuses and perks like the golf club memberships for the highest paid top executives of agencies, boards, and commissions. The elimination of agencies that were defunct or whose functions could be better provided through another entity, including a government department, contributes to the efficient and effective use of public dollars.

I look forward to discussion on this bill and would ask that all members of the House support it. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Member for Cypress-Medicine Hat.

**Mr. Barnes:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I rise to speak to Bill 21, Agencies, Boards and Commissions Review Statutes Amendment Act, 2017. At this point in time I'm very pleased with the intent of the bill to limit government, to look for more value for hard-earned tax dollars, and to reduce bureaucracy. It looks like it might be a rare instance where the NDP has actually brought something useful forward. We will see if the devil is in the details.

Madam Speaker, Bill 21 implements phase 3 of the government's agencies, boards, and commissions review by dissolving 14 agencies, boards, and commissions. Five other agencies, boards, and commissions will be eliminated that did not require a statute to effect the change. Nineteen agencies, boards, and commissions

were identified by this government as either duplicating work or not functioning. These are in addition to the 26 agencies, boards, and commissions identified in Budget 2016 for further consolidation or dissolution.

Madam Speaker, the United Conservative Party caucus supports reducing red tape and bureaucracy, of course, and finding efficiencies as long as consultation and engagement are maintained. Reducing the number of agencies, boards, and commissions is a common-sense approach to reducing the size of our government.

**10:40**

Madam Speaker, if anyone here has read Mark Milke's book *Barbarians in the Garden City*, at the time B.C. NDP Premier Glen Clark swears the NDP was a fiscally conservative party. When the B.C. NDP 1997 party convention adopted a motion condemning the B.C. benefits/welfare reforms package and called for an increase in welfare rates, Clark responded: no; we have a deficit. Sounds a lot like: no; we're broke.

Reducing the number of agencies, boards, and commissions might be one of those cases where the Alberta NDP is channelling Glen Clark. The United Conservative Party also supports arm's-length entities' ability to work without – without – political influence and interference by the government.

Madam Speaker, I'm not sure how the government can call this bill part of the third phase of their ABC review when phase 3 was supposed to tackle executive compensation, roles and mandates, and governance excellence in public postsecondary institutions. Bill 21 does not address any of those issues, leading me to wonder if the government is not going to tackle executive compensation, roles and mandates or if, like we just saw in the previous Committee of the Whole, the government brought us back here before they were ready.

We know that the university presidents and administrators are making exorbitant salaries, and Albertans want to know what we are getting in return when a former U of A president received a \$544,000 salary and just over \$1.1 million in total compensation in 2014 as well as \$930,000 for buying her house. Of course, with known NDP backer Michael Phair guarding the U of A board, I guess we'll never know, Madam Speaker. Again, government has fallen short of truly looking – truly looking – for fair value, value for hard-earned tax dollars, competitive processes to ensure that the right people at the right price are put into rare government positions. At least, it's encouraging to see the NDP getting rid of a little bit of bureaucracy and expenditures.

Madam Speaker, let's take a look at some of these entities the NDP are doing away with. We have three here from the Department of Advanced Education. We have the access to the future fund's Access Advisory Council, the Alberta Heritage Scholarship Act committees, and the Students Finance Board, where, in all, we are told that other entities can handle the work.

Then we have Community and Social Services' family and community engagement councils. These were set up in 2014 but never populated and would require millions of dollars to get going, so no doubt a good saving and a good reduction of bureaucracy.

The one that does concern me, representing a largely rural constituency, is under Agriculture and Forestry. We have the Agricultural Operation Practices Act Practice Review Committee. Madam Speaker, this committee has not been active since 2011. It was called as an ad hoc committee to conduct inquiries under part 1 of the AOPA. Apparently, it will continue to perform an ad hoc function. A change in legislation will clarify that the committee will only form when there is a complaint under the act, an event that apparently has not occurred since 2011. I'm concerned how crucial this could be.

Madam Speaker, we saw last year, with the early snow and frost, particularly in northern and central Alberta, how so many of our farmers and our farm families had to work extra hard, take extra financial risk, and then suffered some losses. This provision was supposed to help that industry, that's weather sensitive and time sensitive, if necessary, if you ran into a concern with an urban neighbour or an urban disagreement over timing and noise and those kinds of things. At this point in time I'll be watching what this government does in this next phase because we have to ensure – we have to ensure – that our agriculture producers have the best opportunity to feed Albertans, to feed the world at a time when it seems like urban movement is infringing on them more and more every day. So I'll be watching this and talking more about it in Committee of the Whole.

Madam Speaker, Economic Development and Trade is getting rid of the Alberta Economic Development Authority. Now, the Premier effectively shut this down in 2015, but I seem to recall that all those employees in AEDA simply got absorbed into the public service in one of the departments: Economic Development and Trade or Treasury Board and Finance or to work for the Premier's Advisory Committee on the Economy. So at the end of the day, if we limit government a bit with Bill 21 and shuffle all the savings to other departments, this is just reshuffling the deck chairs on the you-know-what. AEDA used to produce some excellent reports on the state of the economy and issues we face. I guess the NDP will leave that up to the think tanks like the Canada West Foundation now.

A good search of the government telephone directory tells me that the Premier's Advisory Committee on the Economy doesn't even seem to exist anymore. I wonder where it could be hiding if not in Economic Development and Trade. Has it gone silent? Is it unpaid? Is it volunteer? Or have the employee contracts just run out, the employees let go, and the Premier takes no special advice? Again, my guess is that bigger government still exists everywhere with our NDP government, but we'll see if that can be fleshed out during Committee of the Whole.

Now, the other five agencies, boards, or commissions that will be dissolved through other means include Alberta Health's Alberta Expert Review Panel for Blood Borne Viral Infections in Health Care Workers.

Under Environment and Parks there is the Reclamation Criteria Advisory Group. Yes, you'd think by now we would all know what reclaimed land looks like. Look at the great job that Suncor and other oil sands producers are doing in Fort McMurray to see their reclamation.

Under Economic Development and Trade there is the Alberta Innovation Council. This council provided leadership, advice, and system oversight on \$800 million in annual innovation funding in the province. I wonder: why, exactly, is this ABC being dissolved? Has Alberta Innovates taken over this role? Is this information deemed not necessary? I hope to get some answers from the government as we proceed.

The Small Medium Enterprise Export Council provided advice to expand, encourage, and facilitate access of Alberta SMEs to foreign markets. Again, gone.

Under Transportation there is the Strategic Transportation Advisory Council, a committee made up of public- and private-sector transportation representatives who advise Alberta Transportation on transportation issues affecting Alberta's economy. Again, gone. That's too bad. I didn't know the STAC was formalized. I thought of it as a coffee-shop talk of the airports, the railways, the bus and trucking companies all getting together to tell the minister what's right, what's wrong, and what needs to be fixed.

But, again, we've seen a government short on consultation, so I hope that that doesn't continue and this doesn't make that worse.

At the end of the day, we want to ensure that all of the ABCs planned for this dissolution make sense. We also want to ensure that the other avenues for consultation are working before we simply agree to dissolve the latest list of ABCs. The United Conservative Party also wants to make sure that there are no surprises. After all, Madam Speaker, we were expecting phase 3 to involve postsecondaries, and that is clearly not happening. Either the government changed their mind, or once again they were not ready.

At this point it should be noted that the United Conservative Party has seen the NDP have problems in rolling out its plans for ABCs. Case in point, the changes made to AIMCo under the same ABC program. The ministry responsible for AIMCo handled it so poorly that it threatened AIMCo's reputation by alarming clients about the government's apparent attempts to undermine the Crown corporation's independence. Incredible. Independence is critical to AIMCo, handling \$97 billion of Alberta's money, including 83,000 pensions of our hard-working civil servants and, of course, our \$17 billion heritage savings trust fund. While AIMCo's changes were high stakes, much higher than these ABCs, these ones deserve proper consultation and reflection as well.

**10:50**

These are some of the reasons that while legislation such as Bill 21 may appear innocuous on the surface, it is our job as legislators to scrutinize any bills carefully. Madam Speaker, while I recognize the chance to reduce bureaucracy and limit government, through Committee of the Whole and further readings we will be watching to ensure that this government got this one right.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

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

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill 21.

First of all, I'd like to address something. It bothered me to hear condemnation of Michael Phair from the member opposite because he was named for his talents and his abilities to be the chair of the U of A board of governors. His long-standing reputation is one of excellence in everything he turned his hands to as a city councillor, human rights activist, leader in the LGBTQ community in Edmonton and throughout the province, and it was really disappointing to hear his reputation being maligned by the member who just spoke about him in condescending terms. I was upset about that, and I hope not to hear that type of comment again about somebody who is so well respected in our province.

I do, though, wish to speak further about my agreement to stand in favour of Bill 21, the Agencies, Boards and Commissions Review Statutes Amendment Act, 2017. Madam Speaker, the provincial government's agencies, boards, and commissions do play an important role in delivering important programs and services to Albertans, and they provide valuable oversight and advice.

Now, this piece of legislation isn't simply a housekeeping bill. It's a matter of looking at significant savings but also improving governance in the province. It was announced last year that 26 agencies, boards, and commissions were to be consolidated or dissolved, and this means big dollars saved. It means a \$33 million savings over three years for Albertans.

This isn't something that we're going to be looking at as a one-off. It's something that we need to be doing on an ongoing basis and something that wasn't done for decades under the previous administration. That's why we're faced with a situation right now

where there were a number of these agencies, boards, and commissions which were simply not functioning. They weren't operational, and they were left in the dust because of the neglect of the previous administration. So we're looking on an ongoing basis at these reviews and making sure that the remaining agencies, boards, and commissions are actually functioning and providing quality service at reasonable cost.

This government is intent on making sure that the agencies, boards, and commissions that we have now or ones that might be created in the future actually have a job to do and do so within a budget that is realistic and don't waste money, as I said, and that they provide valuable oversight and service and advice to the province. Bill 21 ensures that all ABCs are relevant and serving the best interests of Albertans. The agencies impacted by this bill are all, as had been mentioned before, either no longer operating, or the work they do could be done more effectively elsewhere. Almost all of the public agencies the bill addresses are inactive or defunct.

Some people have some questions that they have asked about the bill and this phase of the review. The intent of the review was to assure Albertans that the functions and services being provided by our agencies, boards, and commissions remain relevant, effective, and make life better for the people of this province. The majority of the public agencies being dissolved are already inactive or rarely meet. Dissolving these agencies means we are eliminating unnecessary processes. What we're doing is taking care of some of the neglect of the past administration in not really keeping an eye on what was going on with those agencies, boards, and commissions. They ended up falling into disuse, and we're now taking care of that.

This review also ensures that public agencies are transparent and accountable and are following good governance practices. I'm sure all of us have heard horror stories about how some of the agencies, boards, and commissions are not really following proper rules of governance, and having oversight of them right now, having this review take a look at governance of agencies, boards, and commissions is long overdue. I know that I've had expressions of relief from people who are on agencies, boards, and commissions that this review is being undertaken so that they feel comfortable in their operation as members of agencies, boards, and commissions that they operate on.

Now, in phase 2 of the review the outcomes can be described in a number of ways, but all three phases of the review were focused on identifying what's working, what can be improved, and what is no longer providing value or relevance to Albertans. Phase 2 reviewed 140 agencies that are not subject to the Alberta Public Agencies Governance Act, or APAGA. These agencies are more than arm's length for government and include a large number of self-regulated professional organizations. As a result of phase 2 of the review, an additional eight agencies, boards, and commissions are proposed to be dissolved or amalgamated. Government will work to ensure that all the agencies continue to meet the needs of Albertans effectively.

Now, it was brought to light that there are fewer dollars being saved from phase 2 than phase 1. People had that question. An important focus of the ABC review was to be sure that the agencies, boards, and commissions are using public dollars effectively and efficiently. It's also important that these public agencies are transparent and accountable and are following good governance practices. Last year, in phase 1, 26 ABCs were consolidated or dissolved, saving taxpayers \$33 million over three years. The eliminated agencies in phase 2 were no longer functioning and had no board and no staff. The review was thorough and extended to all

140 agencies, boards, and commissions that are not subject to APAGA.

Some have asked why some agencies are still under review. Alberta's agencies, boards, and commissions provide substantial value, and we will continue to ensure that public agencies are relevant, effective, transparent, well governed, and accountable to government and Albertans. Some continuing reviews of agencies are tied in with broader systemic reviews in which the specific agency review cannot be undertaken in isolation. That's why some agencies are still under review.

Once all phases of the review are complete, that doesn't mean that we're going to stop the process. It will be an ongoing process. Our government believes strongly in agency governance, and this means that the reviews of agencies occur regularly so that we don't end up with a situation where we have agencies, boards, or commissions which are dormant, which cost us money, and do nothing. APAGA agencies must be reviewed by the government at least every seven years.

Non-APAGA agencies may also have prescribed review timelines in their enabling legislation. Whether prescribed or not, it's a good practice to regularly evaluate agencies to ensure that Albertans continue to be well served and represented. That is something that we intend to do over time by maintaining oversight over these agencies and on a regular basis reviewing them so that we don't end up with dormant, nonfunctioning, and costly agencies, boards, or commissions in the future.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Member for Edmonton-Whitemud.

**Dr. Turner:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Actually, I want to thank the Member for Edmonton-McClung for a very good review of why we need this bill and what is going to be accomplished.

I actually want to also congratulate him for calling out the rather poorly chosen wording by the member opposite when that member was referring to Michael Phair. I consider Michael Phair to be one of the heroes of the city of Edmonton and the province of Alberta. Indeed, I have known Michael Phair for 30 years, and I have never seen him do a mean thing in his life. He's always been a leader and always brought credit to whatever organization he works for, and that includes being the chair of the board of the University of Alberta. What a brilliant appointment that was, and I really congratulate the selection committee in doing that.

**11:00**

In fact, the appointment of Michael Phair as chair of the board of the University of Alberta actually occurred after our election in 2015. I wanted to bring this up because what the member opposite alluded to was the salary and perks of the previous president of the University of Alberta, and that person actually was given that contract about 10 years ago, I believe, or at least well before 2014.

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. member, are you speaking to the speaker that just spoke?

**Dr. Turner:** Yes, I am.

**The Acting Speaker:** If you could please speak to the speaker that just spoke. I think you're commenting on comments that actually happened before that speaker.

**Dr. Turner:** I am referring to the comments that the Member for Edmonton-McClung made about Michael Phair.

I just wanted to point out that the government responsible for the contract for the previous president of the University of Alberta was actually a Progressive Conservative government, and they . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Hon. member, the previous speaker actually did not speak to the president. He spoke to Michael Phair, the individual. He did not speak about the comment on the prior president. So I would just like you to please comment on what was commented on by the member and not speak to comments that were made by the other member.

**Dr. Turner:** Well, then, I will basically ask the Member for Edmonton-McClung to give us some further information on who was actually in charge of the board of the University of Alberta at the time that that contract was signed.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.  
The hon. Member for Edmonton-McClung.

**Mr. Dach:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I won't belabour the point or go too far off into the weeds on this, but my major disappointment was the fact that the reputation of the board chair of the University of Alberta was maligned, that being Mr. Michael Phair. As has been alluded to, I thought it was also a brilliant appointment. I consider Mr. Phair a true friend of mine as well, and his service and reputation are beyond reproach. It was maligned in this House, and I stand to protect that and to oppose anyone who might malign his reputation. That's basically the point of my comment on comments made in this House regarding Mr. Phair.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, I will now recognize the hon. Member for Lacombe-Ponoka.

**Mr. Orr:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate it. I'm pleased to be able to speak to Bill 21, the Agencies, Boards and Commissions Review Statutes Amendment Act, 2017, this morning. I do hope that the government will make very clear one particular issue for us: whether this bill was intended to implement phase 3 of the government's ABCs review act or, as seems to have been indicated by the Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose, whether it's actually just a wrap of phases 1 and 2, bringing forward some of those things that were raised in phases 1 and 2. I think it does make a difference here, and we'll get to that in a moment.

This current bill, though, that we're speaking to, Bill 21, does bring forward 19 ABCs that have either been duplicating work or not functioning or minimally functioning, which is good. The 2016 budget identified that at that time there were 26 other ABCs that needed to be dissolved due to recommendations from various departments either for consolidation or dissolution. They were all identified as being cost-saving measures and duplication-of-work correction measures. Some of those agencies from phases 1 and 2 are obviously just now being dissolved, and I suppose that's partly because some of the consultation work, internal work for those agencies needed to be completed and brought to a good conclusion. So that's good practice.

In general I want to affirm the government's action on this bill. I will be voting in favour of it, pending how things go through Committee of the Whole, but in general I do affirm the government's action on this bill. Every institution, including government, has a tendency to create programs and new ventures in a burst of zeal, but then over time the need for the endeavour changes, situations change, and programs get left to sort of drag on and on and on way past their best-before date. While it's fun to start

new ventures, it's more like work to wrap them up. So I congratulate the government on an unglamorous bill that accomplishes much more than some of their more radical adventures which the government has brought forward. This is good management, a bill like this.

I would also encourage the government that if you can do this, then I think you can address some of the red tape snarl of regulations in our government as well. It's clear that we fully support the reduction of red tape. The reality is that red tape and bureaucratic reductions and strategies and all of those kinds of things need to sometimes be reviewed. For that reason, I'll be supporting second reading of Bill 21.

Redundant and costly ABCs are really much like redundant and costly regulations. They tend to build up, and every once in a while the home of government regulation needs a serious housecleaning. I trust that as we try to find efficiencies with regard to the ABCs, we can maybe find some prudent efficiencies as well with regard to some of the regulations that we have. I'm hoping that as we support this one, the government will also find it appropriate to, in a while, support Bill 207 from the Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner, the Regulatory Burden Reduction Act, that we'll be seeing. All those in this House can safely assume that at least our caucus does appreciate reducing any area of red tape, removing any duplication, and finding all the efficiencies that we can within the government and its various departments.

I do have a couple of questions, though, that I would appreciate the opportunity to have clarified, that I think should be answered. Clearly, is this bill going to address what was originally phase 3 or not? I wonder if the government would clarify where the mandate for phase 3 is. I believe phase 3, as has already been suggested, was intended to examine executive compensation, roles and mandates, and governance excellence in the public postsecondary institutions. That is not here. It's not even mentioned. Has this been forgotten? Is it going to be brought up later? What are the government's intentions on that? I think it's something that the people of Alberta would appreciate being able to know.

Let me move on. One of – actually, I'll save that for Committee of the Whole.

As always, I think there are questions that need to be resolved around clarity regarding some of the decisions that have been made, how they were made. But, at the end of the day, we just need to make sure that the cost savings actually outweigh what this might be costing the province. Some of the decision-making process, some of the protocols, the methods that were used to decide which ones to combine, which ones to dissolve, which ones were valuable, which ones were not, which ones were actually inefficient, which weren't: I think it would be helpful for us to understand some of that, for the people of Alberta to understand that to be able to be supportive of the intent and of the direction this is going, and having the agencies themselves being involved in that.

I know that the government has often said that they consult, but it's pretty skimpy consulting. Have the agencies and the boards and the people involved, maybe even the stakeholders, had the opportunity to actually contribute to these? Is dissolving them always the best solution? Is it the right solution in each particular case? We can get into some of that during Committee of the Whole.

Clearly, as has already been alluded to by the Member for Edmonton-McClung, I think it was, there are other agencies and commissions that have had serious challenges and serious problems. How are these being addressed? There are issues of overpayment. There are issues that I am aware of with conflict of interest. There are issues of management. These are the things that need to be watched and dealt with. How are we, the people of Alberta, to know that all of these have actually been dealt with in

ways that create a benefit for the people of Alberta? I think a cost-benefit analysis of some type would be very useful. Has that been done, and will that be presented at some time in the future?

**11:10**

The 2016 budget, as has already been said, identified \$33 million in savings over three years. Have we verification that those savings actually occurred, or is it just a nice public presentation? How do we verify actual savings of \$33 million? Along with that, I would say that while I totally applaud greater fiscal responsibility, particularly with this government, I do think that we need much more. That \$33 million, compared to a looming \$90 billion deficit, is a mere drop in the bucket of what needs to be happening here, so I would really like to affirm that we need to continue in this direction with a little bit more energy.

With every decision that's made in Alberta, though, I think it's important that we offer Albertans stability and that we restore confidence in the process and the management of their province and of government. There shouldn't be unexpected surprises. I hope that all of these, then, are well thought through, that the planning was in place, that it involved the people that are stakeholders, as I've said. I'm actually going to be connecting with some stakeholders this afternoon with regard to some of the specifics to see what their thoughts on this are, and we'll bring that back in Committee of the Whole.

Communication is extremely important to people. It's what gives confidence to the system. Alberta has had a lot of shaking of its confidence lately. It's affected our employment, it's affected people who work here, it's affected our businesses, and it's affected a lot of Alberta and our investment in this province. So we really do need to do this in a way that restores confidence to the people that the process, not just the result but the process, was proper and fulsome and adequate.

Those are some of the concerns that I have, and hopefully the government will be able to give us some indication of some of those things as well.

We support the idea of planning for dissolution of those that make sense. We recognize that there have been a number of problems with these in the past. I won't refer to AIMCo – it's already been brought up – except to say that it is important to maintain, generally with ABCs, the whole concept of arm's-length governance on operation. That's why they have independent boards. Yes, there should be an overall review of objectives and if they are fulfilling their mandate, but beyond that, I think it's extremely important that the government stays out of the operation and the daily decisions that these agencies and boards and commissions are asked to make. The whole question of protecting the concept of arm's length, which I think this government has struggled with in the past, is extremely important and one that I would like to have assurance will be protected as we move forward.

I think I'll leave it at that. I will support the bill at this reading. We will have some questions coming up. Let's do a good job on this one at least, okay?

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)? The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm glad to hear that the hon. member is supportive of the bill that we're bringing forward. It definitely is our intention to find efficiencies and create opportunities for those. But I can't help but beg the question: how is tying up legal counsel in drafting a bill, how is tying up departments in drafting regulations, how is creating new

red tape to reduce red tape actually an effective use of resources? Talking about how they want us to bring forward a bill to reduce red tape but that the bill is red tape and therefore would create red tape, to me, just doesn't actually – I can't square that circle.

I think that what is prudent financial management, including management of human resources, is to ensure that staff are working diligently to reduce inefficiencies, to find redundancies and act on them, as opposed to political grandstanding around bills that have the words "red tape" in them. So I would really find it very helpful for the member opposite to help me understand how tying up all those resources and creating a bill to do exactly what we're doing would be an efficient use of public resources.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

**Mr. Orr:** That is the snarl of red tape. It just never seems to end in government and in institutions. The reality is that I think that in order to address the challenge of – and maybe we should use a different language than just "red tape." It's just old and redundant regulation that sometimes needs to be reviewed, housecleaned, as I've said, and sometimes in order to do that, we have to just get deliberate about it. I fully acknowledge it will take some more work. It will take some doing. But, you know, every jurisdiction in Canada, every province at least in Canada except Alberta, does address that, does take a deliberate look at it. I think that we in the end will end up with significantly less redundant and obsolete regulation that nobody really needs but tends to sort of block the flow in our Alberta economy. Yeah, I think we do need to address it.

Thank you.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

The hon. Minister of Health.

**Ms Hoffman:** Thank you very much. Again, Madam Speaker, creating regulations and legislation to say that you have to do things on a certain schedule actually creates new red tape. When I came in, there were a set of past practices that said that regulations expired after a certain time limit unless they were intentionally renewed, which meant that we had to spend tons of department resources going through those regulations that we couldn't have expire. We couldn't have public health regulations expire and create health risks for the people of Alberta, so we had to put in tons of lawyers and department content experts just to deal with the renewal of expiry dates.

To me that is an incredible waste of resources, when there are certain pieces of legislation that are important that we have embedded in the safe operations of government and the safety and protection of people, creating new regulations and new legislation. To say that you have to do it every three years otherwise they expire and are no longer in effect, to me, is dangerous and risky and a waste of public resources because you're tying up all of that legal and content policy expertise on just dealing with expiry dates as opposed to actually looking at pieces of legislation that are worthy of the intentional examination and review and updating. You're spending all sorts of time on things like extending expiry dates, which, to me, is ineffective.

Having a piece of legislation to politically grandstand, saying that you're going to reduce red tape is actually a creation of red tape. I agree with the intention that you want to ensure that you're being effective about where you're using your resources, that you're updating things in a timely fashion that should be updated. But just to say across the board, "We're going to be getting rid of red tape as a political gesture rather than actually having thought and understanding around why some of those pieces might require a longer period of extension, why it isn't actually effective to say that

every three years everything is invalid unless it's been validated," could actually be a tremendous waste of resources, Madam Speaker.

While I agree with the intention around streamlining, as is evident in the government bill that's being debated here this morning, I think that some of the posturing that has been done in the past and may be done again on this floor in short order isn't an effective use of resources, Madam Speaker. Having lived through the intention of, you know, "We'll have these short-term expiry dates so that everything expires unless it's relevant," it actually did create a ton of red tape. I had to work to create efficiencies so that we wouldn't have either a public health crisis or the department spending all of its time just dealing with expiry dates.

That's a little bit of my learned experience that I wanted to share, and I hope that it will be useful in consideration of this bill and others.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. minister.

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

**Mr. Gill:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I stand today to speak in support of second reading of Bill 21. I think that any effort, as the speakers before me already mentioned, to reduce red tape is a positive thing, and for that basic reason I support second reading of Bill 21.

I am curious, however. If Bill 21 is a part of phase 3 of the government's ABCs review, it will dissolve 14 ABCs. In that case I'm not really sure how the government can call this bill part of the third phase of the ABC review because phase 3 was supposed to tackle "executive compensation, roles and mandates, and governance excellence in public post-secondary institutions." Bill 21 does not address any of those issues.

**11:20**

Of course, we all know that that is a big project, and it will involve dicey negotiations with the postsecondaries. We know that this government hasn't performed previous consultations very successfully, and we can talk about that till the cows come home: like Bill 6, the carbon tax, et cetera, et cetera. It appears the key is to provide cover fire by focusing instead on dissolving 14 more agencies, with five others dissolving without the need to do so legislatively. In this way Bill 21 seems more like an addendum to phase 1, which saw 56 agencies amalgamated or dissolved. No word on what'll happen to the postsecondaries. The purported plan for phase 3 perhaps is not going so well. Perhaps the minister can provide an update sometime on that.

Still, the exercise to review ABCs to weed out redundancy and duplication has been a worthwhile one. As the bill moves through committee, the United Conservative Party caucus looks forward to carefully scrutinizing the ABCs targeted in this piece of legislation. Of particular interest is the plan to dissolve the following ABCs up for dissolution. I've picked only a few. I'm not going to go into detail on every ABC. For example, the first one is the Alberta Heritage Scholarship Act committee. It's still active, but its function has been brought back into government to be absorbed by other entities that handle all other scholarship decisions. We want to make sure this makes sense as Albertans are more and more curious about what this NDP is doing with their heritage fund.

The second one is the family and community engagement councils. These councils were created to replace child and family services authorities and persons with development disabilities boards but were never populated. The current government says that they would be too expensive and their functions would be better

handled through the department. Perhaps so, but we'll look into that. Maybe they were a good idea that should have been operational. Clearly, the department hasn't taken on these functions, which sound valuable. How do we know it'll happen if this ABC is dissolved? Like, we don't know the outcome of that.

The other one is the Alberta Economic Development Authority. It does indeed seem redundant with the creation of the Premier's Advisory Committee on the Economy, but what is the Premier's advisory council doing? We don't know about that. There are no reports on its website. Does it just report to the Premier in private? We haven't seen anything.

Another agency, the Alberta Innovation Council, provides leadership, advice, and system oversight on \$800 million of annual innovation funding. We have received little information on the need to dissolve this particular ABC when this government is so keen about diversifying the economy, you know, so keen on innovation, but we have no information on this, this ABC yet.

The other one is the Small Medium Enterprise Export Council. This agency's mandate has been to provide advice to "expand, encourage and facilitate access of Alberta [small medium enterprises] to foreign markets." Again, this would help to diversify our economy. The latter two councils might still serve a good purpose, but, as we all know, the NDP is not a fan of business, but we do need to do away with everything that might assist entrepreneurs.

Finally, the other one I have is the Strategic Transportation Advisory Council. Public- and private-sector transportation representatives advise Alberta Transportation on transportation issues affecting Alberta's economy. Is this public consultation occurring in another venue? That is an important point. I mean, we don't know anything about that.

There is an opportunity here to expand on red tape reduction. The UCP appreciates that Bill 21 at least purports to reduce red tape. This ties in nicely with my colleague the hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner's Bill 207, which is also before this House, Madam Speaker. Since the NDP is suddenly so keen on red tape reduction, as evidenced by this bill, we hope that, you know, we'll get support for Bill 207 as well, a private member's bill.

But, anyway, let's get back to Bill 21. I noticed that you were going to give me warning, so I got back. In reviewing and providing possible amendments to ABCs in coming days, we want to ensure that all board, council, and advisory council plans for dissolution make sense and they don't have any unintended consequences. We want to make sure the government isn't just targeting them to make life easier for ministers who don't want to consult instead of, like, making life better for Albertans, as the government always claims. We have to be sure that the other avenues for consultation must be in place before we simply agree to dissolve this latest list of ABCs. We're also checking to ensure Bill 21 isn't serving up surprises. After all, we were expecting phase 3 to involve the postsecondaries, and that clearly is not happening, so we cannot take what appears to be a simple bill at face value. It is also the job of legislators to examine the government's eventual rollout of statutes.

Should Bill 21 really be what the government says it is, the ABCs to be dissolved have been identified to save costs, reduce duplication of work, then we will continue to support it and we should support it to make government more efficient so we can serve Albertans in a better way. However, we first look forward to fulsome discussion and debate on how it's going impact all these agencies and the end result, how we serve Albertans. We hope that should we offer amendments, our NDP colleagues will accept them in good faith so we can strengthen this bill and serve the intent of this bill, to serve Albertans in a better way.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any members wishing to speak under 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to the bill? The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 21, the Agencies, Boards and Commissions Review Statutes Amendment Act, 2017.

Now, if you know me, I am all about being in favour of getting rid of red tape and the bureaucratic process that hampers the people and saps the use of scarce resources that they have, so when I see Bill 21 coming to the Legislature for the people's endorsement, all I can say is: bravo. I'm glad that we see some common-sense solutions coming from the NDP government at this point. The bigger question is: two and a half years into the NDP mandate, what took so long? There must be incredible bureaucratic hurdles and red tape slowing this review down.

Phase 3 is supposed to focus on "executive compensation, roles and mandates, and governance excellence in public post-secondary institutions." When I see the gigantic salaries being paid out over at the University of Alberta and students from all over the world begging to be let in, I have to wonder: what are we getting for those giant salaries in university administration that taxpayers are paying for? Why are we buying million-dollar homes from university presidents when they retire?

**11:30**

You know, I just might ask the Public Accounts Committee to help this ABC review along by asking them to invite the universities and colleges in to be held to account. After all, we need great thinkers and innovators to be coming out of the universities to fill the jobs and create the jobs of the future.

Now, having read the press release, I understand that although 14 agencies, boards, and commissions are being dissolved here with Bill 21 and five are to be dissolved through other means, "several agencies are undergoing further review to ensure alignment with significant ministry initiatives, broader systems reviews, or [other] legislative reviews." This tells me that there may be yet more ABCs to come for dissolution.

When I take a look at the list of names of the agencies, boards, and commissions that are to be dissolved, I'm struck by why it took so long to make this happen. Are the public servants overworked? Can't they just clean up this bureaucratic mess?

In Advanced Education alone there are three ABCs to be dissolved. The Member for Edmonton-Gold Bar must have inherited a real mess of a department over there if he has to dissolve these three ABCs. I mean, look at it. The Students Finance Board, established in the 1950s, set the requirements for the access to student aid. Now the department says that this function is already being performed by quarterly reviews with the various student bodies in the province. In other words, the bureaucrats took it in-house and neutered the board.

Then we go to Community and Social Services. Nine of these family and community engagement councils were set up but never staffed or funded. It is like so much in government. It exists and it will get done as long as it is funded; if it is not being funded, it doesn't exist. Community and Social Services claims that outreach functions would be better handled elsewhere in the department at lower costs. That's excellent. Handle it. I like lower costs. Doesn't everybody?

Remember that NDP Premier who wouldn't raise welfare rates in British Columbia because he was running a deficit? He kept costs low. He was so good at keeping costs low that he was able to get a free \$10,000 deck built for him for his house, all for signing over a

licence for a casino. Now, if Glen Clark had an ABC like the Alberta Gaming and Liquor Commission to hand out the casino licence, he wouldn't have had to go to court over the nice new back deck and resign in disgrace.

You see, the point I'm trying to make here is that we conservatives support arm's-length entities' abilities to work without political influence by government. Take, for instance, the Alberta Economic Development Authority. These experts and captains of industry were brought in and kept at arm's length so as not to politicize the importance of the economic crystal ball gazing they were doing. They produced important research on the economy. Some of their studies included Fuel Shortages in Alberta and How to Fix Them; Water Reuse in Alberta: Experiences and Impacts on Economic Growth; Return on Innovation: Opportunities in Alberta's Innovation System; Alberta: A Global Energy Leader; Congestion Management: Vital Component of Today's Infrastructure Planning; Accelerating Broadband Enablement in Rural Alberta. We also know that these think tank or consultant-type reports are readily available or can be produced on an ad hoc basis with a contract.

When the Premier dissolved AEDA, in 2015, the staff came back to the bureaucracy and backstopped the Premier's Advisory Committee on the Economy. Now the website says that this committee exists, the last annual report says that it exists, but the phone seems to say that it has been absorbed by the line areas of the department as there is no separate area anymore.

I was a little surprised to see the STAC, the Strategic Transportation Advisory Council, on the list of ABCs to disappear. The feedback I heard from industry was that they enjoyed these round-tables to hear the issues of each mode of the transportation sector and provide feedback to the minister. I guess the minister did not. Though time-consuming and hosting costs are involved, the minister always has a chance to meet one on one with these stakeholders, and I hope that he does.

With that, Madam Speaker, Bill 21 is a good, positive step in diluting waste and red tape and bureaucratic inefficiencies that exist across the government.

However, I do want to address a point that was made by the Minister of Health – and this is about the idea of reducing red tape; I think she used the word – that this bill would be grandstanding. I find it interesting that she would use that kind of language to describe a bill that has been implemented by B.C., has been implemented by the government of Canada, under the Stephen Harper government, in order to be able to reduce red tape and the burden of red tape. In B.C. over a three-year period they were able to decrease regulatory red tape by 36 per cent.

Now, if that's grandstanding, then we need to get up and grandstand all we can because that kind of burden is what costs Albertan family businesses their livelihood. We need to make sure that we stop this kind of abuse of the people that actually create the jobs in this province. I was actually very disappointed to hear that the Deputy Premier of this government is saying that this is grandstanding. I hope that when this private member's bill, Bill 207, that I have presented to the House, comes forward, she rethinks her position on this so that we have the opportunity to have a fulsome discussion and actually see the real numbers for what they are.

Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members – oh, 29(2)(a). My apologies. The hon. Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I just wanted to make a few comments regarding the previous speaker's

comments. You know, first of all, the Deputy Premier, when she was talking about grandstanding and a bill to reduce red tape, I believe her point, which is one that I share . . .

**The Acting Speaker:** Minister, please.

**Mr. Bilous:** This is going back to the bill and will be a question for the member opposite.

**The Acting Speaker:** I'm standing. Could you please sit down?

I think we deviated a little bit over to the private member's bill, and we are not focusing on actually the bill in front of us, which is Bill 21. I recognize that the Deputy Premier was asking some questions, so I allowed the member to respond in kind. However, I would like us to refocus now, if we could, please, on Bill 21. We can wait till private members' business on Monday to respond to the private member's bill, please.

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. My comments do go back to this bill. This is just putting my comments into context. If you would allow me a little leeway in these comments, you'll see that it does relate specifically to Bill 21, which I think members opposite – through the debate of this bill, their point has been that what this bill is doing is cleaning up some committees or bodies and previous costs associated with them as well as eliminating certain elements that will actually make it easier for business to be conducted. With those comments regarding Bill 21, not the previous member's bill, I agree.

You know, the point of a bill like this is that the legislation is needed to clean up some of these bodies, but I think my point is that our government, on an ongoing basis, looks at regulations through the lens of business as far as what benefits they provide. If they are creating impediments, then we have a thorough and robust discussion about that as far as: can we make it easier for them and for bodies to operate within the province of Alberta? Now, obviously, there are certain elements of some regs that provide specific benefits, whether environmental, health and safety, et cetera.

But the question, really, to the hon. member is that if there wasn't legislation needed to reduce barriers to doing business and it could be done through regulation – I think this was the Deputy Premier's point – doing it through regulation is more expedient, less costly, and also does not have to go through a longer process. The question to the hon. member is: would he be in favour of regulations being either adopted, amended, or discarded that would support doing business? Would that not be more efficient than bringing everything through the House via legislation?

11:40

**The Acting Speaker:** The hon. Member for Cardston-Taber-Warner.

**Mr. Hunter:** Thank you, Madam Speaker. I appreciate the question that was asked by the hon. member. I think that there's a disconnect here for the members opposite. The disconnect is clearly manifested by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. This government receives an F every single year because they do not have a strategy. They're the only government that does not have a red tape reduction strategy in Canada. They talk about getting in line – I've heard this many times before – with other jurisdictions, getting up to speed with other jurisdictions. Yet with this one thing, where we have seen a real turnaround in the B.C. government in terms of their economy, red tape reduction – from 2001 to 2004 they decreased the regulatory burden by 36 per cent because they created a plan, and then they executed the plan.

What this government is saying is: we don't have a problem; we're already taking care of it. But they're not willing to share with this Assembly what the problem is. They haven't even determined what the baseline of regulation is. They haven't even shared with this group what the baseline of regulatory burden is. If the member opposite really does truly believe that we don't have a problem, that's the problem. The problem is that, first of all, you have to recognize that you've got a problem and then create a plan to be able to work it out. This is what Bill 207 is all about, being able to address the problem, make a plan. We invite the government opposite to support that bill.

**The Acting Speaker:** Thank you, hon. member.

Are there any other members wishing to speak to 29(2)(a)?

Seeing none, are there any other members wishing to speak to Bill 21?

Seeing none, I will now ask the hon. Member for Wetaskiwin-Camrose to please close debate.

**Mr. Hinkley:** Yes. Thank you, Madam Speaker. I will close second reading with just a couple of comments, a thank you to the opposition for their support of Bill 21's intent and letting them know that phase 3 is under way and does indeed focus on government excellence in public and postsecondary institutions.

With that, I would close the debate.

[Motion carried; Bill 21 read a second time]

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

**Mr. Bilous:** Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. Seeing the good progress we made this morning and that we're very close to noon, I move that we adjourn the House until 1:30 p.m. today.

[Motion carried; the Assembly adjourned at 11:44 a.m.]

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